

MINUTES: University Self-Study Steering Committee

DATE: March 7, 2001
1:00 - 3:00 pm
Old Board Room, Administration Building

PRESENT: C. Havice, Co-Chair (presiding), T. Birdwhistell, D. Boyd, C. Currens, A. Doyle, L. Edgerton, D. Harley, D. Kalika, P. Kelley, T. Lester, T. Lillich, J. Piccoro, A. Sparks, C. Vaughn

C. Havice called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

MINUTES

The Minutes of February 21, 2001 were approved as distributed.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – J. Piccoro

SACS Annual Meeting 2001

The next SACS annual meeting will be December 9-12, 2001 in New Orleans. Some members of the Steering Committee should try to attend. It will be particularly important because that is the time we will be making final plans for our visit. If anyone is interested in attending, call J.Piccoro and he will forward the information.

Update on Surveys

J. Piccoro received an e-mail from R. Langley this morning regarding the status of our surveys. We have received 1866 completed exempt staff surveys out of 4236 sent, which is a response rate of 44.1%. Approximately 2144 of the 4934 nonexempt staff surveys sent out have been returned. This is a 43.5% response. Of the 1794 faculty surveys sent out, 641 have been returned for a response rate of 35.7%. The total number of deans/administrators surveys sent was 609 and 129 were returned. The number of returns represents 21.2% of those sent. However, because of problems with our mailing lists, the total of 609 is incorrect. J. Piccoro has asked R. Langley to sort out how many of these individuals are actually deans and chairs.

The TA/PTI survey is not yet completed. It will be formatted, duplicated and mailed prior to the end of spring break. R. Langley had to stop work on this survey last week to work on another project. Overall, the surveys have about run their course for returns. There may be a few more returns, but there will not be enough to effect the current percentage of responses. The Survey Research Center is working on computer records for faculty, staff and students. We need to know which survey results individual committees want. Please let C. Vaughn know.

D. Boyd asked if data analysis is being done on or off campus. J. Picoro responded that data analysis is being done on campus due to a question of how quickly data can be entered.

Forwarding Problems Discovered by Committees

When M. Eftink was here, he indicated that Mississippi had a "fix it" committee which was responsible for dealing with committee recommendations that could be corrected prior to the SACS site visit. President Wethington has said that our recommendations of this nature can best be handled using the existing administrative structure. If your committee finds a problem that needs to be corrected prior to the SACS visit, send J. Picoro a written memorandum describing the problem and the recommendation for its correction. He will send the memorandum to the President who will then assign it to the appropriate person on his staff for correction.

T. Lillich asked if there would be any criteria to judge the reasonableness of a committee's recommendation. This has been discussed. Recommendations need to be sorted into categories of difficulty, those that will be easy to fix and those that will be more difficult/take longer. Those things that should be easy to correct prior to the SACS visit will be handled immediately. Longer-term problems (policies, etc.) may still be in process when the visiting committee arrives. Some recommendations will have to be discussed with the Steering Committee and may need to be sent back to the originating committee.

First Drafts and Supporting Documentation

We have received 11 first drafts from committees. In general the reports are longer than expected. One disturbing thing about first drafts received thus far is the lack of supporting documentation. Reports do not cite specific supporting documentation. Many reports also do not contain a list of documentation. We have received actual supporting documents from only one committee. Reports should be done just like a research paper or an article in a refereed journal. When there is supporting documentation/evidence, it must be cited. It also must be included in a "reference list" of supporting documents at the end of each chapter.

In order for us to be able to organize documents both electronically and as a "hard copy" library, we also need to have documents as soon as possible. All documents are to be given to C. Vaughn in the Self-Study Office. Documents can range from copies of e-mail messages, letters, contracts, to entire special reports or unit accreditation reports.

PROCESS FOR REVIEW OF FIRST DRAFTS – C. Havice

C. Havice circulated a sign-up sheet for members of the Steering Committee to choose which report(s) they would like to read. We have received 11 of 17 first drafts from committees and subcommittees. J. Picoro did follow-up earlier this week with those who have not submitted reports.

C. Havice, T. Birdwhistell, and J. Piecoro will read all drafts. C. Vaughn has been checking reports for supporting documentation citations and lists. C. Currens has been formatting reports. Drafts are being posted to the web and can be accessed by means of a user name and password. Steering Committee members will be able to review any of the reports. Drafts should be read and feedback given to committees as soon as possible. We are approaching the end of the semester and will lose a lot of ten-month faculty then.

C. Havice distributed a timetable that will allow a second draft to be completed with as much input from ten-month faculty as possible. One member of the Steering Committee should read each draft along with C. Havice and T. Birdwhistell. Chairs of the Educational Programs and Educational Support Services committees were asked to read all drafts submitted by their subcommittees. T. Birdwhistell and C. Havice will each meet with committee chairs and vice chairs to give them feedback on their drafts. The Steering Committee members who read the draft are also asked to meet with the group. Chairs of Educational Programs and Educational Support Services are requested to attend as many of their subcommittees' meetings as possible. The meetings should take place before the end of March. Committees will respond to feedback from the meetings with a second draft of their reports. This is due April 20. The Executive Committee and Steering Committee will review second drafts and return them to individual groups by May 7. Final drafts of committee reports are due May 30.

T. Lillich requested that reports posted to the website be dated. C. Currens explained that the individual drafts posted to the website would remain the same until we finish with first drafts of reports. A header and footer on each page of the documents list the document name and date of receipt.

C. Havice distributed and discussed a handout, "Questions for Reviewers of First Drafts". This document is a guide for those reading first drafts. Readers are to ask:

1. Did the draft address the must statements?
2. Was the methodology clear and supported by documents?
3. Was documentation adequate?
4. Were conclusions convincing?

T. Lillich asked if we have anybody at the University who has served as a member of a SACS visiting committee. People identified were Vice President B. Carr, T. Robinson and J. Blanton. One Steering Committee member said our report needs to be written to make it as easy as possible for the visiting team to identify the information they need. A reviewer will be looking for the responses to his/her assigned must statements. If the responses are not obvious, he/she may simply say the University does not comply and write a recommendation. J. Piecoro indicated that was his understanding of the process. At the SACS meeting in December 2000, people who had just completed their site visits said that the reviewers looked for the must statements, a response, and evidence of compliance or recommendation. Members of visiting committees appreciate having their tasks made as simple as possible. They are here for a short period of time and have a lot to accomplish. If we use a report format that lists and responds to the must statements, we also have to keep in mind that three of our committees have no must statements. We

will have to take into account how to incorporate the information from these groups into our total report. D. Kalika said that he thinks how a committee's report is written is dependent on the subject matter. He has looked at both the graduate program and institutional effectiveness. It was much easier to respond using a must statement format with the graduate program. In a broader category like institutional effectiveness it is much harder to simply list and respond to must statements. A good deal of background must be supplied before the must statements can be addressed. Another member of the Steering Committee said that using a must statement format would serve to keep the reviewer oriented to the task, which should benefit us.

C. Currens asked if everyone had received a revised list of the must statements. The Clemson list previously distributed abbreviated some of the must statements. The revised list uses the exact language found in the Criteria. In answering the must statements, it is logical to group related statements together and deal with several in one narrative and response section.

Question was raised whether reviewers have a "checklist" of must statements specific to their individual areas. J. Piccoro has a call in to D. Carter at SACS. When Dr. Carter returns his call, J. Piccoro will ask what tools visiting committee members use.

NEXT MEETING

The next Steering Committee meeting will be March 28 from 1:00-3:00 pm in the Old Board Room of the Administration Building.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.

Connie Vaughn, Recorder