**CIA Meeting**

**Date:   Friday, March 21, 2014**

**Time:  10:30am-11:20am**

**Room:  BA 524**

Attendance: Betsy Desy, Lori Baker, Linda Nelson, Rhonda Bonnstetter, Pam Sukalski and Jan Loft, Nadine Schmidt, Monica Miller, Carrie Hansen, Alan Matzner and Christine Olson.

Absent: Jay Brown, Wiji Wijesiri, Sang Jung (on sabbatical), Jane Wrede, Michael Cheng, Mike Rich, Scott Crowell and Marcia Beukelman,

**Information Items:**

* Lunch and Learn April 10, Assessment in Student Affairs: Presentation conflicts with New Works presentation: Betsy explained the time conflict between the NewWorks and the Student Affairs presentation. Scott Crowell had requested we delay the presentation anyway.
  + - Suggestions for rescheduling SA presentation for Professional Development Day in August: It is thought this is a better time for the presentation because they will then have two years’ worth of data. Carrie Hansen reported on an earlier meeting with Scott that explained it would be put off until Fall and that the group will continue to move forward in the meantime and the members will be submitting their data collections to Scott Crowell.

**Action Items:**

* March 1 assessment mini-grant --review proposals and make recommendations:

Two applications had been received: Nursing and P.E. There was discussion on ensuring that this type of money can be spent to help pay a bill for an external reviewer.

**\*\* Motion 1 \*\*** Rhonda Bonnstetter moved to approve the Nursing grant pending approval from Marcia Beukelman on the bookkeeping protocol.

Monica Miller seconded. **Motion passed.**

**Secretary’s Note: Marcia Beukelman says this is an acceptable use of grant money. Marcia does remind everyone this type of grant money must be used by June 30, 2014.**

Rhonda Bonnstetter spoke to the purpose and aim of the P.E. proposal. They would like to provide refreshments for the folks during the meeting to discuss developments.

**\*\* Motion 2 \*\*** Lori Baker moved to approve the P.E. grant.

Pam Sukalski seconded. **Motion passed**

* Nominate CIA reps on LEP AHA (Ad Hoc Assessment) teams for LEP Outcome 2 (communication), Outcome 3 (creative thinking), and Outcome 4 (critical thinking)

Pam Sukalski has been named the LEC representative for Critical Thinking.

Previously Jay Brown had volunteered to be the CIA representative for Outcome 2 Communication.

We have a dilemma at this point; we may have to wait until the April meeting to pursue naming more representatives plus wait to see who is appointed to the CIA and the LEC 2014-2015, following the new spring appointment plans. Lori Baker thinks the Creative Thinking appointment will be very important due to the LEP-400.

* Review and discussion of academic program **assessment plan** data collected by CIA
  + Post summaries on t-drive  Committee for Institutional Assessment ASSESSMENT PLAN & RESULTS FOR 2013-14

Via email Jay Brown reported: “I won’t be able to make the meeting tomorrow, but I uploaded everything I had for the academic program assessment plan for the Science Department after seeing that is was on the agenda below. The materials can be found on: T-drive  Committee for institutional assessment ASSESSMENT PLAN AND RESULTS FOR 2013-14.”

* + Nadine Schmidt reported that she is awaiting Art’s plan but as soon as she receives it Nadine will post the Fine Arts and Communication plan.
  + Lori Baker is hoping that we can have all plans posted by the April 18th meeting. Betsy will touch on this subject again at the ALS Chairpersons meeting scheduled for Monday, March 24th.
  + There was considerable discussion on how many places we can post these plans and other documents and who will have access. How to make things easy to find and accessible to the people that need to access the information is an important decision. Betsy wants to respect her promise to Departments that their materials would be accessible only to them and would not be moved or available to others without permission.
  + Lori Baker will talk with Dan Baun to learn what makes sense for the HLC and what makes sense to the CIA. For now, we will not make changes.
  + Christine Olson has designed a cover page for each of the Programs in her Department. Each Program has their folder; all needed right now is the sub-folder for a summary and assessment results. We do not have a perfect answer at this time for how and where that is best for everyone. Nonetheless we need data that shows what faculty are finding and how students are learning. (Christine later sent copies of the cover page and other material samples. **Secretary’s Note:** I saved these in my CIA file.
* Where to post College Now Assessment data for access by CN advisory group
* Again, the question is where and how accessible. It is the same problem of the question discussed above. Right now this data is in each Program’s folder, with limited access by others such as the College Now Advisory group. Pam Sukalski shared that the Advisory group is most concerned that courses associated with College Now are assessed just as the on-campus courses are assessed, to ensure comparability.
* AAC&U/MN universities joint assessment project opportunity (see document below):

Betsy explained her discussion with the Provost about the joint effort between 11 Minnesota institutions and AAC&U; SMSU is not on the list at this time but Winona has pulled out so we can take their place. This initiative involves the AAC&U’s value rubrics for assessment. We have a Communication rubric already designed and used and the Provost said that would not prevent us from participating. English designed their own rubric and thinks it looks good, maybe better than the AAC&U’s rubric. For the first part of the initiative there is a Gates Foundation grant to help pay for all the expenses for a meeting to bring the three people from all participating schools to help identify student work and how to rate the student work. No obligation if we do the first one and then decide we are not interested. There are other opportunities but they all cost money; this is the only plan that does not cost us money. This helps to look at actual work placed in the campus repository, to decide what to place in the repository and then to have it scored. Our work goes in the repository but the how it is reviewed is not necessarily SMSU scoring but by the trained group participating in this project.

What is the process for making this official? The Provost indicated first informing the CIA, and then deciding who will be the three people from our campus. The Provost will bring this to a Meet and Confer.

Christine Olson shared that her AHA team started with the AAC&U rubrics as a springboard but decided not to use wholesale. There were rubric segments that were good but not the total content. Perhaps we can keep some specific elements of the AAC&U rubrics but be allowed our own tweaks and still be able to participate?

Would we eventually get “ranked” with other schools? Will this allow us to see how our students are doing compared to others? This is the pilot project that will iron out the possible kinks in the plan? We would not be obligated to continue, reminded Betsy.

Are we supportive to find out what this is all about? Yes.

Meeting adjourned about 11:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Loft

**Communication to Minnesota Higher Education, Foundation and Business Leaders**

**Getting the Assessment of Student Learning in College Right:**

**A “Proof of Concept at Scale”**

Daniel F. Sullivan, President Emeritus, St. Lawrence University and

Senior Development Fellow, AAC&U

November, 2012 (updated January 9, 2013)

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) proposes to collaborate with 10 Minnesota private and public four-year and two-year colleges to engage in a “proof of concept at scale” of an eventual national vehicle for using common rubrics—AAC&U’s 15 VALUE Rubrics—to assess the quality of actual student work in college so as to facilitate institutional efforts at continuous quality improvement. When this assessment vehicle is fully in place students will become able to submit to employers as part of a job application portfolio examples of their college work that have been assessed using these rubrics by scorers outside their institution and then benchmarked against similar work produced by students at colleges and universities all across America. If we can prove this concept at scale we believe it will become the assessment vehicle of choice across American higher education, with transformative implications for institutions, students, employers and, most important, the level and quality of student achievement.

**About AAC&U**

AAC&U, which will reach its centennial in 2015, is the only national higher education membership organization (1,300 private and public college, university, and state system members—including many community college members) that is wholly devoted to advancing liberal education.

AAC&U’s highest priority is to help colleges, universities and community colleges raise the level of student achievement on key capacities—what we call the Essential Learning Outcomes—that are essential to work and life in the 21st century and critical to the future success of American for-profit and not-for-profit employers. These learning outcomes include, across and beyond content knowledge:

* inquiry and analysis;
* critical and creative thinking;
* integrative and reflective thinking;
* written and oral communication;
* quantitative literacy;
* information literacy;
* intercultural understanding; and
* teamwork and problem solving.

Because more than ever before in our nation’s history there is alignment between the intended learning outcomes of liberal education and the learning necessary for just about anyone to succeed in work and life, any serious national effort both to assess the performance of colleges and universities and aid their efforts at continuous quality improvement must, in our view, have at its center the assessment of the attainment of these learning goals.

Evidence for alignment of the learning goals of liberal education with the needs of the 21st century global economy is strong. Here is what employers responding to the 2010 AAC&U Hart survey[[1]](#footnote-1) said were their top priorities for increased emphasis by colleges in the wake of the economic downturn:

* Effective oral/written communication: 89%
* Critical thinking/analytical reasoning: 81%
* Knowledge/skills applied to real world settings: 79%
* Analyze/solve complex problems: 75%
* Connect choices and actions to ethical decisions: 75%
* Teamwork skills/ability to collaborate: 71%
* Ability to innovate and be creative: 70%
* Concepts/developments in science/technology: 70%
* Locate/organize/evaluate information: 68%
* Understand global context of situations/decisions: 67%
* Global issues’ implications for future: 65%
* Understand and work with numbers/statistics: 63%
* Understand role of U. S. in the world: 57%
* Knowledge of cultural diversity in US/world: 57%
* Civic knowledge, community engagement: 52%

In AAC&U’s 2008 Hart survey nearly four in five business executives also endorsed completion of a senior project that demonstrates depth of knowledge in the students’ major and problem-solving, analytic, and reasoning skills as a very (46%) or fairly effective (33%) way of ensuring college graduates’ attainment of necessary skills and knowledge. Solid majorities gave similar weight to completion of essay tests that evaluate problem-solving, writing, and analytical-thinking skills (60% very/fairly effective) and electronic portfolios (56% very/fairly effective) as means for ensuring student achievement. The only assessment that received low scores from the majority of employers is the idea of requiring college students to complete multiple-choice tests of general content knowledge.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Further evidence of alignment is that employers put their compensation dollars into the jobs that require these kinds of higher education learning outcomes. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce economist Anthony Carnevale says this:

From a federal database analyzing qualifications for 1,100 different jobs, there is consistent evidence that the highest salaries apply to positions that call for intensive use of liberal education capabilities, including: writing, inductive and deductive reasoning, judgment and decision-making, problem solving, social/interpersonal skills, mathematics, originality.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Indeed, the 220 jobs in the upper quintile with regard to these liberal education capabilities pay on average over double what the 220 jobs in the lowest quintile pay.

Employers also understand increasingly that a narrow, vocational education geared to particular jobs requires its recipients to be retrained for the next job at significant cost to the job-holder, employers, and taxpayers who fund federal and state job programs.

More often than not, vocational training is not intended to and does not succeed at helping students become lifelong learners, motivated to teach themselves new things. The graduate’s education/training, though less expensive to provide, depreciates.[[4]](#footnote-4) In contrast, students properly educated in the high-level thinking and skills needed in the 21st century—that is, educated in a way that inspires them to become intellectually curiousand self-directed lifelong learners—are constantly educating themselves in their current jobs and for their next jobs. They are well prepared to adapt to changing environments. This kind of higher order learning actually appreciates in value because its beneficiaries become more valuable in the marketplace with time—good for them and good for the rest of us who benefit from their improved productivity.

No one has estimated the enormous size of the depreciation cost borne by individuals educated narrowly and vocationally and by those who must then subsidize their retraining. But employers understand the limits of narrow learningand they understand the concept ofdepreciating value.

**Assessment of Student Learning in College**

Drawing on work that has already begun on many college, university and community college campuses, AAC&U proposes to work with higher education leaders and faculty to advance a far-reaching change in “what counts as primary evidence” when it comes to assessing students’ learning gains in college.  The implications of this new approach are so significant that leaders involved are calling this alternative approach to assessment a “Sea Change.”  The result would be faculty-led longitudinal assessments of student work that are truly worthy of the educational missions of this nation’s best colleges, universities and community colleges, and focused on learning that adds value to the economy and to society.

What is the intended Sea Change?  Over the course of the twentieth century, standardized tests of specific knowledge and/or general skills became the widely accepted centerpiece of all efforts to document and report students’ learning gains from school and—by extension—from college.  Yet faculty at the college level have, in our view rightly, objected all along that tests featuring common “right answers” can never capture the most important goal of a high quality college education, which is to prepare students to deal with “unscripted” problems where both the nature of the problems and the best ways to approach them are complex, contested and strongly dependent on rigorous analysis of both evidence and alternatives.

Today, faculty members from across the country, in collaboration with AAC&U, are actively developing a more robust approach to assessment of students’ learning in college.  Early results are highly promising, and point toward the prospect that integrative designs for assessment could themselves become a way of improving the quality of learning, while also enabling its documentation.

The key innovation is that these faculty-led approaches move students’ own complex college work—projects, writing, research, collaborations, service-learning, internships, creative performances and the like—to the center of the assessment equation. The new approach also underscores the central role of faculty members’ own collaborative judgments about the goals of higher learning and about the rubrics or standards that ought to be used in evaluating students’ attainment of those goals.

Standardized testing would—in this new approach—become complementary rather than central to national and institutional reporting on students’ gains in learning.

The new approach also involves students themselves in the intentional project of reporting, integrating, and demonstrating their cumulative gains in college. It gives students focus and skills as they work toward becoming self-directed learners.

Specifically, this new faculty/AAC&U-designed assessment framework recommends:

* That colleges and universities focus teaching and learning—across all fields of study and all majors, and above and beyond specific content knowledge—on the Essential Learning Outcomes enumerated above.
* That student progress and achievement in these essential learning areas, and then college and university performance, be determined through beginning, milestone and capstone assessments of representative samples of students’ best actual work in college using rubrics—AAC&U’s fifteen VALUE Rubrics—scored at least twice for reliability by independent assessors made up of qualified faculty from outside the institution in which the work was produced.
* That higher education institutions use the resulting summary measures of their students’ performance to learn both whether and by how much individual students improve in performance during college, and whether overall student performance in these areas of learning improves over time. Assessing institutional performance by evaluating how much the average student improves, rather than the average level of student performance, focuses on the institution’s success in promoting growth in student learning. Without the focus on student development, performance measures can end up just creating a snapshot of the level of competence with which students came to college.

In addition, comparing the same actual students’ performance at beginning, milestone, and capstone points in their college careers eliminates the bias caused by attrition. It is generally the less well-performing students who do not graduate. This approach is called a “longitudinal value added” assessment design.

* That higher education institutions benchmark their students’ improvement in performance against the improvement in performance of students in other institutions nationally as part of a continuous quality improvement program focused on student learning.
* And—very important to the for-profit and not-for-profit employers seeking to hire college graduates best suited to their needs—that individual students eventually be able to submit validated (by their institution) examples of their best work for scoring using one or more of the VALUE Rubrics. Once scored, students may then request both that the work itself and its scoring summary become part of a job application portfolio, including where the student’s work ranks when benchmarked against similar work of other students nationally stored in the repository of student work AAC&U will bring into being and maintain.

It is very important to stress, in addition, that the system of assessment AAC&U proposes is absolutely not about college and university rankings—the goal here is continuous quality improvement in student learning done in a way that allows institutions to focus on getting better, and in a way that works well with the system of higher education accreditation in America. It is also not about the assessment of individual faculty performance. This is a student-centered approach.

We are at a tipping point with respect to the national possibility of moving this strategy from determining feasibility to actual implementation. That is why this communication to key higher education and other Minnesota leaders proposing this collaboration with AAC&U comes now.

**Why Minnesota and Why Minnesota Now?**

The Itasca Project Higher Education Task Force, a collaboration of Minnesota business, higher education, foundation and policy leaders unique in the nation, recently released its report—“Higher Education Partnerships for Prosperity: A Vision for a New Skills and Innovation Economy Through Collaborations Among Higher Education Institutions, Employers, and Regional Communities”—advocating early and major statewide attention to strengthening higher education in Minnesota. Minnesota businesses and non-profit organizations, the report advocates forcefully, need a greatly increased supply of college graduates who have the higher-order learning and other skills necessary for the jobs of the 21st century. It argues for new collaborations between Minnesota’s higher education community and Minnesota’s for-profit and non-profit employers. AAC&U’s proposed collaboration responds directly to this recommendation of the report.

Separately, on October 30, 2012 Minnesota’s Center for Policy Studies released its report—“From Lagging to Leading: Making Minnesota Postsecondary Education a National Model”— advocating that higher education investment in Minnesota have as its primary focus a dramatic improvement in student learning, and that in order for that to happen there must be a sea change in Minnesota higher education regarding the assessment of student learning. In its Preface, the report says:

[Our] report focuses on the need to:

* Define and measure what students need to know and be able to do;
* Demonstrate the competencies students actually acquire; and
* Ensure the knowledge and skills students acquire match the constantly changing demands they are already facing . . . . . as 21st century workers, engaged citizens, and lifelong learners.[[5]](#footnote-5)

And later in the report in its section on “Specific Actions to Get to a Proficiency Model” it says this about AAC&U’s assessment model:

1. Capitalize upon the apparent growing interest among colleges and universities in Minnesota to move toward a proficiency model . . . . . . The AAC&U is emerging as a national leader on this front, and they have identified Minnesota as a major laboratory. If institutions in Minnesota respond, the prospects for national leadership are significant.[[6]](#footnote-6)

These Minnesota reports build on a long history of cross-higher education sector collaboration in Minnesota and enlightened business and foundation leadership that is unique in America. I was able to witness this far-sighted collaboration first-hand from 1971-86 when I was on the faculty and then in the senior administration at Carleton. Major Minnesota corporations and foundations have provided significant financial support historically to the state’s colleges and universities for the kinds of innovations and institutional strengthening that have made Minnesota higher education so strong.

While some in Minnesota say this tradition has frayed in recent years, looking from the outside one sees a state more ready than any other to take the leadership role in proving the viability of the approach to college and university student learning assessment that AAC&U has pioneered.

AAC&U’s VALUE Rubrics have undergone major testing and validation in every kind of higher education setting in America, and Minnesota is an ideal place for the next step in higher education learning assessment to happen. While many institutions already are using AAC&U’s VALUE rubrics to assess students’ progress across the curriculum, the interest among Minnesota colleges and universities in AAC&U’s work in this area has been among the highest of any state’s institutions, as measured by total number of Minnesota-based downloads of the rubrics from AAC&U’s website.

**A Proposed AAC&U-Minnesota Public and Private College and University Collaboration to Accomplish the Critical Next Steps**

In three separate recent trips to Minnesota I met with the presidents, provosts/academic deans, assessment coordinators and, in some cases, interested faculty members at thirteen of the two- and four-year private and public colleges and universities whose administrators and faculty have downloaded AAC&U’s VALUE Rubrics most frequently, indicating a high level of interest in AAC&U’s approach to assessment. My goal was to discover their level of interest in participating in the “proof of concept at scale” project AAC&U is proposing. Ten colleges and universities in Minnesota—five private colleges, two MnSCU institutions, one University of Minnesota campus, and two public community colleges—have formally committed to participate.

It is clear that we have the critical mass level of interest among higher education institutions that we need to move forward with the two-year proof of concept project we are proposing. Here is what needs to happen next:

* We need to locate funding from Minnesota-based private foundations and corporate foundations to cover the costs each participating campus will incur over two years to be part of this project. Our initial estimate of those costs is roughly $90,000 per institution over two years, $900,000 total for ten institutions. The costs include: funds for each institution to organize and transmit student work for evaluation; a portion of the time of each institution’s assessment coordinator so that it may be devoted to this work; and, the largest cost, the scoring of student work submitted by independent scorers—roughly 1,000 pieces of student work per campus per year.

While there are 15 VALUE Rubrics—Inquiry and Analysis, Critical Thinking, Writing, Integrative Learning, Oral Communication, Information Literacy, Problem Solving, Teamwork, Intercultural Knowledge, Civic Engagement, Creative Thinking, Quantitative Literacy, Lifelong Learning, Ethical Reasoning, and Reading—this project envisions that a given institutional participant would work during the two years of the project on assessing 3-5 of the learning goals for which AAC&U has created rubrics that are of strategic interest to the institution. Hopefully all 15 VALUE Rubrics will be used at least once at an institution in this project. In total, the work of the institutions involved in this project will produce proof of concept at scale.

* AAC&U needs to establish a repository into which the student work from campuses is deposited. The repository would:
  + Receive and catalog student work deposited by institutions—keeping attached to each piece of work the ID of the student who produced it and the ID of the institution where it was produced so that, if a student wanted to submit the scoring of his or her work, benchmarked against work produced by other students of various kinds (from various types of institutions or the national pool) to a potential employer or graduate school along with the actual work, they could do so—and also, if a student whose work was not part of the representative sample of work submitted to the repository wanted his or her work submitted and scored (stored separately from the representative sample of work) he or she could potentially do so for a fee;

* + Make that work e-accessible to scorers so that it could be scored remotely using VALUE Rubrics;
  + Summarize the results for institutions and report them back to the institutions;
  + Benchmark institutional results against those from other institutions in ways requested by the institution and report those results back;
  + Do all this in a way that protects the confidentiality of individual students’ data and individual institutions’ data so that identifiable data gets used only as the individual student or individual institution wants it to be used.

AAC&U will raise the funds for its portion of this “proof of concept at scale”—roughly estimated at $760,000 over two years—from sources outside of Minnesota.

**Concluding Comments**

AAC&U’s proposed approach to the vexing but extremely important issue of assessment in higher education is designed to respect the complexity and sophistication of the learning America needs from its colleges and universities. We reject the notion that a workable and useful assessment system can be built through the necessary oversimplification that comes with standardized testing.

In addition, we know from already-completed pilot testing in a number of institutions that AAC&U’s approach is also less expensive than standardized testing approaches.[[7]](#footnote-7) Finally, we have constructed our approach with the needs of employers also in mind. Time is short. We need to get m

1. “Raising the Bar: Employers’ Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn” (AAC&U and Hart Research Associates, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning? Employers’ Views on the Accountability Challenge (A Survey of Employers Conducted on Behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities,” Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., 1725 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC, 2009, January 22, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Anthony Carnevale, Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce, analysis prepared for Association of American Colleges and Universities Presidents’ Trust, “The Economic Value of Liberal Education,” 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See *Inside Higher Ed’s* October 18, 2011 “Quick Takes” summary of a new NBER Working Paper: “The skills students learn from a vocational education may ease their transition into the labor market, according to a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research. However, those initial labor-market advantages fade as workers age. The study found that individuals with a general education are more likely to be employed at age 50 than are those with a vocational education. A general education was particularly helpful in countries that experienced faster economic growth and larger technological change.” The NBER paper is: Eric A. Hanushek, Ludger Woessmann, and Lei Zhang, “General Education, Vocational Education, and Labor Market Outcomes Over the Life-Cycle,” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 17504, October, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Center for Policy Studies, *From Lagging to Leading: Making Minnesota Postsecondary Education a National Model,* October, 2012, preface. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Kathleen Langan Pusecker, et al., “Increasing the Validity of Outcomes Assessment,” *Peer Review* (Washington, D. C., AAC&U, Fall-Winter 2011-12), 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)