APPROVED

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL

Minutes of February 20, 2012

3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Baumgartner, Birberick, Cassidy, Damodaran, Dawson, Falkoff, Gorman, House, Jung, Koren, Matuszewich, Prawitz, Simpson, Ye

Guests: Donna Askins, Research Associate, Office of the Provost; Doris Macdonald, Chair, HLC Steering Committee and Associate Professor, Department of English

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. Prawitz introduced Doris Macdonald who is chair of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Steering Committee and an associate professor in the Department of English.

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of November 21, 2011, and the motion passed unanimously.

The accreditation process for the HLC self-study has begun. A Steering Committee has been created to begin drafting the self-study report, and subcommittees have been populated. The Steering Committee members are chairs of the subcommittees. The subcommittees will be responsible for providing evidence for the criteria. A Mission Update Task Force has also been created to review the Mission Statement. The HLC is in the process of developing new criteria, and the criteria have yet to be finalized. The public comment that the HLC has received on the last version of the criteria indicates that there will be a few minor changes made. We are in the process of sending in our preferred dates for the 2014 site visit. Our liaison at the HLC has asked us to send him an outline of the chapters as well as the memberships of the Steering Committee and subcommittees. This is a 360 review. A website is also being set up for the campus community, so people can know where we are in the process. There will be a general call for individuals to volunteer to serve on the subcommittees. The timeline for HLC self-study process and site visit document is a good overview of the timeline.

The Mission Update Task Force has met four times in January and representatives from the APC, UAP, HLC Steering Committee, Supportive Professional Staff Council, Faculty Senate, and Operating Staff Council serve on the task force. The chair of the HLC Steering Committee serves as the convener of the Mission Update Task Force and is an ex officio member of the task force. Cassidy and Douglass also serve as ex officio members of the task force. The APC and the UAP are the two bodies constitutionally charged with reviewing the Mission Statement.

The Mission Update Task Force was charged by the Board of Trustees to update the Mission Statement, and the board wants to review a draft of the statement at its March meeting. The current statement is a Mission and Scope Statement, and it has been close to 20 years since this statement was updated. The institution has changed during the last 20 years, especially since we now have the Great Journeys Strategic Plan and Vision 2020.

The new statement should reflect what our current practices are and include aspirational language as well. We want our unique qualities to be reflected in the statement. A mission statement should also say and demonstrate what we do. The statement should be revised on a regular basis. We looked at the Vision 2020 process to see where we are going. The majority of our students come from this region, and
they stay in this region after graduation. The statement will come back to the APC for a final vote at some point in the future. The task force looked at mission statements from other institutions in the same Carnegie classification as NIU--research high activity.

The draft Mission Statement was discussed, and the following comments were made:

- The statement “premier student-centered research-focused public university in the Midwest” is narrow, and the vision statement should be broad. It seems like this is a short-term vision statement.
- “Contributing to the advancement of knowledge” phrase is too narrow. We want to do many other things too.
- A vision statement should be around for about 50 years.
- The mission statement should be separate from the vision statement because these are two different things.
- The statement should take a long view of the mission and also talk about the institution.
- NIU is a public institution of higher learning with a long-term mission to level the playing field for students who are not financially prepared to pay high tuition costs. We want to offer the citizens of Illinois the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education at reasonable costs. This would make social mobility possible for our graduates. A separate vision statement is not needed.
- We don’t have to chase after Harvard. Northern is Northern, and we need to emphasize Northern’s features because we have a unique student body and unique faculty.
- Students do not have to be rich to attend this institution. Northern offers the best education at an affordable price.
- Affordability with the best education should be in the statement. Affordability is reflected in bullet number three. “Access to high-quality undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs that prepare a broad spectrum of learners to be competitive in a rapidly changing workforce.” Part of access is affordability. Diversity also implies economic diversity as well. The College of Law has “affordability” in the first sentence of its Mission Statement. Our students don’t think that we are affordable.
- We should say what our unique features are, and then create a vision statement.
- This statement is pretty well written overall.
- Were the transfer students taken into account while drafting this statement? The statement “community of diverse people” includes transfer students and so does “a broad spectrum of learners.”

The task force discussed these things in detail, especially the uniqueness piece. It is difficult because there are many components of NIU and we are a large university. Other research universities may also be about teaching, research, and scholarship, but are they really pursuing student engagement in learning? The words used in this statement were chosen very carefully. One question while reflecting on this statement is, do you see the work you do in this document? The other question is, is there anything missing? Campus people and those working on the self-study will be reading this statement, and we have to provide the evidence that shows that our teaching and learning activities are tied to our mission.

The five criteria for the self-study are: mission; ethical and responsible conduct; teaching and learning—quality, resources, and support; teaching and learning—evaluation and improvement; and resources, planning, and institutional effectiveness. Everyone will have to have the mission in mind when they are working on the criteria.
After the Mission Statement is finalized, it may be appropriate for the colleges to review their Mission Statements.

The APC will meet next week, and you will be receiving two proposals for new degree programs. Please look at the proposals. The APC members will be asked if they endorse the proposals prior to taking them to the Board of Trustees.

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck