

ASFAC Annual Report, 2015-2016
Submitted by Jennifer Ahern-Dodson (jahern@duke.edu)
July 12, 2016

Committee Members:

- Jennifer Ahern-Dodson (Thompson Writing Program)—chair, spring semester
- Julie Reynolds, (Biology)—chair, fall semester
- Dorian Canelas (Chemistry)
- Steven Churchill (Evolutionary Anthropology)
- Barbara Dickinson (Dance)
- Chris Roy (Chemistry)
- Kristen Stephens (Education)
- Ingeborg Walther (German)
- Lee Baker (Dean of Academic Affairs, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences), ex officio
- Keith Whitfield (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs), ex officio
- Molly Goldwasser (Provost Office), ex officio
- Matt Serra (Director, Office of Assessment, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences), ex officio
- Jeff Forbes (A&S Academic Deans), ex officio
- Lee Willard (Senior Associate Dean, Academic Planning, Arts & Sciences), ex officio
- Anita Layton (ECASC Liaison), ex officio

To promote culture change around assessment and help move departments forward with their ongoing assessment efforts, the committee engaged in the following activities in 2015-16:

1. **Assessment Liaisons Networking Meetings.** We hosted a fall and spring semester networking lunch for departmental assessment liaisons with two strategic goals: (a) continue to develop the faculty assessment community; (b) showcase promising assessment practices. Each meeting was attended by over 40 Arts and Sciences faculty.

- **Fall.** Focused on the SACS process and strategies for assessment of the major. After an introduction by Lee Willard, participants divided into thematic discussion groups:

Naming What You Want Students to Learn. How to build consensus within your department. Convener, Matt Serra.

Strategies for Assessing Learning. How to develop criteria and rubrics to assess writing and student learning. Conveners, Molly Goldwasser and Cary Moskovitz.

ePortfolios. How to use ePortfolios to encourage students' critical thinking in the major and demonstrate learning. Conveners, Jennifer Hill and Amy Anderson.

- **Spring.** Roundtable discussion groups framed around questions that emerged during ASFAC department visits throughout the year.

Course evaluations. How can you use course evaluations to help you meet departmental objectives? Convener, Matt Serra.

Portfolios. What are portfolios? How can they be used to assess learning? Conveners, Jennifer Ahern-Dodson, Kathy Amato, Kristen Stevens.

Rubrics. What are rubrics? How can they be used to evaluate student work and align with department objectives? Conveners, Dori Canelas and Barbara Dickenson.

2. Assessment Grants. With the support of the Dean of Arts & Sciences, the Dean of Academic Affairs, and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, the Arts and Sciences Faculty Assessment Committee awarded grants to departments to support department/program assessment. The committee reviewed and recommended funding to the following departments:

- Chemistry. “Assessment of student use of videos for learning in flipped and traditional general and organic chemistry classes.” Project Leader, Dori Canelas. Awarded: \$4800.
- Center for Documentary Studies. “Assessment Grant for Center for Documentary Studies.” Project Leader, Christopher Simms. Awarded: \$1805.
- Thompson Writing Program. “Assessing Writing at Duke through Portfolios: A Pilot.” Project leaders: J. Ahern-Dodson, D. Comer, C. Moskovitz, M. Rego, E. Schonberg, C. Woods. Awarded: \$9650.

Total grant funding awarded for 2016-17: \$16,255

3. Faculty Assessment Scholars Program. In partnership with the Center for Instructional Technology, ASFAC piloted the Assessment Scholars Program to support faculty/departments who received department assessment grants in 2015-16 academic year. All faculty awarded grants were invited to participate in the year-long pilot. Participants received a \$1,000 stipend. Molly Goldwasser (Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs), Randy Riddle (Academic Technology Consultant), and Kim Manturuk (Program Evaluator) led the program. The group met six times between September and March.

Program participants:

- Minna Ng (Inst for Brain Sciences)
- Ken Rogerson (Pub Policy)
- Kathie Amato (Innovation & Entrepreneurship Certificate)
- Hayley Young (Staff, Innovation & Entrepreneurship Certificate)
- Shelia Dillon (Art, Art History & Visual Studies)
- Merrill Shatzman (Art, Art History & Visual Studies)

Participant feedback and recommendations (courtesy program evaluator, Kim Manturuk)

All the participants reported that they were successful in their funded project and felt that the Assessment Scholars program was a contributing factor in that. They noted that the working

sessions forced them to take time to work on their projects, but they felt there were too many working sessions. They suggested bringing guest speakers to the meetings who have done assessment projects across campus. They also suggested a session that focused on demonstrations of tools that can be used for assessment. All the participants valued getting to meet other faculty members from across campus and work collaboratively.

Recommendations

The small group size was the biggest challenge with this program. It is difficult to do active learning activities with 4 people. We feel that this program has value and was impactful, but could be more successful. The changes we propose are:

- Participation in the Assessment Scholars program should be a requirement to receive funding from ASFAC so that faculty members know at the time of application that they will be participating in a learning community
- We should have at least 12 participants because typically 1-2 people miss each meeting and a starting pool of 12 would ensure enough attendees to have a collaborative learning experience with group activities
- Continued involvement by someone from ASFAC and/or Trinity Office of Assessment will be important to connect the Assessment Scholars program with the larger goals of the committee and the funding

4. Department visits. ASFAC members Jennifer Ahern-Dodson, Dorian Canelas, Steven Churchill, Barbara Dickinson, Jeff Forbes, Chris Roy, Kristen Stephens, and Ingeborg Walther reached out to three to four departments each to offer feedback and support for departmental assessment efforts. This consulting work included reviewing the 2015 WEAVE report, troubleshooting challenges, meeting with Matt Serra and/or Molly Goldwasser to discuss recommendations, meeting with department chairs and assessment liaisons to advise on assessment strategies for the 2016 report. ASFAC members consulted with over 22 departments.

Timetable for assessment activity and increasing departmental buy-in, 2016-2017. After some conversation, it was agreed that department visits need to begin in the fall. Departmental buy-in continues to be a key challenge. Other challenges department assessment liaisons named included lack of time, need for regular funding for small assessments and examples of successful assessment projects from other departments, more one on one consultations, making assessment more visible and valued within department, and frequent turnover in the assessment liaison position. We recommend the following to help address these challenges:

- Arlie Petters visits departments with chair and divisional dean to discuss importance of SACS and the need to prioritize assessment efforts.
- Connect assessment to department budgets by adding funds earmarked for assessment (Suggestion, \$2000.)
- Increase the number of tenured faculty on ASFAC.

- Encourage chairs to appoint a senior or experienced faculty member as assessment liaison within the department for greater stability within the position. Or/and make assessment liaison work visible in the departmental recognition and reward system.
- Revise the Assessment page of the Arts and Sciences Council website to include examples of successful departmental assessment plans and research, resources for beginning through advanced assessment efforts, and any documents shared at roundtable discussions and liaison meetings.
- Connect future department assessment grants to Duke's new ePortfolio initiative to align A&S efforts with campus wide programming/education/support.

5. Communications. To help improve access to information ASFAC members needed, we did the following:

- Revised the ASFAC Sakai site and presented information in an easy to search way. (Matt Serra)
- Consolidated multiple Sakai sites into one. (Matt Serra)

To help improve communication between the Office of Assessment, the provost's office, and ASFAC, we recommend the following:

- Choose one place (Sakai, e.g.) for ASFAC to share and access assessment related documents such as WEAVE reports, grant announcements / applications/ reports, and meeting notes.
- Identify one person to serve as the communication liaison who can help ASFAC members find the information they need to consult with faculty and to serve as the primary liaison for ASFAC chair.
- Revise the Assessment page on the Arts and Sciences Council website for documents that are public. (see #5 above).

6. Presentations.

- Lee Willard presented at the spring DUS meetings. She announced the RFP for the assessment grants, the strategic initiative, the dates for the assessment liaison network luncheon in the spring, and an overview of SACS accreditation.
- Jennifer Ahern-Dodson presented "The Pedagogy of Portfolios" at an Assessment Roundtable meeting in April.
- Jennifer Ahern-Dodson, Dori Canelas, Barbara Dickenson, Molly Goldwasser, Matt Serra, and Kristen Stevens led roundtable discussion conversations at assessment liaison networking lunches.

7. Discussed recommendations for student course evaluation form. In February 2016, Arts & Sciences Council asked ASFAC to make recommendations for revising the student course evaluation form. ASFAC also was asked to make a recommendation on whether all students' text comments on course evaluation forms should be made public (rather than faculty opting in).

After significant discussion, a subcommittee was formed to gather additional research. Committee members included Jennifer Ahern-Dodson, Dori Canelas, Jeff Forbes, Matt Serra, and Inge Walther. In March and April, subcommittee members conducted informal faculty surveys in committee members' home departments, met with Keith Whitfield and Kevin Moore to discuss the role of student evaluations in university research, department-level assessment of teaching and learning, and faculty appointments, promotion, and tenure. Based on this research, the subcommittee recommends the following:

- Use an evidence-based approach to assessing the need for changes in the student evaluation form, identifying possible models, and implementing a new or revised form.
- Include research on the following issues faculty already have raised: 1) clarity on the purpose of the form; 2) options for including additional questions / reconciling departments' need for separate forms; 3) opt in/opt out models; 4) usefulness of the form for faculty assessing own teaching; 5) connections to the new curriculum; 6) inconsistent return rate
- Separate the process of revising the form from the issue of making student text comments public. The subcommittee did not feel it had sufficient time (it had only 4 weeks) to gather enough feedback from A&S faculty to make a recommendation on whether to make all students' text comments public. It was clear that students had a strong motivation to make student comments public, but faculty had no clear consensus on the issue.
- Include faculty as active participants in the conversation from the beginning, such as hosting a series of lunches so A&S Council can learn how/if faculty would like to see the form revised and why.
- Include tenure track faculty on any committee and conversations related to the use or revision of student course evaluation form.
- Gather feedback on the student evaluation form from all interested stakeholders, including students, faculty, and administration.
- Gather more research on student course evaluation models, such as Stanford's.
- Ask assessment personnel to lead a study of the effectiveness of the recent Pratt course evaluation changes.
- Pilot a revision of the order of questions in Summer II 2016 (multiple faculty members suggested this).