ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of March 26, 2012
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Alden, Baumgartner, Birberick, Cassidy, Gordon, Gorman, Jung, Koren, Matuszewich, Mini, Olson (for Dawson), Prawitz

Guests: Brad Bond, Dean, Graduate School and Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies; Carolinda Douglass, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment, Office of Assessment Services; Earl Seaver, Deputy Provost, Office of the Provost

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of February 27, 2012, and the motion passed unanimously.

The next agenda item is the consent agenda for the follow-up reports. Periodically, programs are asked to provide focused reports on a given issue after undergoing program review. The only program that provided the information requested was the Master of Public Health (M.P.H.), and that is why the M.P.H. report is included on the consent agenda. Anyone who wishes to discuss the report can bring it out to the regular agenda.

The APC turned to the remaining follow-up reports.

The M.S. in Chemistry program was asked to report on the assessment findings and actions taken on the findings since the last program review in 2009. The reports do not quite answer the questions that were asked. The program was to report out on the methods included in the assessment plans, what they found, and any actions they have taken on the findings. This information was not in the program review report. The report included a description of the assessment process, but it did not report any findings or actions taken on these findings.

The B.S. in Computer Science program was asked to report on enrollments and recruitment efforts and their assessment findings. The program did report on their enrollments and recruitment efforts in some detail. However, the report on assessment activities did not include any findings.

For all three programs in the Department of Physics, we asked for the same information that chemistry was asked to provide. For the undergraduate program there were five assessment methods reported, but the program only reported on findings from one of these methods. For the M.S. and Ph.D. programs there were also five assessment methods reported, but the programs only reported out on one of the examinations. We received incomplete information.

The B.A. in Theatre Studies and the B.F.A. and M.F.A. in Theatre Arts programs were asked to complete the internal benchmarking section of the reviews and report on findings from assessment initiatives and how data are used in decision making. This year more indicators were provided for the benchmarking section, but the programs didn’t provide baselines or targets. There was information about the assessment methods, but no data. For the B.F.A. program, the portfolio review was used as an assessment tool, but there were no data available for the other indicators. For the B.A. program there were no data. It doesn’t appear that the feedback loop has been closed. The school has been given some start-up money from the University Assessment Panel to develop a database to gather and store these data so they can be tracked.
Typically we ask the APC to receive the reports, and if the questions haven’t been answered satisfactorily or the council wants additional information, we ask programs to submit additional reports. Several of these programs have already been asked to submit additional reports.

It would be helpful when we review the reports to have the information about what the programs were asked to report. In the future, the letters asking for the reports could be included in the APC packet.

After a lengthy discussion, a motion was made and seconded that the programs will be required to provide additional follow-up reports that focus on the missing items. The motion passed unanimously. To help break the cycle of receiving the same type of information in the future, the chairs and deans should attend the APC meeting when the follow-up reports are discussed.

The last follow-up report is on the limited admission status for the B.A./B.S. in Communication Studies. There have been ongoing issues with the admission procedures related to the baccalaureate in communication studies program. The program needed to identify one process for admitting students into the program. Also, during the program review process, programs that have limited admission status must reapply to maintain that status. The program did not forward a request to continue its limited admission status to APASC. This is a report about the action and timetable to discontinue limited admission status for this program. The department is working on making catalog changes.

The next agenda item is an update on Strategic Planning. Phase 1 occurred from 2006-07 through spring 2011. Planning imperatives were developed in 2006-07 and, during spring 2007 through summer 2008, the campus community developed plans. Initial funding decisions were made in the summer of 2008. The Strategic Plan initiatives were implemented in fall 2008 through spring 2011. Funding was provided for 13 initiatives. Data were gathered on the numbers of NIU students, faculty, and staff who were impacted by these initiatives, as well as the number of external stakeholders who were impacted. In fall 2011, we moved on to Phase 2 of the Strategic Plan. In fall 2011, there was a call for proposals for renewals and new initiatives; 52 proposals were submitted and 32 were funded. In spring 2012 these initiatives were implemented. Accountability has changed and outcomes will be reported yearly. Future funding will be contingent on these outcomes. The website is in the process of being updated. In a couple of weeks, all of the information will be available on the website, and it will also include a crosswalk with Vision 2020.

There have been some success stories for the Vision 2020 initiative. One of which is the move to have wireless access in every academic space. Another initiative is the reconfiguration of equipment in the smart classrooms. Another technology initiative is to convert some of the general computer laboratories to cloud computing. This would be more like a gathering place for students (like Starbucks). Generalist computer laboratories may be a thing of the past. In terms of research, Lisa Freeman has been given a sum of money to run projects in order to increase access for faculty funding. Brian Hemphill has been given money for recruitment purposes, but it will not be used for scholarships, which have been very successful in increasing enrollment. This is one-time money. The university exceeded its target by 2 percent of admitting students who have at least a 23 or 24 ACT score. Money has been set aside for more online infrastructure and changing to a business model for tuition. This infrastructure may lead to hybrid courses. We still want students to come to campus because of the enriched campus environment. There is a course redesign project being initiated to redesign large lecture courses and many of these are general education courses. We are working with individuals from the University of North Texas who have been successful at creating an exceptional model for this project. Large lecture courses would be turned into blended courses (face-to-face instruction, other technology support, and an engaged learning practice component). Faculty will have to think outside the box. Faculty will be asked to apply in order to participate in the redesign project. The selected faculty will be provided support to redesign their courses. Philip Turner from the University of North Texas will come to NIU in September to talk to the entire campus and meet with the faculty. The faculty who are involved in this process will become mentors for other faculty. This will occur over the next three years. This redesign has a significant impact on faculty workload. Support will be available to help the
faculty convert their courses, and course buyouts will also be part of the process. How does this impact seat time? For the Math Emporium model there is a certain amount of time spent in laboratories, and this process helps students succeed. It allows for the opportunity to document login time and monitor inaction time on the computer. There are a number of different models that could be used. The technology piece can help you troubleshoot the problems. This is a different pedagogy.

The next item on the agenda is the Baccalaureate Review. General education is part of the Baccalaureate Review. We are currently in the process of searching for a general education coordinator who, we hope, will start on July 1. This person will help with the HLC reaccreditation review. We are currently in the second phase of the Baccalaureate Review. Eight student learning goals have been identified and faculty teams have been constructed to look at these goals in fall 2012. Each team is responsible for one learning goal. Team members have been introduced to the AACU Value Project, and rubrics will be developed. The AACU has developed and tested 15 rubrics to assess learning outcomes, and we can use these rubrics to assess our learning goals. Wendy Garrison, who is an AACU point person, will come to campus to talk to us about this project. We now have drafts of student learning outcomes for each of the eight rubrics, and have developed a plan to test the rubrics. We will be asking for faculty to take samples of students’ work and apply the rubrics to find any problems that need to be addressed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck