

To: Core Committee
From: Martha Haun, Sarah Fishman
Re: Core/Gen Ed Assessment
Date: 5 October 2006

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We met with Libby Barlow from Institutional Effectiveness and Peggy Maki, from the Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation, to discuss ways we can assess student learning in our Core and beyond. We want to develop a system that will satisfy both SACS and the Coordinating Board, but most importantly, will be useful to us and to our students without overburdening any group. There are a number of ways this can be done, from some sort of standardized testing (bad), to embedding questions to measure competencies in final exams from capstone courses (better), to the one we thought was most worth exploring, creating a student learning portfolio system that would serve as the basis of assessing student competencies.

We would like the Core Committee to explore the possibility of requesting that UH pilot student learning electronic portfolios, using existing web based systems. WebCT for example, has one called Caliper. The idea is that when students enter as freshmen, they will be instructed that they must complete a student portfolio to graduate and trained in how to do so. We could create a course, say 4198 Student Learning Portfolio, required for graduation. Students would be responsible for entering the elements into their portfolio. We could require them to enter one element every year. We could require specific things, for example, a writing sample from a Core Humanities or WID course. Departments that want to use this to build departmental portfolios required of their majors should be able to do so.

The second part would be figuring out how to assess those portfolios. We need to agree on a common set of things that will form the basis of the assessment. One idea is to survey our faculty, as we did with the Undergraduate Writing Assessment two years ago. Create a web based survey that asks faculty, to list, for example, the three most essential skills/competencies educated college graduates should have when they leave the university (critical thinking, writing, quantitative reasoning, research, communication). From faculty responses we can determine the shared goals and use those to evaluate our students' portfolios.

The final part would be who would evaluate the portfolios. An assessment committee could include faculty, retired faculty, community experts, advanced graduate students.

The goal is to develop a plan we can submit to the full UC for discussion and approval.