

Student Learning Committee (SLC)
Minutes from Meeting on September 9, 2014

Committee members present: Kendrick Brown (chair), Nancy Bostrom, Keith Edwards, Polly Fassinger, Terri Fishel, Jim Hoppe, Diane Michelfelder, Kimerly Miller, Paul Overvoorde, Jaine Strauss

Absent: Student representatives yet to be named by MCSG.

I. Introductions and Welcome

- The Chair began with introductions and a welcome, followed by background and context for the committee's work. The "Student Learning Committee Objectives" document was shared with committee members.
 - SLC is in the process of objective #2, evaluating the extent to which college-wide student learning goals are being met by synthesizing information gained from institutional, general education, academic department and co-curricular domains of student learning inquiry.
 - At this point, SLC is also moving into #3, collaborating with the Institutional Research Office and Assessment Office to report relevant college-wide student learning findings to the Macalester community and general public.
 - This is a complex undertaking, and SLC is taking time to develop a systematic approach that is manageable and provides meaningful information.
- The Chair reviewed committee tasks over the past few years, beginning with the creation of the Statement on Student Learning (SSL), and the completion last year of a student learning map which connects the SSL to learning across campus.
- SLC will take a managed approach to reporting assessment findings, synthesizing results from one learning goal at a time. This year the committee will begin with "Think Critically and Analyze Effectively." When analysis is complete (perhaps spring 2015, perhaps later), the committee will turn to "Demonstrate Intercultural Knowledge and Competence." The committee's guiding question is: "How well are Macalester students as a group demonstrating the knowledge, skills or perspectives associated with the

particular SSL goal? As SLC reviews each learning goal, it may recommend revisions to the SSL to better reflect our institutional objectives.

II. A first look at Learning Outcome #1 of “Think Critically and Analyze Effectively” (TCAE): “Students should question both stated and unstated assumptions and explore issues from multiple perspectives.”

- Last year, SLC conducted an “item analysis” of institutional measures connected to TCAE. Over the summer, Institutional Research gathered corresponding data and prepared information to share with the committee. Does this information help us to better understand student learning related to this outcome?
 - At this point, SLC is focusing on institutional measures, which will be followed by general education assessment results. In the spring, the committee will use data available through Department Action Reports in curricular and co-curricular departments.
 - Polly highlighted a couple of parameters for the data:
 - Results include only data since 2009.
 - Some survey questions changed over time, so longitudinal figures are not available.
 - Some longitudinal data points are not yet available—in some cases we are waiting for “post” results, in some cases the “post” data has not yet been collected.

SLC considered each available item in turn:

- CLA Analytic Reasoning mean subscore from the Writing Task
 - This longitudinal data was collected in 2009 (first years) and 2013 (seniors).
 - The group’s consensus was that this is helpful, direct assessment data that is aligned with the learning outcome and should be used. However, the evidence would be more compelling if it were in the context of the larger cohort. For example, how representative is the sample? Unfortunately, CLA does not typically release individual student data and this information is currently unavailable.

Action Item: Institutional Research will contact CLA to request individual data so that we can determine representativeness.

- NSSE: Course work Emphasis
 - This is cross-sectional indirect data, with comparisons from other institutions. While it describes more of an “input” in terms of what students were asked to do in class, rather than an “outcome” describing perceived gains, it can provide helpful context for direct evidence, such as CLA.
 - The consensus is to use this question, while acknowledging its limitations.
 - When we move to the information available in academic departments, we may want to check for departments that use the IDEA form, which has a question similar to TCAE #1. While the use of the IDEA form has declined, it would provide helpful evidence in areas where it has been used.
- PSRI: Self-Perceived Gains
 - In one sense this question is compelling because it is focused on students’ self-perceived gains related to TCAE #1. However, the question itself is problematic in that it asks about TCAE #1, but within the context of communicating across difference.
 - The consensus is to use this question, while acknowledging its limitations.
- Further discussion led to the question of how discrete some of our items will be—how well will they map onto a learning outcome, and how much overlap might there be with learning beyond the specific learning outcome being examined? Is it OK to bring in examples that are close to the exact learning outcome, but overlap into other areas? The consensus seemed to be that SLC should at least start by including these items to provide a sense of the learning outcomes, recognizing that we may eliminate items in the future, if it is determined that other measures are better aligned with the outcomes.
- Data from Campus Labs may be another source of indirect evidence related to TCAE and other learning goals.

III. Next Steps

- For the next meeting, SLC will remain on the institutional level and review the learning outcomes #2 and #3 for TCAE. Once the committee has reviewed the institutional measures, it will turn attention to results from the General Education assessments.