



**Advisory Committee on Academic Assessment (ACAA)
Accreditation, Assessment and Learning
Office of the Provost
Kent State University**

**April 30, 2020 Meeting
*via Microsoft Teams***

MINUTES

Members in Attendance:

Susan Perry, Hollie Simpson, Shannon Helfinstine, Marcia Kibler, Ching-I Chen, Dale Eilrich, Mary Ann Haley, Mary Hricko, Chris Hudak, Karen MacDonald, Jennifer Marcinkiewicz, Jennifer Miller, Richmond Nettey, David Putman, Valerie Samuel, Elizabeth Sinclair, Linnea Stafford, Pamela Stephenson, Therese Tillett, William Turek, and Brittany Thomas.

I. Welcome and introductions

Susan Perry introduced Shannon Helfinstine, the new Associate Director, Assessment hired on March 31 coming from Aultman College with experience in Institutional Research and Assessment as well as being a Kent State alumnus completing her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Biological Sciences. Susan asked for committee members to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of March minutes

The minutes from the ACAA March meeting were presented and accepted as written.

III. Announcements/Updates

a. Great Colleges to Work For

Great Colleges to Work For is a climate survey that goes out to a sample of 600 employees that include faculty, staff and administration. This survey has been completed every year since 2008 and this is the highest response rate historically (37%) that we have ever had for this survey. In previous years, the response rate has been between 15-34%. In late July we expect to receive overview summary reports that will be shared with this committee and others.

b. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

The NSSE is a survey that goes to all first year and senior students who are in four-year degree programs. This year is the first year all of the regional campuses, along with the Kent campus, have participated in this survey.

The survey response for the Kent campus is at 25.5% which is higher than the 2017 iteration and is above average for institutions with larger campuses. Regional campus response rates currently range from approximately 23% to 36%. The survey close date has been extended an additional week and the committee was invited to share ideas and engage in strategies for additional outreach. The new survey deadline is May 22. The data and reports for this survey are received the end of August or early September so the results will be shared during the fall semester.

c. Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE)

Susan Perry added an update about the AALHE conference which will be held remotely beginning June 8. Registration opens on April 31 with a fee depending on membership and a discounted group rate option is available. Susan will post more information about registration on Teams when it becomes available.

d. Announcements from committee members

Liz Sinclair from the College of Business Administration (COBA) advised the committee that the college is looking into ways to cut costs when completing end of program assessments. The college has many students graduating, and they need at the minimum a quarter of the students tested. To keep testing consistent, the college tests everybody and then adds the feature of giving the student feedback on all the outcomes that the college collects. This is also a requirement of their accrediting agency AACSB.

Discussions COBA is currently having is about artificial intelligence (AI) and assessing written communication. There have been conversations with a company named Vantage that have state of the art ways to grade writing using AI. Sinclair has concerns in using some of these new grading techniques to combine outcomes. For example, combining ethics and oral communication and expecting AI to assess both outcomes. Content is not easy, but COBA is curious if anyone has done anything with AI and should this be considered institution-wide especially with the Kent core and with written assignments. Mary Ann Haley shared her concern about evaluating content for ethics and suggested reaching out to computer science because they have been doing a lot of work trying to develop AI.

Susan Perry shared that standardized testing companies have been using AI for grading essays for some time now, including the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA).

COBA's plan before making a decision is to take samples of what has been graded and have this company put the data into the system and see how closely they align. They want to see if they are grading similarly but also know its

efficiency. Students receive immediate feedback on their writing that they can use for improvement. Strategies for how the cost would be covered are also being discussed.

Jenny Marcinkiewicz questioned what the end goal for using AI would be for writing assessment, to assess writing fluency or content knowledge. She raised the concern that content knowledge may be overshadowed by poor syntax. She also recommended talking with someone in computer science about it.

Richmond Nettey suggested reaching out to an AI faculty member, Ray Lu, who has been working with him on a project to conduct contactless screening at the airport using AI. He will send Dr. Lu's contact information to Liz.

IV. Accreditation Update

a. HLC Updates

Hollie Simpson shared a couple of updates from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). HLC has adopted some new policy changes about consortial arrangements, peer review assignment and voluntary resignation of accreditation. Some of these changes are due to the revised federal regulations that go into effect on July 1, 2020. One of the changes that may be of interest to the committee is to the consortial arrangements between HLC accredited institutions. HLC considers a consortium to exist when like accredited institutions agree to collectively provide portions of an educational program, degree or certificate. In the past these consortial arrangements usually required prior approval from HLC, with the changes to federal regulations this pre-approval will no longer be required.

Webinars will be offered detailing the revisions to the HLC criteria for accreditation which will take effect on September 1, 2020. Both Hollie and Susan will be attending these webinars. The revisions to the criteria are not drastic changes but will require some changes to the assurance argument document that was submitted in June 2019. The reaffirmation site visit is scheduled for academic year 2024/2025 so we have some time to get these changes incorporated.

b. Specialized Accreditation

Hollie shared that the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) which is an organization that recognizes and reviews accrediting bodies, recently conducted a survey of their members to gain insight on how specialized program accreditors were handling the challenges brought on by the pandemic. The results indicated that most accreditors are offering their institutions flexibility in meeting accreditation requirements through a variety of ways, including. virtual site visits, which can be very cost effective and may become more of the norm in the coming years, as well as postponing site visits or extending accreditation.

V. Assessment resources

Shannon Helfinstine presented to the committee, "Assessing in a Pandemic", with references from National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). She has been immersing herself in the assessment process by reviewing ACAA meeting

minutes, online trainings and participating in assessment webinars focused on assessment strategies during the pandemic. The webinars and her previous faculty experience have provided additional insight into what faculty have endured this semester with a sudden shift to remote teaching. While overall assessment of learning has continued in some form, plans were likely adjusted and we will need to have a flexible approach in reviewing these reports, just as accrediting agencies are having to adjust expectations. She asked the committee to think about and discuss how we can help ease the burden for faculty across campus, keeping in mind this would not be the time to assess the effectiveness of a remote course as an online course when it really was never intended to be one.

Jenny Marcinkiewicz shared with the group that the Academic Continuity Committee, on which she serves as chair, has been involved in crafting policies and processes during the campus disruption and created a feedback survey for faculty. This survey is available on Blackboard for anyone who had a course move to remote instruction. Around 472 responses from faculty have been collected at this time with many responses that centered around communication and asking to share success stories. Data is expected to be shared with the university community on the Keep on Teaching and the Provost's Coronavirus websites.

Discussion continued about the challenges of the spring semester and the move from face-to-face courses to online format along with meeting student learning outcomes. Shannon shared that she is ready to assist as best she can with Taskstream training as she is still getting herself immersed in the software. There are tentative plans to conduct formal group or one-on-one trainings to get the conversations started during the fall semester, remotely for now. AAL is in the process of finalizing those details with the online signup system. If the committee knows of anyone needing training, contact Shannon.

VI. Next meeting: TBD

Susan Perry shared the fall semester meetings will be scheduled sometime in late summer or beginning of the fall semester, location and format to be determined.