

**University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign Senate
Final Information**

HE.01.08 Report on the IBHE Faculty Advisory Committee Meeting, April 27, 2001

President Elmer Kirchoff welcomed the FAC to Southwestern Illinois College, formerly Belleville Area College. Belleville is the oldest and largest of the three campuses that include Granite City and Red Bud. Of the 13,000-student headcount, about 2/3rds are in transfer programs, 1/3rd in career training. The impact of the Belleville campus gaining a light rail stop (from the St. Louis airport through downtown St. Louis and East St. Louis) is likely to be positive as is the new information sciences building with 30 smart classrooms. A particular strength is an integrated program for the elderly linking many classes, cultural and physical activities, meals on wheels, etc. that has heavy utilization.

Assessment: Judy Dallinger of Western Illinois University spoke on assessment and led a spirited discussion of assessment concerns. She stressed that the focus of assessment is student learning with a goal of improvement in educational outcomes. The 4-step process used at Western Illinois calls for articulation of desired learning outcomes, development and implementation of measurement, data analysis and reporting, and, finally, feedback using the results to improve student learning. Without the final step, the process is not assessment although it may be an evaluation. Standardized tests may be part of assessment but are not the major means. Assessment is NOT measurement of office functioning (institutional effectiveness); student affairs; such regular reports as grade analysis, credit hours, graduation rates; periodic program review; nor the usual evaluation and grading of student work within classes by teachers. Many external groups think of assessment in terms of comparative evaluations of one or more of the above list to meet the need to be “accountable.”

In the discussion, some FAC members argued that grades were assessment or that performance on tests for licensing such as CPA exams constituted assessment. Since we are already doing assessment, we are being asked to waste time and energy on still more assessment. Others stressed the focus on giving tests and collecting data to provide reports. Dallinger argued that unless the tests and data are used to improve educational outcomes, the activities are evaluation, not assessment. Why collect data that is not used to improve educational quality? Unless the testing and analysis of outcomes are used as feedback to improve student learning the activities do not fall under the rubric of assessment. If faculty are not committed to and part of the process, it does not function effectively. Assessment may focus on the undergraduate major or graduate program, general education or learning skills—what the IBHE terms baccalaureate skills—such as writing and speaking, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, etc. She noted the accrediting agencies were increasingly stressing the use of assessment to improve educational outcomes rather than just the development of assessment programs.

One outcome of the discussion was to ask the Quality Subcommittee to develop a set of “best practices” in assessment since the term is used variously by groups seeking different outcomes such as meeting standards, providing a basis for comparisons among institutions, and meeting accountability goals.

Business Meeting: IBHE liaison Doug Day noted the report on access and diversity had been forwarded. The FAC Access and Diversity Subcommittee is preparing a report. It will stress the need to educate people on recognizing diversity issues and methods of dealing with them. All students need to understand diversity concerns, not just the targeted groups. While welcoming a stress on technology in dealing with issues of access and diversity, this cannot be the only or main mechanism. More attention needs to be given to adults coming back to higher education who need assistance. A particular concern is those with learning disabilities. Efforts of the state to provide access seem sound but diversity is a complicated issue in need of greater attention.

The focus on requiring all high school students to take the college preparation sequence was discussed. Some are concerned this will increase the high school dropout rate. Countering this is the view that students want to attend college but fail to understand the necessity of preparing for it and are not given adequate advice and information on their readiness for college. In the changing economic climate, college is becoming essential. Another possibility is that the quality of the courses will decline with less interested students taking the courses and possible pressure on teachers to see that more students complete the course. This could be controlled through careful testing, monitoring, and ensuring quality standards are met. Mr. Day urged that the recommendations be widely discussed. He noted some elements could be legislatively mandated.

The Quality Subcommittee is developing two reports: one on time to degree and another on assessment of educational quality indicators including baccalaureate skills. Subcommittee chair Ken Andersen is part of a group (which also includes Ira Langston of the U of I) assembled by the IBHE staff to develop the instrument for the legislatively mandated survey of part-time and full-time nontenure-track faculty. The group had an initial meeting in Springfield and will do much of its work by e-mail.

Nominations for the officers for the 2001-2002 FAC were requested. The election will be held at the May 11 meeting at Northern Illinois. New and retiring members (many of the community college members and some from private institutions will leave the FAC) will meet together at the June 8 meeting to be held at Augustana College.

Ken Andersen
Campus representative to the FAC of the IBHE