ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of April 30, 2012
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Alden, Baumgartner, Birberick, Cassidy, Damodaran, Dawson, Falkoff, Gorman, Koren, Prawitz

Guests: Donna Askins, Research Associate, Office of the Provost; Will Boelcke, Research Associate for Special Projects, Office of Assessment Services; Carolinda Douglass, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment, Office of Assessment Services; Earl Seaver, Deputy Provost, Office of the Provost; Brian Lance, Project Coordinator, Office of Assessment Services

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Announcements: An email was sent out today asking for recommendations for changes to the program review guidelines. Please send your input to Carolyn Cradduck by May 21. The provost informed the APC that he has been called to a special meeting with the president today at 4:00, so he will need to leave the meeting at 3:45. When he leaves, the assistant chair of APC will run the rest of the meeting. Two guests were introduced who work in the Office of Assessment Services: Will Boelcke, research associate for special projects, and Brain Lance, project coordinator.

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of March 26, 2012, and the motion passed unanimously.

The APC turned to the last follow-up report. The B.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 report did not 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. The report provided details regarding general education outcomes, but it did not report any findings or actions taken on these findings for the baccalaureate program. A motion was made and seconded to receive the report.

The Board of Trustees asked the Mission Statement Task Force to consider making a few changes in the vision and mission statement. The statement of vision and mission did not change, but there were a few changes made in the bulleted information on values. Items three and four were switched, and bulleted items 5 and 7 were added in response to the feedback from the board. The concept of service, including Outreach, was expanded in the new statement. Engagement is also highlighted more in the new statement. This statement will be presented to the board at the May 10 meeting. A motion was made and seconded to accept the vision and mission statement. The motion passed unanimously.

An update was presented on the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation process. The Steering Committee and subcommittees are meeting regularly. A website has been created to keep the campus and others updated on what is going on with the reaccreditation process. On the website, there is a statement from the president about the importance of accreditation. There is also a statement from Doris Macdonald, who is chairing the Steering Committee, on her willingness to lead us in this process. The website contains a link to the HLC website that gives an overview of the criteria, FAQs, and what the commission does. NIU’s timeline for this process and information about the Steering Committee and subcommittees are also posted on the website. Recently there was a call in Northern Today for volunteers to serve on the subcommittees. We are moving along with this process, and there are lots of things to do.
All the criteria have changed since the last reaccreditation. The final criteria came out in March, and will become effective January 1, 2013. After this site visit, we will go into a different accreditation process that is called “Open Pathways.” This process will involve touch points every year all along the way. Another self-study will be required in year four of the process (2017), although another site visit will not occur until 2024. The university will need to be engaged in a university wide continuous quality improvement process that will require HLC approval.

The next item on the agenda is the budget priorities. The budget priorities have changed very little in the last five years, and we have not received any money for the priorities we have identified. The three programmatic priorities submitted are teacher preparation—science, technology, engineering, and math areas; web-based off-campus baccalaureate completion programs for community college students; and nursing and clinical laboratory sciences education.

The budget rescission amount was 5.2 percent last week, and this week 6.1 percent is being discussed. There are lots of things in play right now. We are trying our best to strategize in order to put the universities in the best light with the General Assembly, but we are a small player in this process. Over the last 10 years, NIU has spent $92 million on unfunded mandates. If the pension and Medicaid issues are resolved, the state budget is in good shape. The problem is that these two issues are very overwhelming.

An update was provided on performance funding. The legislature charged the Illinois Board of Higher Education to create a model that included meeting key performance targets as the basis for a proportion of FY13 budget allocations. The IBHE created a Performance Funding Steering Committee to create a funding model. Universities were allowed to provide feedback on the matrix, and we gave the Steering Committee some good ideas to address the issues we saw in the model. The model is weighted against the missions of the institutions. There are certain subcategories that institutions get extra credit for (graduation of low income--PELL/MAP eligible--students; adults (age 25 and older), Hispanic students; Black non-Hispanic students; and students in STEM and health care programs). The thinking was, for example, that PELL eligible students graduate at a lower rate, and there should be some premiums for having a higher rate of PELL eligible students graduate. Originally, institutions were supposed to be measured against themselves (not each other) and rewarded on growth from baseline for targeted outcome indicators (e.g., degrees awarded.). This is no longer the case. Now all the institutions are grouped together, and there is another committee refining the matrix. We have told George Reid about the challenges we have with this current matrix. Right now .5 percent is the percentage used for performance funding. If this percentage increases in the future, this could be a major issue.

The provost thanked all the council members for their hard work this academic year, and he turned the meeting over to the assistance chair.

A preview of the Blackboard Content Collection site was made. Information about logging into the system and accessing the program review data and reports was presented. Several council members asked if hard copies of the reports could still be provided to the subcommittees. The intent of using Content Collection was to create a paperless process for program review, but we will check with the provost on this request.

An update on the College Portrait was presented. The College Portrait provides three main types of data: student intuitional data, student experiences data, and student learning outcomes, including value added data. New this year is the collegiate assessment of academic proficiency. For the collegiate learning assessment piece, NIU decided to use the CLA. Many peer intuitions are also using the CLA, and the CLA was the most cost effective instrument. This test was administered to freshmen who were enrolled in UNIV 101 and to seniors in capstone courses. The test measures critical thinking, analytical reasoning, written communication, and problem solving. The institution will report on testing results annually. An interim report on the freshmen cohort scores was distributed with the agenda. Table 1 shows the performance of NIU’s cohort, and Table 2 provides the same information for all students who took the CLA. On page 2, the tasks are
broken down into sub-scores, and table 5 shows how we compare against all schools using the same sub-scores in figure 4. It looks like we are fairly comparable to other scores. Our students are coming in more qualified than students at some other schools, but on the performance tasks our students only score at the average rate. Student motivation is the big variable. For the most part, students wanted to do this for NIU. Students also receive their individual results from the test.

What students learn is not necessarily shown by how they test. The CLA is only one piece of evidence used in the College Portrait. We don’t know how these data will be used, but it was proposed that all institutions adopt the CLA as an indicator for performance funding. Data support that incentives don’t work for motivating students to do well on examinations. We did ask the faculty involved to make the assessment a course requirement. Faculty can’t give students a grade for taking this test, but they can give students extra points for completing the test. There was also a discussion about putting the scores on students’ transcripts. One issue is that only 100 freshmen and 100 seniors take this test. Maybe these data can be used for other things as well.

The APC turned to the 2010-2011 Annual Assessment Update Report. We have been collecting these data for the past seven years. For the past five years there has been 100 percent compliance in reporting. This year was the first year that all programs submitted online data via the Content Collection tool, and we are now able to track these data. Table 2 reports the percent of criteria met for each Annual Assessment Update area, and table 3 reports the percentage of academic programs meeting the criteria. Only 59 percent of the programs meet all the criteria.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck