

NEASC Steering Committee Meeting, March 13, 2009

Present: President Selma Botman, Interim Provost Mark Lapping, Luisa S. Depez (NEASC Chair), Jack Kartez, Roxie Black, Susan Campbell, John Voyer, Cathi Fallona, David Carey, Beth Higgins, Adam Tuchinsky, David Nutty, Matthew Edney, Tom Knight, Bill Wells, Dick Campbell, Andy Anderson, Bob Caswell, Dennis Gilbert, Jean Whitney, Liam Harrison, Devinder Malhotra, Tom Parchman, Tom Wood, Donna Bird, Joan Boggis, Rosa Redonnet, John Wright (guest)

Luisa opened the meeting acknowledging her delight in leading this effort and thanking all the steering committee members for participating in this effort with her. She indicated that her approach was to be one of transparency and one that would allow for us to tell the story of USM so as to guide its direction for the future. It is important, she emphasized, that we write a report that matters. She also indicated that in considering participants for the Steering Committee as well as recommendations she made to co-chairs for committee members, her intent was to cast the net widely, involving both faculty and staff and to showcase leadership at USM.

Interim Provost Mark Lapping talked about the importance of accreditation, emphasizing its importance in (1) assuring quality within the institution and (1) promoting improvement within the institution. He reiterated the importance of this endeavor as one which allows us to tell our story and to build a living document which builds on the future. Also of significance is its ability to create a community-building experience at USM. President Botman addressed the question of what USM wants to get out of this self-study by recognizing it as a validation – a chance to ensure that we can deliver on the promise to students, faculty, and staff to provide an education grounded in excellence.

Members introduced themselves and it was clear that a substantial degree of accreditation experience was present among the group – members had both participated in and led accreditation studies, within their fields/disciplines and institutions, and as external site visit team members. Each Committee co-chair team then provided a brief synopsis on the focus of the standard for which they are responsible.

The NEASC Site Visit has been confirmed for **April 10-13, 2011**. Liz Morin, Director of Conferences, will be responsible for arrangements, transportation, space, etc. Luisa and Joan will work with her on ensuring the success of this visit.

Time-line for work is as follows:

April/May 2009: first meetings with committees – familiarization with the Standard, assessment of data needs

Summer 2009: data secured for committee work to begin in Fall

Fall 2009: committee works on Standard using D/A/P templates

January/February 2010: draft of Standard narrative

Spring 2010: draft to USM community for review and discussion, back to committees for revisions and refinement

Summer 2010: refinement of Standards

Fall 2010: USM community meetings on refined self-study draft, mock site visit  
November/December 2010: draft to NEASC staff for review and comment  
December/January 2010/2011: revisions from NEASC review  
February 2011: Final copy due to NEASC  
April 10-13, 2011: Site Visit

Packets were then reviewed in some detail.

1. The Mission Statement is the building block for all standards. Layer the standard over the mission statement. While the UMS is not now considering new mission statements from campuses, they have advised us that we can use the one currently adopted by the Faculty Senate. (See Blackboard site)
2. The 2001 Self-Study and the 2006 Five Year Report are to be used as starting points within committee deliberations. An exercise was distributed to all members that is a suggested beginning exercise for when committees/sub-committees first meet. Luisa will, if you want, review both the 2001 and 2006 studies and pull out the salient points from them – what we said needed to be addressed, what we did to address them, etc.
3. The Self-Study uses an analytic framework throughout that focuses on three components: Description, Appraisal, Projection. The description component asks us to describe what we are doing; the appraisal component to determine how we are doing what we do (from the description) – what do we value, what is being done well, what needs improvement; and the projection component asks to consider where we want to be, how we will get there, and by when. This format is available both on the Blackboard site and the Website.
4. Guidelines. Writing standards are on the website. The report can be no longer than 100 narrative pages. There is to be one chapter for each standard – see website for page limits and handout for further description of what each chapter will include.
5. Documents. This is a data-driven endeavor. Evidence must be used in writing. If you come across data/documents that you think would be useful to another committee forward it to Luisa and she will pass it on. All members need to keep a log of all data used – it must be available in both hard copy and virtual copy. Any information, reports, etc that need copying, please get to Luisa and she will scan and post them. All committee co-chairs will have rights to the Blackboard site to post documents for use by their committee members. See UVM Documents List and other handouts for examples of documents used for committee deliberations and in the writing of the report. Data exists in many places in the institution – admissions, registrar, CFO, library, continuing education, student services, alumni affairs, academic departments, Dean's offices to name a few.  
Use the data collection template that was in your packet and emailed to you to determine what your committee's data needs are – Luisa will spend the summer collecting the data you seek so that you will have it available for your committee's initial meeting in September.

Data First Initiative Forms. Each Steering Committee member received a packet of forms required under NEASC's Data First Initiative. Dick Campbell suggested that a small group of people be pulled together to look at these forms more carefully and ensure that

they are all filled out using data which is consistent and valid. Luisa will be asking Dick to identify some people who should confer about this and will assume responsibility for bringing them together and reporting back to the Steering Committee. The Data First Initiative requires the institution to get data reports three years prior to and the year of the site visit.

Templates for work. Luisa distributed to co-chairs, templates for their committee work. There are two: data collection forms which identify what the data needs are for the committee by standard/sub-standard. Luisa suggests that at the committee's first meeting this spring, the committee/sub-committee members use these forms to identify information necessary to conduct their work in the fall. The second template is one which breaks down each standard by sub-standard allowing for each to be looked at in depth using the analytic framework: description, appraisal, projection. Luisa asks committee co-chairs to let her know if you need these for committee/sub-committee meetings. She has also emailed the data collection template to each co-chair.

Resources: On the USM NEASC website is a valuable booklet which members were encouraged to review: **The NEASC Self-Study Guide**. The NEASC website, accessible through the USM NEASC website, also has additional resources for review.

Luisa briefly articulated some keys to a successful study: candor, conciseness, clarity, evidence-based, analytical, useful and participatory. Also, from the consultations she has had with other institutions and through her participation in the Accreditation Workshop she offered some hints, warnings, reminders:

- a. read the standard and write to it – in description, appraisal, projection
- b. what is the story line for the standard?
- c. If you can't support it, don't say it – start with evidence and then write
- d. Be candid, critical, encourage open and honest dialogue
- e. Don't skip the important issues or conceal contentious ones
- f. Be bold and forthright especially when looking at strengths and weaknesses
- g. Clear writing is based on clear thinking
- h. Write an integrated narrative

Steering Committee Functions/Responsibilities. Among theme are:

Guidance: to Luisa, to each other, to the process.

Responsibility for overall review of drafts and final documents

Mechanism for communication to constituents: Committee members should use and schedule updates through their usual forums to keep colleagues current with accreditation status:

Faculty should discuss status in chairs meetings – there are 3 chairs on the Committee as well as a few Associate Deans  
Dean Malhotra should discuss status in Dean's Council  
VP's should discuss status in President's Council  
President/Provost should discuss status with other units in USM  
Parchman should discuss status in Faculty Senate  
Wood should discuss status in Professional Senate  
Caswell can keep the public/media abreast of status

The Steering Committee will hold regular meetings throughout the duration of this process – probably monthly. At these regular meetings, members will be given updates on committee work, kept apprised of challenges/obstacles faced by colleagues/other committees, and offer guidance, suggestions, assistance to others.

Support for Steering Committee work will come from:

Luisa – whatever you need within reason  
Joan Boggis  
Donna Bird – website and Blackboard  
Liz Morin – site visit

Donna Bird provided the committee with an overview of the USM NEASC website and the Blackboard site. All committees have a tab in Blackboard, hence, all participants will have accessibility to all committee postings/documents/meeting minutes/drafts. Donna is working to secure privileges for co-chairs to be able to upload documents into their respective committee site.

#### Issues for Discussion

1. Standards 1 and 2 – composition of committees and process for work. We discussed how committees for Standards 1: Mission and Purpose and 2: Planning and Evaluation might start by emerging from within the Steering Committee. Jack Kartez, co-chair of Standard 2, presented an idea which would position about 5 Steering Committee members to begin a discussion about Planning and Evaluation centered on the first component of the analytical framework – description. The committee would then bring their findings back to the Steering Committee for further discussion and direction – he imagined that perhaps the committee might be augmented with significant others or that the committee or co-chairs might seek input from others as suggested by the Steering Committee. In other words, the Steering Committee would play a key role in the appraisal stage of the process and perhaps beyond. Hence, the Committee would not be set up in the ways in which other committees were. The committee for Standard 1 could operate in the same way. Jack and Luisa will reach out to some Steering Committee members and begin this process for Standard 2 and Luisa will reach out in regard to Standard 1.

2. Beginning committee work. Luisa urged co-chairs to set up meetings – at least one – for April-May to introduce committee members to the standard and the work ahead as well as to the timeline and to determine data/evidence needs for work. Luisa will spend the summer collecting and posting on Blackboard the data/evidence requests from committees so that when fall arrives the committees will be able to “hit the ground running” on their work. Co-chairs should consider how they might do their work – surveys, meetings with constituent groups, etc. Luisa indicated that there are numbers of ideas from other institutions they might want to consider - a site for people to post to, web-based surveys for all faculty and staff asking about strengths and weaknesses by standard - and if they want, she will put together a list. See also list of NEASC self-studies from other institutions.

When committees meet, there should be minutes from the meeting which should also be posted on blackboard (let Luisa know if you need help securing a room or minute-taker). We should also discuss whether we want to post them on the USM NEASC website.

Documents Room: all documents need to be secured in both hard copy and virtual copy. Please make sure that Luisa receives at least a virtual copy of each document you use in your work.

The April 3<sup>rd</sup> opening luncheon will be held in the Sullivan Gym. Approximately 148 faculty and staff have accepted the invitation to come. Sixteen tables will be set up by committee/sub-committee. Pat O'Brien, Associate Director of NEASC, will present on the NEASC process. Liz Morin is making all arrangements for the luncheon.

The NEASC Accreditation workshop will be held in Southbridge, MA. from October 15-16, 2009. We will be taking a team of 5 – 6. Steering Committee members, especially co-chairs should think about their interest in attending. As soon as Luisa gets information on the workshop she will forward it to the Steering Committee.

Minutes by Luisa S. Deprez