APPROVED

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of September 26, 2011
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

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

Guests: Donna Askins, Research Associate, Office of the Provost; Brad Bond, Dean, Graduate School; Carolinda Douglass, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment, Office of Assessment Services; Lara Luetkehans, Chair, Department of Educational Technology, Research, and Assessment

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of August 29, 2011, and the motion passed unanimously.

Lara Luetkehans, chair of the Department of Educational Technology, Research, and Assessment was introduced. She provided an overview of the department. This department primarily offers graduate degree programs, and it has a strong service mission. The department has worked hard to make the programs accessible to a wide variety of students.

Aimee Prawitz thanked the members of subcommittee B, and she presented the APC subcommittee report.

There are many strengths in the Departmental Context section of the report. The report was well written, and the subcommittee members really appreciate this. An important resource is the infrastructure for technology-based program delivery, including five labs with state-of-the-art technology and faculty engaged in multiple modes of program delivery including face-to-face, online, and blended. The department has partnerships at the local, regional, and national levels, which have resulted in experiential learning, practicum and internships experiences, and employment opportunities for students. The faculty outcomes from partnerships include publications and presentations, collaborative teaching and scholarly engagement with students, and external funding. The faculty are actively engaged in scholarly activities and the pursuit of external funding with a very impressive track record. Another strength is the recently launched fully online M.S.Ed. in Instructional Technology with Type 10 Certification. The online format allows professionals already employed in the field to have easy access to the program.

One discussion point that the subcommittee noted was that there was a concern whether students being taught at NIU’s regional centers are at a disadvantage vs. those students being taught on campus due to differences in technology at the regional facilities. The department offers courses on a rotational basis at the regional facilities. The road block at NIU-Naperville, Rockford, and Hoffman Estates is with the hardware in the laboratories and the ability to load software. We work around these issues by having students use laptops and the required software is loaded onto the laptops. If we could upgrade the technology at these facilities, we could offer more courses at these locations. The facilities run a lower software version than what we use in the program. For example, we use SPSS version 19, and the facilities use a lower version of SPSS software. The university is not ready to move forward on the newer software versions, which we use in our program. Sometimes the hardware configuration won’t support the new versions of the software, and given the cost of the software, it is prohibitive to request
licenses. ITS has a long-term plan to move toward Cloud computing; have you had any discussions with ITS regarding the timeline on this initiative? The department has had discussions with ITS regarding this issue; and going to Cloud computing offers us a future solution.

Another discussion point is the reliance on tuition-based funding, which limits the development and delivery of innovative programming. Have alternative revenues models been explored? You mention the partnership with Joliet Professional Development Alliance (JPDA). What are your plans to continue this partnership? For the cohorts the program contracts with an agency to offer the programs off campus. For the on-campus program we have open enrollment. We have partnered with the JPDA to bring the program to them; JPDA serves as a recruiting agency. We are limited in offering our programs off campus by the tuition model, but we worked something out with JPDA for a one time deal. The tuition model limits are ability to put our programs out there. There is a Distributive Learning Taskforce that is working on developing an online funding model.

We have been very successful with offering the M.S.Ed. in Instructional Technology off campus. The last cohort started with 25 students, and 22 of the students completed the program. We are planning on doing another cohort. The orientation will be in DeKalb, and then courses will be offered at Naperville and Rockford. Every term we have a face-to-face meeting. This program is offered in an accelerated format for school professionals. We run 10 week courses continuously, and we deliver three courses every semester. We have removed duplication in the courses, and we capitalize on the school professionals experiences. This program can be completed in 14 months.

When you make changes in the full report, please make changes in the summary to reflect these changes as well.

The recommendation for the future is to find external sources of funding. Faculty should continue to position themselves in other contexts such as STEM and special education and to seek collaboration with colleagues in other disciplines. Soliciting additional corporate funding might be worth pursuing. Also, some faculty might be interest in the NIU Summer Research and Artistry Awards.

The section on the M.S.Ed. in Instructional Technology was well written. A portfolio is required of all students, which provides a means to demonstrate mastery of key concepts and skills and serves as an important assessment tool. Graduates are satisfied with the degree and are getting jobs at competitive salaries. The pass rate on certification examinations is improving and currently is near 100 percent. Internship and practicum experiences provide students with real-world experiences. Internships represent excellent mechanisms for assessment of program objectives from the perspective of employers. The subcommittee recognizes that it is difficult to get feedback from employers. Utilization of former students to market the program while simultaneously providing continuing education strengthens the relationship between the faculty/program and the alumni base, yielding a win-win situation. Word of mouth is really working. Overall, it’s a strong program with bright employment prospects for graduates. We want NIU to become a hub of technology coordinators, and offering this program using the cohort model helps us with this initiative.

The department noted that enrollment is declining, and this is a discussion point. What are the target enrollments and what are the challenges? The real challenge is the library media area because schools are cutting their budgets. The library system in Illinois collapsed with the cut in state funding; we are trying to establish a partnership with the new system. We are in the beginning of discussions. We have partnerships with schools and corporations. Right now the enrollments from the corporate side is building.
Another discussion point is how does service to students-at-large (SAL) affect faculty workload? Some SALs start in the program wanting to receive their library endorsement, and once they start the program they seek the master’s degree. We are service providers, and SALs are exploring what majors they want to pursue. We are also marketing to these groups. We manage faculty workload well.

Some assessment methods are based on grades, and it is generally recognized that grades do not represent appropriate assessment measures of program objectives. We have a portfolio that a committee reviews which ties into program objectives. The artifacts in the portfolio may reflect courses assignments, but then we also use a rubric to assess the artifacts. The program can use internship supervisor evaluations as employer data for this report.

The subcommittee was confused about the portfolio and the capstone activity. The portfolio is part of the capstone. The capstone consists of a self-reflection; the portfolio, which is the expert assessment piece; and the public piece, which is shared with faculty and the committee. The practicum experience is also integrated into this activity. Students do not receive credit for this activity, but they are required to attend a showcase, which is about three hours in length, and share samples of their work. The showcase is also a social event, which occurs every semester.

Recruitment is also an area for discussion. The subcommittee was wondering what you are doing to recruit more minority students into the program. The program is being offered online, and we hoped this would improve the accessibility for minority students. This didn’t happen. The Chicago Public School system is very competitive. We have just developed an agreement with the city colleges to deliver the doctoral program there. We continue to look for partnerships to reach other audiences. One of the things that you mention in the report is that you send faculty and advisors to local and national conferences as exhibitors to promote the program. We go to primarily local and state conferences. Most of the individuals who attend these conferences are in-service teachers. Please clarify this in the report. You note a projected 10 percent growth in employment opportunities for graduates. Is this shared through your recruitment activities? Yes it is. Do you recruit non-majors who take your classes? Yes, and we advise all of these students too. How do you think your efforts are working? We are continuing to try new things. We developed a webinar, but only a few people attended. We need some more professional development on how to recruit. Please add this to your report and talk about where you plan to go next.

Another area for improvement is that we didn’t see an analysis of changes in enrollment and degree completion over the five-year period. Can the large number of degrees awarded in 2010 help explain the drop in enrollment? Does the proportion of part-time students play a part in time-to-completion? Add your analysis to the report. Also, in the Internal Benchmarking section add a brief discussion about why you chose these specific measures and why they are important for the program.

Can you talk about the number of students pursuing new careers vs. those remaining in their current jobs? This is split about in half. Sometimes teachers come into the program and then realize there are other opportunities in the corporate environment and they sometimes switch careers.

The information in sections B and C should match; discussions of areas for improvement should be addressed in the future plans section. This also needs to be changed in the reviews of the other programs.

There are a couple of recommendations for the future. Identify or develop a plan (if you don’t have one) to address declining enrollment that will grow the program both on and off campus. There appears to be ample demand for an increased supply of graduates. Provide a clear link between assessment
methods and the students learning outcomes being assessed by these methods. This was previously in
the document and we asked them to take it out; the outcomes by methods table included in the review
addresses this issue.

Most of the people who complete this degree go into the workforce. This is true at the master’s level.
When people come to us for a doctoral degree, they are seeking to change careers.

The Ed.D. in Instructional Technology section of the review has many strengths. It was very well
written. Overall, enrollment is good, and women and minorities are well represented in both enrollment
and degrees awarded. Students are engaged in the scholarly work of faculty by participating in grant
activities and field projects. They are active participants at professional conferences at the international,
national, and regional levels. Some students have published their scholarly work in peer-reviewed
journals and in books. Many have earned awards and scholarships. There is a high employment rate
with attractive starting salaries for graduates of the program. The alumni support across a variety of
activities in strong.

Some of the discussion points we have already talked about. Enrollments have declined somewhat over
the review period but appear to have leveled out over the past three years. Can you explain why
enrollments declined? Are efforts being made to grow the enrollment? Overall, there has not been a
decline in enrollment. The cohort in Chicago finished the degree, and now we are ready for another
cohort to begin the degree. After this cohort starts, enrollment will level out again. The review talks
about adding a Ph.D. program instead of converting the Ed.D. to a Ph.D. The Ph.D. would have a
different focus (learning systems design and educational research) than the Ed.D. The Ed.D. would still
be attractive to school professionals seeking the credential, and we want to maintain this degree for this
purpose. We think there will still be a market for the Ed.D., and the Ed.D. might offer us more
flexibility in our delivery options. We would like the Ph.D. to be a part-time program because this is our
student group. We think we can maintain both degree programs. We will bring in external reviewers to
look at this from schools that have both an Ed.D. and Ph.D. Some of these schools offer the Ed.D.
online, and the Ph.D. is an on-campus program. What kind of resource will you need? We don’t think
additional resources are necessary at this time. Since this is a part-time program we are not looking to
support students. We are looking at offering seminars run by faculty members. These seminars would
run through the research stage of the program, and we would be creating research clusters without
requiring additional resources. There will be more courses offered. We will have to see what our
migration of students is from the Ed.D. to the Ph.D. If we see a full migration, we may reserve the
Ed.D. for those special delivery models. The faculty is onboard and feels that we have the capacity to do
this. There needs to be a broader discussion with the individuals from the Graduate School and the
Office of the Provost regarding the proposed Ph.D. We encourage you to talk carefully to the students
about how long it will take to receive approval for a Ph.D. Probably 90 percent of your students will be
gone before this happens, if it does. The approval of a proposal for a new Ph.D. would need to go
through the curricular process, the Office of the Provost, the Board of Trustees, and then the Illinois
Board of Higher Education. Our competitors offer Ph.D. programs. The Ph.D. will align better to what
we are doing, but we think there is a segment of the market that would like the Ed.D. To be competitive
you have to offer both? Yes. You need to coordinate with the Graduate School and the Office of the
Provost regarding the external review. How does delaying the point at which students can enroll in
dissertation credits improve the dissertation completion time? This doesn’t seem to change the time
from start to finish. Previously, students completed all the course work, the candidacy examination, and
then started on the dissertation. Now the candidacy examination is connected to two courses, and the
dissertation proposal process is connected with two other courses. This allows students to start on
several of their chapters before they finish their course work. These are part-time students, so they still
take awhile to finish. Most students complete the degree program in six years.
The recommendations for the future are that the program continues efforts to explore the feasibility of adding a Ph.D. program and explore further collaboration with faculty in other departments and/or colleges to help support program growth. Faculty in the Department of Operations Management and Information Systems might assist in overseeing graduate dissertation research.

In the summary for this degree program it states that between 50 and 70 percent of your students successfully complete the program. Is this a good completion rate? It depends on if students are in a cohort or not. On-campus students have a lower completion rate; cohorts are more successful in completion. Our on-campus students are closer to the 50 percent rate. Our students do tend to be older; they come back after they have work experience. Do you have any sense as to why they fail to complete the program? Because of their lives and families. The national completion rate for doctoral programs is 50 to 55 percent.

For the on-campus program we put students into groups, but this is not quite as lockstep as a cohort would be. We also admit students all year long for the on-campus program. We have also tried some community building activities for the on-campus students. We do a showcase with our master's students.

How do you help the students to finish in a timely manner? The research seminars help provide the support for students to complete the program.

Do your students use the University Writing Center or the Dissertation Boot Camp? Our students use the writing center. The Dissertation Boot Camp requires students to set goals; it is a structured way to get through the dissertation writing process.

The M.S. in Educational Research and Evaluation program has many strengths. This section of the review was well written. Minority and gender balance has been good over the review period. There are three certificates of graduate study available. The certificate in advanced quantitative methods has consistently shown success in enrollment and completion; within the five-year period, 42 students have completed the certificate. There is a high level of faculty/student interaction and mentoring of students by faculty. The level of service to non-majors is commendable. Great emphasis is placed on presentation of research at professional conferences with 25 percent of current students and 75 percent of alumni having presented at professional conferences. There appears to be plentiful job opportunities with good wages. The program also fills a valuable role in preparing professionals to progress in their careers, especially in acquiring quantitative skills. With no other similar programs existing in Illinois, NIU is obviously at a competitive advantage in this area. There is one other program; UIC has a program that is similar to our program, but it is not in the same CIP code.

There are a few discussion points. There is a limited number of senior faculty available, but the program is shifting some of the advising to the faculty. The faculty can manage the advising right now because of the number of students. Having a non-faculty member advise the students does not allow for the development of a relationship with the faculty member who will advise the thesis. The program has a project option that looks a lot like the thesis. The program wants to differentiate between the thesis option and the project option. We are developing a portfolio option for individuals who want to do assessment in school settings. Counting completed projects is not an assessment measure; it would be better used as an internal benchmark. Enrollment is low, but it is steady and it is comparable to similar programs across the nation. You might want to recruit students to pursue this as a second major. Maybe a certificate would be helpful too.
Recommendations for the future include developing a plan to reduce degree completion time, continuing efforts to grow the program and market it, and exploring future collaboration with faculty in other departments and/or colleges.

There was some discussion at the summer meeting about the appropriateness degree level; does a master’s degree serve the needs of students? At some institutions the terminal degree is at the master’s and at other institutions the terminal degree is at the doctoral level. The skill set is what is most important in the higher education market. Right now there is no credential for assessment in schools. The people engaged in assessment aren’t fully trained in assessment, and don’t have the skill set required for school assessment. We think these people need a formal skill set. Districts are hiring in these areas, but they don’t know what credential this should be. We couldn’t do a cohort model for this program. We have also looked at our course titles and the title of the degree. There have been some discussions about adding an OMIS piece (database and extracting data) to degree requirements. We have a large faculty, but it is because of our huge service mission; this program doesn’t cost us anything. Unfortunately this is not an acceptable argument to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and it’s a hard concept for other people understand. Beginning this year in November we’re required to submit an annual report on program deletions to the IBHE as a result of legislation. The focus is to cut small programs and reallocate the resources to other programs. Because the enrollments in this program are low it may need to be cut, particularly if you’re considering a proposal for a new Ph.D. degree. The certificates have been successful and seem to meet students’ needs; perhaps that’s the more appropriate offering in this area.

The next item on the agenda is the proposal for The Center for P-20 Engagement. The center has status as a temporary center, and now we want to bring forward a proposal to make it a permanent center. Temporary approval lasts for five years; this allows the center to think about its primary mission and what really is feasible to accomplish. We need to endorse this proposal before it can go forward to the Board of Trustees and then the IBHE. We have been involved in P-20 work for a long time, but it was informal in the beginning. The Center for P-20 Engagement did receive some Strategic Planning money. The budget for the center comes from two sources: internal allocations and fees, sales, and other income. The activities and relationships with external partners outline what the center has done. Some of the things the centers has been involved with are: professional development schools, working with DeKalb high school in curriculum development and the configuration of learning spaces, literacy projects, working with young children, the Huntley High School Medical Careers Academy, and the Center for Economic Education. Have we quantified the results? Has enrollment increased? There are no data about how these initiatives may have increased NIU enrollment. The document does talk about participating in the broadband network, and the center has received about $2 million in awards for the Interactive Report Card, the 20th Century Learning Centers, etc. Is the center expected to bring in external funding? Yes, and they bring in other sources of income too.

A motion was made to endorse the request for permanent center status for The Center for P-20 Engagement. The motion passed unanimously.

Who looks at how the reallocation money is used? We are asking a group to look at this to see what needs to be reallocated.

There are two interim reports on the agenda: the Ph.D. in Art Education and the Northern Illinois Center for Accelerator and Detector Development (NICADD). The IBHE requires that institutions submit an interim report three years after a new program or a permanent center is approved. A summary of these two reports will be submitted to the IBHE.
How did the Ph.D. in Art Education degree program graduate students in the first couple of years? There is a specialization in art education within the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, and a couple of students moved over from that program to the Ph.D. in Art Education. The students in the Ed.D. program were taking classes taught by the art education faculty. We will clarify the difference between the “X” and “x” and the “C” and “c” on page 4 of the report before it is submitted to the IBHE.

A motion was made and seconded to endorse the Ph.D. in Art Education interim report. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded to endorse the NICADD interim report, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck

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