

November 10, 1997

Dr. Jerry Odom
Provost
Osborne
CAMPUS

Dear Dr. Odom,

The Assessment Advisory Committee has labored diligently since the 93/94 academic year to provide the Provost with insights concerning assessment, especially the assessment of general education. We have developed a philosophy on general education which follows: 1) general education issues, such as written and oral communication and computer competency, are the obligation of the institution - not of a single department or College, and 2) the assessment process should provide decision makers with relevant data which will inform and improve decisions about instruction, curriculum and learning. Although the idea of assessment has been around a number of years, it has never been embraced by the USC community; however, we feel that the upcoming self-study will generate renewed interest in the process. In anticipation of such, the committee would like to be prepared.

Several concerns which have been identified by the Assessment Advisory Committee follow:

1) What is the role of the faculty in assessment? How will this role be incorporated into the faculty responsibility and reward system?

The Committee recommends that you consider forwarding the following statement to The Faculty Advisory Committee for possible inclusion in the Faculty Manual:

"Instructional staff members are expected to provide reasonable opportunity for students to assess their teaching (e.g., student evaluations), and also to participate in appropriate institutional assessments of teaching effectiveness and students' learning."

2) We need help in obtaining pilot data on general education outcomes among our Seniors. For the past two years, we have tried a number of strategies to "charm" Seniors into participating in a survey of general education outcomes using the ACT-COMP - an instrument designed to assess general education among Seniors. To date, we have not been able to attract a representative sample of Seniors; thus we have no meaningful data to disseminate to decision making bodies. Will you consider involving the authority of the Provost and the Dean's in this process? We suggest, for example, that you ask each Dean who has authority over

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undergraduate programs to recruit a group of Seniors to take the COMP during the Spring of 1998. (Phil Moore will be glad to define the numbers needed for a representative sample.)

3) When we developed our concept of general education (attached) in 1993, we used two resources: the so-called Core Curriculum which the Faculty Senate approved in 1988 and the then current SACS guidelines. Nine of our eleven goals for general education were developed from the USC CORE and two others were adapted from SACS guidelines: computer competency and oral communications competency. The assessment committee has remained at arms length from these last two competencies since they were the specific or peripheral subject of other appointed committees.

Recently, Dr. Cannon in CSCI contacted John Winberry with a proposal to impact computer competency. As an assessment group, we take no position on curriculum proposals. We view our role as one of providing data to help appropriate bodies make decisions about such proposals. Although we have not been asked to provide data on computer competency to date, we know that this issue will continue to come up. In a similar manner, we feel that the issue of oral communications competency will soon be on point. We would like to play our proper role in these emerging areas.

Does the Provost have any preferences on how the issues of oral communication and computer competencies should be addressed, both in terms of curriculum and of assessment? We are ready to work in concert with any other committees (existing or appointed) to deal with these important issues.

Sincerely,

Don Stowe
Chair, Assessment Advisory

Wednesday, March 18, 1998

Dr. Jerome Odom
Provost
Osborne Building
Campus

Dear Dr. Odom:

The vision of general education which has been developed by Assessment Advisory has not been widely discussed by the decision making groups of the faculty. With the self-study looming, it may be a good time to get some institutional consensus on the idea of general education. This can be done, of course, through our established deliberative processes.

The members of the Assessment Advisory Committee feel that we have provided a plausible model which should inform and elevate any future discussions on the topic of general education. Therefore, in addition to the two recommendations we sent to your office in November of 1997 (attached) we add a third recommendation.

Recommendation 3:

Please consider sharing our work with the appropriate faculty committees with the ultimate goal of arriving at an institutional consensus on the meaning of general education at the University of South Carolina.

We are anxious to fulfill our proper role in this process.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Stowe
Chair, Assessment Advisory