Summary of APAC Discussion Points on Resources for Assessment

January 18, 2006

Objective: To make recommendations to the Provost regarding resources needed by programs to conduct assessment that not only satisfies accreditation requirements but provides meaningful feedback for program improvement.

- The guiding principles and recommendations submitted by APAC to the Provost in January 2006 underscored the **necessity of adequate resources** to enable academic units to meet University expectations for conducting assessment on an ongoing basis.

Centralized Support Services for Assessment

- **Centralized support services should be provided to help academic units conduct assessment activities as needed.**   Level of support needed varies across academic units. Some schools and departments have their own dedicated staff for assessment; others have none.

- **Academic units should be made aware of existing resources for assessment support.** For example, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IRA) provides the following types of services to the extent that current resources allow: (1) data and reports from University files on students, courses, personnel, and certain financial areas; (2) statistical analysis and interpretation; (3) questionnaire design and administration; (4) focus groups and individual interviews; and (5) consultation about assessment methodology and related topics.   The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) serves as a resource for teaching evaluations and faculty training in assessment methods, among other functions.

- The **sufficiency of existing resources** in IRA and CTL to maintain current levels of support and to expand their services to meet unfilled needs should be considered by the Provost's Office.

- It might be more cost effective to **invest additional resources in expanding centralized professional services** such as those that currently exist in IRA and CLT than to attempt to provide funding for each unit to create its own in-house assessment support services.

- **Common needs for reports and data should be identified** and systems developed to supply that information to chairs and deans routinely via the web or some other mechanism.   In addition, most departments have some unique reporting needs that would require the creation of query-based systems that allow those individuals to develop customized reports.

Managing and Facilitating Assessment

- **Establishing a group of faculty with expertise in assessment** who are available to provide advice and consultation to other faculty upon request might be a very effective method of promoting and supporting assessment as a collegial, peer-based process.

- Generally, the professional schools have a **designated administrator to coordinate assessment** across departments or divisions.   In some cases, that person is fairly new to assessment, and in other cases, the assessment coordinator has had extensive experience with evaluation and accreditation issues in that discipline. In several instances (Education, Public Health, Journalism & Mass Communication), the appointment of an assessment coordinator was in response to changing accreditation standards that required a more intense focus on outcomes assessment and some change in previous processes.

- **The College of Arts and Sciences has special needs for assessment-related resources.** There is no administrator formally assigned to facilitate the overall effort for the College (currently the senior associate deans collect the materials and pass them on to the IRA). In addition, faculty in most of the departments are new to assessment and could use some resources comparable to those made available for course development in order to design assessments that will provide useful data. Bill Andrews also suggested the creation of a standing faculty committee within the College to review assessment plans and reports and provide feedback to the units.   It will be important for the leadership of the College to make it clear why assessment is a priority and to see that adequate resources are provided for development and administration of this process.

- The administration of assessment processes within the Division of Student Affairs and several of the professional schools (Education, Dentistry) might be studied as models for the College of Arts and Sciences.

- There are other resource issues concerning assessment that go beyond administering the process.   As units actually use the results of assessment to identify needs for improvement, will there be resources available to help them make the necessary changes or enhancements that are implicated?   Some commitment from the Provost's office that assessment results will be considered in the budget process is important – for example, that budget requests based on solid results of assessment indicating the need for new resources to fix problems will be rewarded.