**2009 E&M Feedback**

**Assessment Committee Contact Person: Dean McCurdy**

**Plan also reviewed by: Drew Dunham and Cheryl Blackwell**

General Suggestions (sent to all Departments/Programs)

In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals (the progression from Step 2 and Step 3 in your plan was exceptional!) Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures, and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.

Specific comments about your plan

Steps 1 & 2: Your Mission Statement and learning outcomes are clear, constructed carefully, and student-centered. This is a model for other departments to use. Well done!

Step 3: Your description of the role(s) of various courses in meeting specific learning objectives from Step 2 is impressive! Excellent work here!

Step 4: Our suggestions center on this step. While we are impressed with the variety of assessment efforts being used by your department, these efforts are mostly indirect measures of assessment (they assess perceptions of the program and include self-study measures of whether learning outcomes have been met). We think it would be helpful to also consider additional, direct measures of learning outcomes, which could be done by assessment of specific learning outcomes connected with various courses listed in Step 3. We do not expect that ALL learning outcomes will be assessed immediately (you could choose one outcome from each set of courses or track student progress for one outcome through several sequential courses). Such assessment could be done as part of what you are already doing to evaluate student learning in the various courses you teach.

Related to the point above, we noted that most of your assessment activities are directed at E&M majors. Many other students also complete courses in your department. Are they achieving some of the outcomes listed by taking fewer classes? An assessment of learning outcomes at the scale of courses would help address this issue.

The reviewers were very pleased with your progress on this plan as we look forward to reading your revisions and responses to Steps 5 and 6.

RESPONSE/REVISIONS TO REVIEWERS (Vicki Baker, September 13, 2009)

We realize that a response is due September 15, but we are not completely ready.  We apologize.  Allie Lewis, summer intern, is scheduled to present the findings from our most recent data collection efforts (the indirect measures you note above) at an E&M Department meeting on Thursday, September 17th from 4:30-5:30.  Based on that presentation we, as a department, will select 1 -2 learning outcomes to focus on (most likely in a sequential manner) and will certainly identify/develop direct measures of assessment at that time to address your point above.  We are happy to provide more detail in response to your comments in the October 1st preliminary report as well as the November 2nd final report of the semester.

In regards to your second point (RE: non-majors), you bring up a good point and one that we should consider.  At this time, however, our plan is to focus on majors, followed by minors, as a large majority of students taking E&M courses other than E&M 101 are either majors or minors.  Later, we can focus on non-major learning outcomes.  We also realize we need to consider our connection to Gerstacker and how that will play out in the future with the changes planned for Institutes on campus.