General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) Group

Fifth Meeting: October 16, 2001, Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York

Present: Robert Axelrod, Frances Dearing, Mary Jane Feldman, Sean Grady, Joseph Flynn, Joseph Hildreth, Jack Meacham, June Pierson, David Rule, Donald Steven (co-chair)

Guests: Anne Breznau, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, Empire State College
Lorna Forster, Professor of Sociology, Academic Assessment Coordinator, Clinton Community College
David Hadaller, Associate Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, Dutchess Community College
Connie Hallam, Director of Curriculum, Program Development and Evaluation, Ulster County Community College
Carole Berotte Joseph, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dutchess Community College
Richard Kelder, Adjunct Professor of Communication and Media, Curriculum Coordinator, SUNY College at New Paltz
Rick Miller, Director of Assessment and Institutional Research, SUNY Potsdam
Margaret Ordansky, Professor of Biological Sciences and Physical Education, Ulster County Community College
Kelli Parmley, Associate Director, Institutional Research, SUNY College at New Paltz
Holly Pennock, Director of the Office of School Programs and Educational Outreach, Hudson Valley Community College
Judy Tavel, Dean, Academic Affairs, Columbia-Greene Community College

Regrets: Pat Belanoff, Naniette Coleman, Patricia Francis (co-chair), Thomas Moran, Robert Ploutz-Snyder, Gary Waller.

Thanks to Holly Pennock, Director of the Office of School Programs and Educational Outreach at Hudson Valley Community College, for making the arrangements for our meeting.

I. Updates

After introductions and a welcome from Holly Pennock on behalf of President John Buono of Hudson Valley Community College, Donald Steven updated GEAR on his presentation on the implementation of the SUNY Assessment Initiative to the Academic Standards Committee of the Board of Trustees. He indicated that the chair of Academic Standards was concerned about the possible limited public distribution of assessment data. Dr. Steven told the chair that the Task Force spent considerable time balancing how to be fully accountable to the Board and other constituencies, while maintaining an appropriate environment for the type of productive discourse regarding matters of academic quality that generally takes place between the Provost’s Office and campuses. Trustee de Russy said she would like to discuss this issue again and wants further clarification on just what type of data would be shared.

II. GEAR Membership

GEAR discussed and approved the request drafted by Campus Governance Leaders and endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to expand its membership to include additional teaching faculty from the various sectors of the University. June Pierson, Vice President of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges was welcomed as a member and Robert Axelrod, Joseph Hildreth, and Donald Steven will confer to name the additional new members shortly.
III. Review Process / GEAR Working Groups

After discussing the positive aspects of expanded membership, GEAR discussed the design and protocols for its working groups, and the review and approval process. It was agreed that:

- Campus plans will be assigned for initial review to one of seven GEAR working groups, whose membership has been/will be designed so as not to aggravate geographic distances between members.
- The assignments of campuses to working groups will be made by the co-chairs, as much as possible on the basis of:
  - Achieving some degree of geographical proximity of working group members to campuses whose assessment plans they are reviewing.
  - Balancing the SUNY sectors from which the plans originate for each group, so as to minimize specialization and broaden perspective.
  - Balancing workload.
- In order to assure campuses of the benefit of GEAR consensus and to develop an early-on shared sense of standards and interpretation of the Review Process Guidelines, the first campus plan assigned to each working group will be reviewed and approved by the full GEAR group.

Repeated from the minutes of June 21, 2001

Each working group will consist of three GEAR members, one of whom (wherever possible, shown below in italics) served on the Provost’s Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. This group leader will provide “institutional memory” and be the contact person for the campus designee. Those campus plans that the working group unanimously considers to meet the criteria in the guidelines will be considered as approved and will not be taken up by GEAR as a whole. (With a campus’s permission, “best practices” plans will be posted on GEAR’s Web page so that other campuses can learn from them.) Plans that the working group feels do not yet meet the standard for approval will be discussed by the whole GEAR group.

Note: Assessment or process questions that arise during the development process for campus plans should be directed per the protocol below (IV). The assignment of a GEAR working group and liaison will be made only after the submission of a campus’ plan.

Working groups

Robert Ploutz-Snyder       Sean Grady
Naniette Coleman          Donald Steven
Mary Jane Feldman         Gary Waller
Cathleen McColgin         Robert Axelrod
Jack Meacham              Additional SO/F member
Additional CC member      Pat Belanoff
Frances Dearing           Joseph Flynn
Herbert Merrill           David Rule
                          Additional CC member
Patricia Francis          Additional SO/F member
Joseph Hildreth           Additional SO/F member
Thomas Moran

1 Not on the original Task Force
IV. GEAR Protocol for Responding to Campus Questions

To date, GEAR has received many questions from individuals and campuses on the review and approval process, on assessment in general, and on a campus’ assessment plan or its early thinking about its plan. In order to provide individuals and campuses with good, clear and consistent answers, GEAR has discussed and established a protocol for asking questions and receiving answers that it is hoped will provide the maximum benefit in the shortest possible time in a collegial and orderly process.

*Types of Questions and Appropriate Routing*

The following table indicates the appropriate routing of the various types of questions that may arise in the process of building and reviewing assessment plans, to whom these questions should be addressed, and the likely response.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of question or inquiry</th>
<th>Question should be directed to</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General questions re GEAR, including meetings, review and approval process, reporting, etc.</td>
<td>Either GEAR co-chair: Patricia Francis, Professor of Psychology and Executive Assistant to the President, SUNY Cortland, at: <a href="mailto:patricia@mail.cortland.edu">patricia@mail.cortland.edu</a> or Donald Steven, Associate Provost, Office of Academic Affairs, System Administration, at: <a href="mailto:stevendo@sysadm.suny.edu">stevendo@sysadm.suny.edu</a></td>
<td>We will try to respond within a day or two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General questions on assessment</td>
<td>GEAR has put together a set of resources on its Web page. We ask that you refer to the Resources on Assessment section at: <a href="http://cortland.edu/or/GEAR/assessmentpage.html">http://cortland.edu/or/GEAR/assessmentpage.html</a> or try to get an answer or a way to find one by using SUNY’s assessment listserv: <a href="mailto:ASSESS-L@ls.sysadm.suny.edu">ASSESS-L@ls.sysadm.suny.edu</a></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific questions re a campus’ early assessment planning</td>
<td>GEAR. First, check the Frequently Asked Questions section on GEAR’s Web page: <a href="http://cortland.edu/or/GEAR/assessmentpage.html">http://cortland.edu/or/GEAR/assessmentpage.html</a>. If you can’t find an answer there, send an e-mail to: <a href="mailto:gear@cortland.edu">gear@cortland.edu</a></td>
<td>We will try to get you a response within a few days, but – if it is a matter requiring the development of a consensus within GEAR – we will likely want to discuss it at our next meeting. This may take up to a month or more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific questions re a campus’ completed plan</td>
<td>GEAR working group liaison assigned to your campus</td>
<td>We will try to get you a response within a few days, but – if it is a matter requiring the development of a consensus within GEAR – we will likely want to discuss it at our next meeting. This may take up to a month or more.</td>
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V. Review Process Guidelines

GEAR refined its Review Process Guidelines, taking into account the request drafted by Campus Governance Leaders and endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to extend the “due date” for campus plans by a month to March 1, 2002. After further discussion, the guidelines were unanimously approved. After the approved changes have been incorporated, these will be shared with the SUNY assessment community via the assessment listserv (ASSESS-L@ls.sysadm.suny.edu).
VI. Dialogue with Campuses

GEAR continued with a dialogue with campus guests, including a discussion of concerns re terminology ("measure," "discipline," "department"), sampling, the specificity and language required in plans, the possibility of GEAR posting examples of effective measures on its Web site, and the need to be sure that assessment is not used to compare campuses. There was dialogue involving the use of outcomes assessment and the benefits to the individual institutions (specifically programmatic improvement as opposed to individual student reporting). The suggestion was made that regional meetings be arranged to allow for ongoing dialogue amongst the campuses. *(Ed. In fact, this is the purpose of holding GEAR meetings across the University.)*

VII. Other Business

Jack Meacham distributed a handout re *CoursEval*, a Web-based set of Curriculum Outcome Assessment Survey Tools developed at the University at Buffalo (now offered by academic management systems). Anyone wishing further information on *CoursEval* should see: [http://www.academicmanagement.com](http://www.academicmanagement.com)

VIII. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held at Farmingdale, likely in late November or early December. GEAR has accepted invitations to hold meetings at a number of SUNY campuses across New York. These are open meetings and invitations will be extended to campuses in the various areas to attend.

This meeting summary will be posted on GEAR’s Web page: ([http://cortland.edu/oir/gear/](http://cortland.edu/oir/gear/)) and sent to campus Chief Academic Officers and subscribers to the assessment listserv (ASSESS-L@ls.sysadm.suny.edu).