

October 25, 2003

Whereas, The University Faculty Senate has long supported University-wide campus-based assessment of General Education; and

Whereas, The SUNY System Administration has worked cooperatively with the University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges to establish the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) committee to oversee the campus-based assessment process; and

Whereas, SUNY campuses have long-established quality General Education programs and implemented the GEAR-approved assessment plans, which Provost Salins called a “huge success” and a “remarkable accomplishment”; and

Whereas, Each SUNY campus is unique, having different missions, admissions standards, student populations, and means of satisfying the SUNY General Education requirements; and

Whereas, Accrediting bodies such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education recognize the diversity of campus programs within a state system and assess the performance of the individual campuses and not the state-wide system; and

Whereas, National experts on assessment (e.g., Dr. Barbara Cambridge, former Director of Assessment for the American Association of Higher Education, and Dr. Peter Ewell, Senior Associate of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems), and a recent report of the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy of the California State University have argued that academic assessment is best done at the campus and not system level; and

Whereas, Dr. Candace Young reported at the 135th Plenary Meeting of the University Faculty Senate on the nature and success of the nationally recognized campus-based assessment program at Truman State University; and

Whereas, The specific requirement in the draft Memorandum of Understanding on Value-Added Assessment (September 26, 2003) for common measures across the campuses of SUNY would undermine fundamental principles of academic excellence by discouraging pedagogical creativity and innovation; and

Whereas, General Education occurs over a student’s entire academic career, and since students take individually diverse pathways through the available educational programs, including coursework at other institutions of higher education, internships, and study abroad programs, attempting to test this diversity in the manner proposed in the draft Memorandum of Understanding on Value-Added Assessment (September 26, 2003) is academically unwise and unsound; and

Whereas, The costs of such a program would be considerable and would have to come from SUNY's zero-sum budget in an economic environment that already restricts the ability of campuses to carry out their academic missions; and

Whereas, The June 17 Resolution on Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes of the Board of Trustees has offered no academically compelling reasons, evidence or problems that warrant its approach to assessment; therefore

Be it resolved that the University Faculty Senate respectfully requests that the Board of Trustees suspend implementation of its June 17 Resolution on Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in order to engage in a substantial dialog among representatives of the Provost's Office, the Board of Trustees, and faculty governance regarding University-wide campus-based assessment;

Be it further resolved that the University Faculty Senate cannot support the proposed Memorandum of Understanding on Value-Added Assessment dated September 26, 2003 but does support an ongoing discussion which will produce a mutually acceptable process of University-wide campus-based assessment;

Be it further resolved that the University Faculty Senate reaffirms its long-standing commitment to University-wide campus-based assessment, and will urge campuses to continue to implement their GEAR-approved General Education assessment plans; and

Be it further resolved that in the best interests of the education of our students, and the State University of New York, the University Faculty Senate invites the Board of Trustees and SUNY System Administration to continue to discuss the assessment of foundational skills in General Education. This may include externally referenced measures of the campus's choice that provides for campus responsibility and System Administration oversight.