Present: **Bender, Guevara, Nickerson, Reisbig, Rinkevich, Schubert, Sollars, Woodman, Zoubek**

Absent: **Anaya, Joeckel, Ruchala, Wysocki**

Date: **Wednesday, April 24, 2013**

Location: **Faculty Senate Office**

Note: **These are not verbatim minutes. They are a summary of the discussions at the Executive Committee meeting as corrected by those participating.**

_____

1.0 **Call to Order**
Guevara called the meeting to order at 3:00.

2.0 **Professor Giesecke**
2.1 **Assessment Criteria Requirements by the Higher Learning Commission**
Professor Giesecke reported that she recently attended the annual Higher Learning Committee (HLC) meeting and a five day workshop which provided details about what we will have to do for reaccreditation and to hear what the new criteria for accreditation are. She stated that her charge from the campus is to figure out a way to make the reaccreditation process as painless as possible and to begin the process now.

Professor Giesecke pointed out that the HLC's new criteria requirements is a response to the 2008 Higher Education Act which calls for institutions of higher education to provide evidence of assessment on student learning outcomes, a key component that is required for accreditation. She provided a document that provides details of each criterion along with its core components. She pointed out that criterion three deals with teaching and learning and criterion four deals with assessment and evaluation. Universities must have an undergraduate general education program and student assessment on all educational programs. She stated that universities must also recognize diversity and show how students are engaged at the university. She stated that assessment information will need to be available on a public website which some departments are already doing well.

Woodman asked if assessment evidence needs to be provided for each course or for a program. Professor Giesecke stated that the assessment in criteria four is of majors or a degree program. Woodman asked if it is the department that has to generate the outcomes or whether individual faculty members are responsible for generating the outcomes. Professor Giesecke stated that the HLC will look at student learning outcomes at the program level, but this does not mean that course learning outcomes will not be needed.

Professor Giesecke stated that on-going assessment of student learning will be required and criterion number four specifically states that universities have to address student

learning outcomes as stated in our goals and co-curricular activities. She is working with Student Affairs which is working on student learning outcomes for co-curricular activities. She noted that what also has to be shown is how faculty members and departments have used assessment to improve courses and programs. She pointed out that this is a new procedure since 2006 when UNL was last accredited.

Sollars asked what departments and faculty members need to do if they are already meeting the outcomes of the courses. Professor Giesecke reported that the departments would want to generate a report stating that they have looked at the assessments and that the courses are meeting the outcomes. Guevara asked if the HLC will be checking to see if departments are actually doing something with the assessments. Professor Giesecke stated that in many department and college reports there is a section which confirms that courses or programs have been modified or changed to make improvements based on assessments. She stated that if reports have not been written, other documented evidence will need to be provided. Guevara asked if the HLC will take a department's word that they have done something with the assessment of its program. Professor Giesecke noted that department reports which will be turned into PDF's must be accompanied by evidence.

Woodman stated that he is confused about what is being required. He pointed out that if statements from instructors are accepted for the department report isn't this just taking their word for it. Professor Giesecke stated that behind the report there has to be a lot of evidence such as minutes of meetings, copies of files, reports and other documents. She noted that at Bowling Green University each program submitted a report to their assessment committee and indicated how they used assessments to improve their course. She reported that the visiting accreditation team may ask to see course syllabi or wish to speak to faculty members to see if they in fact did anything with the assessments.

Nickerson asked if assessments are for all courses or just the ones that are specific for a major. Professor Giesecke stated that, she thinks, most courses should have assessments done. She noted that all of our planning has to relate to student outcomes and the emphasis of the accreditation will be on assessment and outcomes. She stated that we have to be sure that we have the infrastructure that will help us get the evidence that is required for the accreditation.

Woodman asked if there are any changes in the accreditation process for us since we are now a member of the Big Ten. Professor Giesecke stated that the accrediting agency is assigned according to geography and we fall in the Higher Learning Commission's region as do most of the Big Ten universities.

Guevara asked if the accreditation is every ten years. Professor Giesecke reported that the process now has three components to it over a ten year time period. She stated that in the fourth year we have to update the self-study now called assurance document with new evidence of what we are doing. She noted that in the fifth or sixth years we will have to start a quality initiative project that will show quality and improvement of our programs.

Then in years eight and nine we work on the assurance document and evidence, with the site visit in year 10.

Sollars noted that accrediting committees access responsiveness to prior reviews and asked if we are vulnerable in any way from the 2006 accreditation process that we need to be concerned about. Professor Giesecke stated that in 2006 Interim Dean O'Hanlon, who headed the campus accreditation process, wrote an excellent document which put us in a good position so we are not vulnerable. However, this year our report will be limited to 35,000 words. Before the 2006 accreditation we were criticized on our lack of assessment. She stated that the challenge now is that if the accreditation process is not done correctly the HLC can ask for a campus visit to conduct an investigation or can put the campus on a cycle of having more site visits. She pointed out that we want to show and highlight everything we do well and that we have responded to the issues raised by the federal government. She stated that the 2008 Higher Education Act was a response to the concerns raised over the high price of attending college. She pointed out that the regional accrediting agencies are delegated to conduct the review of universities to see that they are meeting federal requirements. She noted that considerable federal aid is tied to accreditation of universities.

Woodman asked if the people who conduct the review from the HLC are faculty people or professionals. Professor Giesecke stated that there is a staff of professional people at the HLC office in Chicago, but the campus visits are a peer review committee comprised of faculty members from different universities. She noted that this committee is usually six or seven people who will read the self-study report and look at the evidence, visit the campus, and then make a recommendation to the HLC Board. She reported that the Board is made up of administrators and faculty members from accredited schools so it is members of higher education institutions making the judgments.

Guevara noted that his department has done several assessments but he wondered if departments were clearly told that they have to show how they have acted on assessments. He stated that he does not recall seeing any information that stated departments would be required to use assessments to make changes to improve the program. Professor Giesecke stated that in 2006 higher education was still trying to figure out what to do with all of the assessments. She noted that accrediting agencies requiring the use of assessments to make improvements in courses just occurred in the last three to four years. She pointed out that departments do not need to be perfect, but they need a system that shows they are trying to adjust courses as they need to. She reported that departments need to have documents that state that the assessments have been done and courses/programs have been adjusted if needed. She noted that some departments do a very good, detailed job in their reports. She pointed out that the book Assessment Clean and Simple is very helpful.

Woodman noted that there are some courses that have large enrollment. He asked if assessing exams would be enough to satisfy the assessment requirement. Professor Giesecke stated that the problem with exams is that when you look at the percentage of students that have passed or failed you don't know the reasons why they were successful

or unsuccessful. With assessment an instructor is trying to figure out why some things in class are working and why other things are not. She pointed out that grades alone are not sufficient.

Woodman stated that he does not remember being informed that all instructors have to provide documentation about a course and whether it meets the outcomes. He asked if every instructor will have to do this. Professor Giesecke stated that each department has to figure out the best way to provide documentation on assessment within its program. She suggested that the department curriculum committee might get together to look at the plan to see if it is working. She noted that there are a variety of ways that this can be done. She pointed out that the Engineering College is working with a committee that is looking at what they can do across the college that will improve teaching and learning. She stated that minutes of the committee meetings are considered evidence. She stated that departments need to ask if students are learning what they are supposed to and have they accomplished the outcomes of the course. She pointed out that the idea is to make this exercise useful for everyone.

Professor Giesecke stated that a quality initiative is another part of the accreditation process and it is a two year project. She pointed out that we are now in the seventh year of the ten year accreditation cycle so we need to work on a quality initiative project. She stated that efforts that could be selected for the quality initiative project could be the planning of a student success area, our 2017 goals, efforts to improve advising, etc. She reported that we will pick something that we are already working on that works with our university goals.

Professor Giesecke stated that she recently reviewed most of the ACE 10 courses in departments and looked at the proposals for the course to determine what assessment methods instructors are using for these courses. She noted that most departments select two or three courses as their capstone course, although Modern Languages is different and has many capstone courses. She pointed out that the capstone courses will be the kind of courses that we look to for some of our assessment data.

Woodman noted that Biological Sciences is in the process of increasing its capstone courses because of the large number of students that are graduating with a major in biology. He pointed out that many of the capstone courses have only 20 students enrolled. Nickerson noted that many faculty members have been discouraged from putting their capstone course into the ACE program because of the excessive paperwork required for teaching ACE courses.

Professor Giesecke stated that she is happy to help departments in any way that she can to make sure that they are gathering the required evidence. She pointed out that the goal is to be sure that UNL has the evidence it needs so that when we go through accreditation we aren't scrambling to meet the criteria with the required evidence. She stated that departments and colleges need to ask the question of what is the best way for us to make sure students have the best knowledge that they can have about a subject. She noted that

there has to be a process that gets information into a centralized database and if we gather this information as we go along it will make the accreditation process easier.

Nickerson stated that the Executive Committee is trying to reduce the amount of assessment documentation currently required for ACE courses and that needs to be submitted to the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) because many faculty members feel that this is a very burdensome task. He pointed out that the Executive Committee wants to minimize faculty time on these kinds of tasks so the faculty can concentrate on the work they were hired to do, but we don't want to jeopardize our accreditation. He asked if the assessment material for these courses can be kept in the department. Professor Giesecke stated that the challenge with leaving it in the department is that there is typically only a 50% compliance rate of departments collecting the material. She pointed out that if we have only a 50% compliance rate there will likely be concerns raised in the accreditation visit. She stated that the advantage of having the evidence sent to a centralized committee is that the committee can review the information to see if anything is lacking. She noted that the mechanics is easier if all of the evidence is gathered in a central location. Nickerson asked if it is the curriculum committee or some other committee that does this type of work at other universities. Professor Giesecke stated that this will vary because each university has its own structure. Woodman noted that the ACE requirements currently state that evidence from the course needs to be sent to UWAC by the UCC's ACE Subcommittee and this committee should provide the reports for the general education courses.

Reisbig asked what the current status is of the University-wide Assessment Committee is, and what its relationship is with the reports that the UCC ACE Subcommittee submits. Professor Giesecke reported that the Associate Deans from each college are members of UWAC along with Professor Mitchell, Director of Undergraduate General Education, Brooke Glenn, Program Coordinator of Assessment & General Education, and herself. She stated that the Committee looks at the biennial program reports and program assessment reports. She noted that the Committee looks at the ACE assessment reports that have been done and is supposed to look at broader assessment. Reisbig asked if UWAC deals with program level assessments versus the UCC ACE Subcommittee dealing with ACE courses only. Professor Giesecke stated that UWAC is an administrative committee and the UCC ACE Subcommittee comes out of the ACE Governance and Assessment document. Reisbig stated that there is some question about how active UWAC is because according to the website it does not appear to be a functioning committee. Professor Giesecke reported that UWAC meets about four times a year, but noted that the website has not been updated for some time.

Woodman pointed out that the UCC ACE Subcommittee should be reporting to UWAC and asked if this has occurred. Professor Giesecke stated that Professor Mitchell submits reports. Woodman asked if there is a way to get a copy of these reports. Professor Giesecke noted that the report submitted on the ACE courses is entered into the Pearl software program and professors might be able to get access to the reports through Pearl.

Professor Giesecke stated that the idea is to have a central location for gathering the required information and it is felt that the UCC is a good committee to gather the information. Nickerson asked if there is concern whether this central location is administered by a faculty committee or by an administrator. Professor Giesecke stated that she is neutral on this point. She pointed out that we just need to have a central location for the information on a server. For example, she stated that she has asked Institutional Research and Planning Office to save any of the information on the campus master plan because this information will need to be included for the accreditation process, but we need to find place on a server to centrally locate all of the information. Professor Giesecke pointed out that a number of documents will have to be made public because we have to show information on how our students are learning and the results of our assessments. She stated that she is not sure who will be responsible for putting this information on the web.

Professor Giesecke stated that the goal is to get through the accreditation as painlessly as possible and she will continue to do exploration on how other universities are doing it to see if there is a less difficult process.

3.0   Announcements
    3.1   Executive Committee Summer Schedule
    Griffin reported that the Executive Committee will begin its summer schedule of meeting every other week after the May 1 meeting.

    3.2   Possible Meeting with Interim Dean Busch
    Griffin stated that Interim Dean Busch told her that she would be happy to meet with the Executive Committee to discuss proposed changes to Love Library. The Committee agreed to schedule a meeting with Interim Dean Busch.

4.0   Approval of April 17, 2013 Minutes
    Rinkevich moved for approval of the minutes. Several Executive Committee members were concerned with the significant changes that SVCAA Weissinger made to the minutes because they feel that the edits substantially change what was discussed. The Executive Committee discussed the changes and felt that Guevara should contact SVCAA Weissinger to ask for an explanation for the changes. Schubert moved to table the minutes until clarification can be obtained from SVCAA Weissinger. Zoubek seconded the motion to table the approval of the minutes. The motion was approved.

5.0   Unfinished Business
    No unfinished business was discussed.

6.0   New Business
    6.1   Review of Senate Meeting
    Guevara stated that it was disappointing to see that no one provided feedback on the draft KACE policy. Reisbig stated that while she likes the policy she feels that there needs to be some revisions such as providing a definition of terms and that acronyms need to be spelled out. Woodman pointed out that he will be chair of the Information Technologies

and Services Committee and he thinks the Executive Committee as a group should make comments on the proposed policy. He pointed out that the policy should be more generic rather than just specifying the KACE program. The Executive Committee agreed to carefully review the policy and discuss recommendations at the next meeting.

6.2   Possible Meeting with Associate VC Perez
Griffin asked the Executive Committee if it would like to meet with Associate VC Perez to discuss T3 plans for the campus and other initiatives. Woodman noted that changes are being made to room 124 in Henzlik yet no faculty members who use that classroom have been contacted about the changes as yet. He stated that it is not known whether the changes will have significant impacts on class size and what the impacts will be for those teaching in the room. The Executive Committee agreed to discuss this issue with Associate VC Perez.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:51 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Wednesday, May 1 at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held in the Faculty Senate Office. The minutes are respectfully submitted by Karen Griffin, Coordinator and Toni Anaya, Secretary.