

Report, Placement and Assessment Chair Washington DC 2008

Activities:

- **Committee Chair meeting, followed by AMATYC Board report.** Took notes for the Committee chairs, reviewed before sending by the other Committee chairs to allow for better communication between chairs
- **AMATYC Board reception**
- **Themed PAC Presentation “Mathematics Placement and Assessment and Beyond Crossroads”** 8:30-11:25 Thursday a.m., nine 15 minute presentations with 5 minute separations. Average attendance 42.2: individual sessions 39, 39, 60, 47, 45, 40, 40, 39, 31. Main emphases on classroom assessment and research. See below for comments, reflection, planning for future.
- **Two formal PAC Committee meetings** 1:45-2:35 Thursday p.m., 4:30-5:30 Friday p.m. Average attendance 22: individual meetings 19, 25. Main emphases on communication and sharing. After introductions of officers and liaisons, announcing that we will have another PAC Themed session in 2009 (with a narrowed focus, and only 4-6 presentations), we split into groups to facilitate networking and sharing of problems/solutions. At the end of each session we summarized our discussions. Correlating placement exams, use of multiple measures, use of review classes/retaking placement exams, length of time between placement exam/completion of approved prerequisite class, comparing cut-off scores between institutions (recognizing that cut-off scores may need to be periodically adjusted, varying as to technology on placement exams, course content objectives, as well as individual and campus demographics) were mentioned in placement discussions. Math vocabulary and English fluency (ESL/reading prerequisites for math courses?) were the topic of one Thursday sub-group. Discussions at the assessment tables focused on closing the loop of *Beyond Crossroads*: “ We have assessed; we have the numbers, but what have we learned? Now what do we do?”; ensuring valid assessment of on-line courses (proctored exams for on-line courses were the universal recommendation, with some colleges allowing only 10% of the course grade to come from un-proctored student contributions), and sharing college program assessment reports (these are the public documents, required for accreditation).

By the end of the 2nd Committee meeting, it was decided to:

- Focus the PAC Themed session for 2009 to two issues: course/classroom level assessment, in accordance with the AMATYC Board request as outlined in the AMATYC Strategic Planning. Future Themed sessions will include other issues.
- Request PAC members from colleges that have recently gone through accreditation processes to have the link to their college review, particularly the chapter on assessment put on the PAC website. This should help sister colleges starting the review process and also those reflecting upon their past reviews. They will be posted, with permission, on the PAC website.

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Comments, reflection, planning for the future:

- **Themed session evaluations:** 17 evaluations turned in. Several attendees wished there was more time available for Q and A (lowest overall scores for “audience participation”) but there was the comment “great presentation on assessment. I liked the 15 min format to get lots of information about projects going on in classrooms right now. And I liked that Owens/Pruden have another workshop later which I can attend to learn more.” This offset the complaint “Owens/Pruden had no data. Why not wait at least a year til they had data to present? Compare their talk with Gallo, e.g. who had data!” I was particularly interested in this comment because the board had communicated to me that in the past there were remarks that the themed sessions were too stale, with repeat presenters, and perhaps that is why the average attendance was lower (42.2) than last year (upper 60’s). However, upon reflection, attendees appreciated the data of frequent past speakers (Gallo in particular). I also saw evidence (via session/workshop proposals for this 2008 conference) that connections made in 2008 committee meetings and through 2008 themed session and through this past year PAC Newsletters had resulted in cross-country collaboration, and that ideas that had been presented (like Bill Worpenberg’s 2007 paper on “informed self-placement”) are being used and evaluated by people in colleges many miles away from the initial presenter. I was glad to see presentations by Project ACCESS Fellows from earlier cohorts (I intend to bring Eby/Downs’ Calculus Placement 1st day test back to my college to use in our College Algebra discussions—it was particularly helpful to see that they had correlated individual questions with future success in calculus), and two of our PAC liaisons made presentations for the first time. Although the actual attendance was somewhat low in the Themed Sessions, I noted that by early afternoon Friday the leftover handouts were nearly gone from the table in the Hospitality Room.
- **The Board Strategic Priority’s** on spreading the word on *Beyond Crossroads* was in place in the Themed Session and in committees
- **Evidence of sharing what is done across the country** was shown by the proposals and presentations done at the 2008 conference using things shared at 2007 Themed sessions/ by articles in the PAC newsletters showing use of handouts posted on the PAC/AMATYC website. The next PAC newsletter has several articles on placement exams, balancing this 2008 Themed session which primarily focused on classroom/course research and assessment. A written comment on the Themed 2008 session was “Outstanding presentations, relevance to current issues in teaching college-level mathematics, effective methods presented.”
- **We will continue to post handouts of this and past PAC Themed Sessions, with presenter e-mails** so that follow-up use and questions can be possible. This has been done for several years now and is most helpful.

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- **A motion was made to solicit and post individual college review documents on the PAC/AMATYC website** for help to colleges new to the process and for help in re-thinking our own processes. Requests will be made to the membership.
- **The PAC membership list** will be updated, reflecting the addition of names gathered at the two committee meetings and several informal, unpublished PAC conversations during the conference.
- **Sincere thanks are extended to the subcommittee chairs/co-chairs, to the regional liaisons, to Stefan Baratto (our Board liaison), and to all the individuals who helped the PAC committee be more efficient and useful during this 2008 Washington conference.** If I left anyone out, it was unintentional. This committee only works through participation by all, and I thank you all.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Buller

Chair, AMATYC Placement and Assessment Committee

cbuller@mccneb.edu