Program Review Committee
Minutes
January 7, 2008

Present: Marianne Robins, Warren Rogers, Dave Marten, Bill Wright, Mark Nelson, Laura Montgomery and Barb Kennedy

Warren opened the meeting with prayer.

Marianne reviewed the accomplishments of the Committee during the fall semester. She passed out an agenda with key tasks outlined. The first item was a listing of departments who had turned in September reports. Her goals for spring include: obtaining “missing” reports, providing feedback to all departments, working with departments who are struggling with assessment in general and finally, assuring that all departments have identified viable student outcomes and a plan for assessment.

Secondly, Marianne noted that the Template for Program Review passed in the Senate without much resistance. At the next meeting she will ask Barb to explain the work she has done on data collection for each department. Thirdly, Dave Marten asked Marianne how she decided on the order for Program Review Reports and whether the schedule had been approved. Technically the schedule doesn’t have to be approved by the Senate but Marianne described the many factors which she took into account to make the schedule. These included reviewing the prior schedule and the progress of various departments.

Regarding PRC members’ contributions, Marianne made the case for committee members to work with a couple of departments. While most members are doing assessment work for their departments, it will add to their knowledge to work with others. She tentatively allocated several departments to each faculty member: Mark Nelson, Dave Marten, Ray Rosentrater and Laura Montgomery. She indicated she tried to find departments for the members:

1. within the same divisions
2. which would require a relatively “low” amount of work
3. departments which were working well on assessment.

While she doesn’t intend to be out of the picture, she wanted to delegate a small amount of work to the Committee.

The Committee also noted that we need clarification on departmental responsibilities (who is responsible for assessment) for Program Review and setting a policy for compensation, either with stipends, course reductions or committee release time.
Warren and Marianne noted that release time will be hard for Faculty Council to consider as they have such a difficult time filling positions on faculty committees. If course reductions were to be granted, the PRC would have to build in some type of accountability. Laura suggested that if course reductions were granted that the faculty person should check in regularly with the Director of Assessment or PRC to be sure they were making progress and not leaving the work to the last minute. The frequency of course reductions and an appropriate accountability procedures if the work was not done needs to be defined by the Committee.

Marianne reminded the Committee that several faculty members felt that a promise had been made during our WASC preparation to review the 6 Learning Standards after the site visit. In fact, the learning standards were discussed at one Senate and one Faculty Meeting this fall. Unfortunately, we can't move forward on this as the Long Range Planning group is in the midst of revising the College's Mission Statement. Dave asked if anything “good” had come of the discussions with the faculty. Faculty loosely defined the 6 Learning Standards as having language that “doesn’t speak to them”. They want standards that are simple and more elegant. Laura noted that there are too many indicators and that they need to be reduced to more manageable numbers. Some faculty apparently made the case for abandoning them entirely and relying on the GE categories. Ray invited faculty near the end of the year to submit “sketches” to the PRC of revised Learning Standards.

Revisions of the handbook's section on the PRC should be presented to Faculty Council as the current language does not correctly represent the work of the Committee. We have worked on changes during the fall and Marianne asked that everyone re-read the copy which was included in her agenda pages. Bill advocated adding the phrase “including establishing policies and procedures” to the general statement under responsibilities. Warren advocated collapsing the bulleted points into a well-written paragraph. Finally, Marianne pointed out comments made by Eileen McMahon related to the handbook revisions. She raises the question of the authority of the Committee over the Director of Assessment. Eileen was worried that a Director of Assessment could institute policies which the Committee might not like.

Marianne has plans to visit Biola in the next few months and she believes they have integrated their faculty development programs better than other institutions. Dave Marten asked an over-arching question about the title of “Director of Assessment”—whether in fact it should be Director of Program Review. His concern really centered around the role of the Committee and whether they ought to be the ones reviewing the work of the departments? He wondered that Committee members should look at departmental plans as well, not just the Director of Assessment. Are we going to make departments define what a good department looks like? He also wondered about the role of outside reviewers. Don’t we need to rate/rank and compare our departments to other schools? Who will decide if a plan has been sufficiently thought through? Departments need autonomy but there also needs to be oversight and accountability.

Marianne will revise the bullet points into a paragraph for the next meeting. Laura agreed to send her some suggestions. Marianne asked that the faculty committee
members send her an email about the feasibility of working with the departments she proposed. She also passed out copies of some of the fall minutes and asked members to review to assure they adequately reflect our discussions.

Recorded by,

Barb Kennedy