

Committee on SOA Minutes, January 26 meeting

Original Agenda is in bold.

I. Discuss Alternates

Members of the committee named their alternates. Alternates are now available from all departments except English and Modern Languages. Alternates are being added to the mailing list so that they can be kept fully informed of the work of the committee.

II. Look at the Music SOA plan more closely.

The committee engaged in extensive discussion of the Music SOA plan in their efforts to understand how SOA is working in a department of the college that has been making yearly reports. Alan observed that one of the challenges of SOA work is using the data to set goals for program improvement. Alan observed several features of the program that are linked with skills acquisition over the course of the major. He pointed out that admission to music degree programs often entails auditions and that students who do not make benchmark goals for skills will switch majors. This poses difficulties for SOA if the department is supposed to set goals of increasing student success in the programs and if retention is supposed to be a mark of success. Committee members concurred that in skills-based majors that feature performance, situations arise in which students need to leave the program because they simply do not have sufficient affinity for the high demands of performance in that major. Conversation ensued about similar situations in other majors in which students are not capable of demonstrating excellence in skills/performance as artists or performers. The committee noted the challenge of setting goals for program success when students who are not going to experience success typically leave the program early on and in which no amount of effort by some students will result in performance excellence. No immediate solutions to this concern seem at hand but the problem needs to be kept in mind as departments work further on their SOA plans.

Members of the committee discussed with Alan separation of his outcomes assessment data collection from curriculum development/revision work conducted by faculty elsewhere in the department. Discussion suggested that outcomes assessment will be advanced when all departments are able to link it to conversations about the curriculum in which faculty already take strong interest. When faculty are talking in curriculum conversations about what is working/ not working in a course and how courses need to be revised or augmented with new courses, faculty need to feel comfortable placing these conversations within the context of an SOA feedback loop. This is not happening so far but it needs to be a goal to which the college SOA committee can contribute over time. .

In other reactions to the Music SOA plan, Martie noted that development over the course of the major could be tracked by having benchmark recitals taped or placed on DVDs and placed in students' electronic portfolios. A sampling of these benchmarks could be viewed by faculty with rubrics designed to mark stages of development for novices in the major, mid-major, and seniors. Faculty could use rubrics to determine the percentage of students who meet or exceed goals at

each stage in the major. In referencing the earlier concern about students leaving the program who do not experience success, the recital recordings could be measured with rubrics that address, for students who stay and complete their electronic portfolios, attention could be given to developing rubrics that track student progress with an eye to seeing if curricular experiences can enhance student success at one or more benchmarks. The goal would not be absolute success but contextualized success --all students would develop to some degree their skills over four years. Martie noted that students at Alverno who use electronic portfolios to track their skill development in oral communication over 4 years take considerable interest in the documented improvement of their skills: by viewing all their oral communication performances, they can see that their skills have significantly developed over four years. Most will never be professional speakers or rely on speaking for their livelihood, but they can account in demonstrable ways for skill development over four years. At Alverno, students handle the logistics of the recordings. They ask classmates to help run the equipment in the classroom, bring equipment to the classroom, etc. Faculty are not responsible for this.

III. Review draft being prepared by Martie of a reporting template of yearly report by heads to dean on SOA work in their department that academic year.

The committee reviewed the draft and approved it for submission to the Deans.

IV. Come to the meeting prepared to highlight any features of the SOA university documents distributed at December meeting that a committee member wishes to discuss with the entire committee...

Delayed due to time constraints.

V. Review dates/locations for future meetings this semester. Also discuss a special meeting with alternates – perhaps focused on looking at assessment models from other schools that appear intriguing etc.

The committee meetings this semester will alternate between Mondays and Wednesdays because the entire committee is not available at a single hour anytime this semester. Alternating times will enable everyone to be present at least some of the time.

Given the difficulty of finding a time at which all members can attend, it was decided that trying to schedule a meeting that alternates could also attend would probably not meet with success. The committee decided that alternates would be welcome to participate as they are able.

The committee decided that for its February meeting, it wanted Martie to present a mini version of the SOA conference she attended at Alverno College. She will distribute materials from that conference for reading ahead of time.