

New Mexico Assessment Task Force Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2006
NMSU Albuquerque Center

The meeting began with discussion led by Susan Wood on the February NMHEAR conference presentation. The group came up with a draft title and sequence of activities for the two hour session, and then Susan agreed to draft an abstract to send around for comments and revision suggestions. It was agreed that the presentation would be for all areas, not just area one. Further, it was agreed that the purpose of the session would be to educate people about the existence of the competencies and to help institutions create appropriate plans for assessing them. It was noted that the competencies, though they are already accessible on the HED website, can be difficult to find.

Participants decided that the presentation should begin with some commentary from Dr. De Leon; after that, there would be a review of the task force's work, and then the session would move into panel presentations on implementation to show that assessment of the competencies is "doable". The panel presenters will show different models for assessment. After that, several poster presentations will illustrate assessment models from a variety of schools in all gen. ed competency areas, if possible.

It was agreed that all templates used for assessing competencies should have the same key components, and these components will be included in all the models described at the NMHEAR conference during the task force's presentation.

It was also decided that the presentation would be an opportunity for soliciting suggestions from conference participants.

Several task force members volunteered to be on the panel, including members from San Juan College, New Mexico Junior College, Santa Fe Community College, and NMSU.

Dr. Santana-Melgoza asked task force representatives of all campuses to bring poster presentations to the NMHEAR conference so that all competency areas would be addressed. All members agreed to bring presentations if possible. At the January meeting, further planning will take place.

The task force will work to create an assessment culture on state campuses, and members shared strategies used on their campuses, including a campus assessment day or fair, assessment workshops, or brown bag lunches for discussing assessment issues.

It was suggested that the task force prepare a packet of materials for NMHEAR conference participants to take away, including handouts of the matrix, the competencies, and model assessment rubrics and materials. It was agreed that the essential components of assessment templates would be “Courses”, “Procedures”, “Results”, and “Use of Results.”

Discussion ensued on whether the 35-41 hour limit for general education was “enforcable.” No one knew exactly how the policy would be monitored, but Dr. Santana-Melgoza said she would look into it and get information out to the task force soon.

Next, Dr. Santana-Melgoza informed the task force of Dr. Flores’ expectations. Dr. Flores would like to see a common template that could be used in all areas, and would also like the task force to develop a time line for phasing in use of the template in all areas.

There was some discussion with respect to these expectations. It was suggested that after templates were introduced at the NMHEAR conference in the spring, the task force would have an additional meeting each year to talk about how assessment processes were going. A workshop could be held that would allow area-specific groups to determine ways to assess competencies in their areas using the templates. Further planning will take place at the January meeting. Ideas discussed included having coaches for the workshop, the possibility of a summer workshop, and also the importance of having time for discussing how campus-specific “overarching” general education goals, those that are programmatic rather than discipline-specific, can be assessed as well.

Questions arose as to how assessment relates to transferability; consensus seemed to be that endeavors to assess and improve would enhance articulation.

There was some discussion on how best to respond to Dr. Flores’ expectations, and also HED expectations. The task force was in unanimous agreement that standardizing processes would be detrimental, and that the standardized rising junior test was not the proper tool for assessing general education in New Mexico. Hence, the task force decided that a statement should be written that would make clear the assessment philosophy of the group, a statement that would include information from respected sources that would validate the group’s philosophy that schools should have the freedom to choose methods most appropriate for them.

Nevertheless, it was emphasized that transparency and accountability are of the utmost importance, since the group wants to be proactive in using this opportunity to design quality assessment processes institutionally. It was decided that a position statement should be drafted in January. Each member will bring information that would enhance the philosophy statement.

No guidelines were given for poster presentations. There might be some additional decision-making with respect to this in the spring.