ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of February 25, 2013
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Alden, Baumgartner, Birberick, Bond, Chakraborty, Dawson, Douglass, Falkoff, Gorman, House, Matuszewich, Prawitz

Guests: Tawanda Gipson, Research Associate, Office of Assessment Services; Sherrill Morris, Acting Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment, Office of Assessment Services

There was not a quorum, so the APC members started to discuss items that didn’t require action.

Two announcements were made. First, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) reaccreditation process is moving forward. Right now drafts of chapters are being reviewed. A public relations committee has been developed, and it is up and running. The public relations committee will focus on helping people to better understand NIU’s mission.

Second, a program review process task force has been put together to streamline the program review process to make it more faculty friendly and effective. The task force has had its first meeting. We want the task force to develop high level recommendations. We are currently looking at data we use and other data that could be used in the program review process. The recommendations will be brought to the APC next fall.

Tawanda Gipson, a research associate in the Office of Assessment Services was introduced.

The APC turned to the 2011-2012 Annual Assessment Update Report. For the past six years there has been 100 percent compliance in reporting. The report is a summary of the Annual Assessment Updates from every academic program. The Office of Assessment Services looks at all of the updates and provides feedback to the programs. Table 2 reports the percent of criteria met for each Annual Assessment Update area, and table 3 reports the percentage of academic programs meeting all of the criteria. Only 54 percent of the programs meet all the criteria. It looks like there has been a small decline over the last couple of years. Do you know why? There are two reasons for this: One is that, as we move forward, the bar is being raised, and two is we are looking over time. Also, the rubric is being clarified.

It was announced that the Assessment Expo will be held this coming Friday (March 1). Ten different programs will be presenting on the use of their assessment results.

The next agenda item is the 2011-2012 Annual Assessment Update Graduate Programs Report. In 2004, the HLC wanted to see more assessment of the graduate programs. This report is also distributed to the Graduate Council. The College of Law is not in these data because it only has one program, and we didn’t want to call out only one program.

An update on the Voluntary System of Accountability (College Portrait) was presented. NIU began its participation in the College Portrait in 2009. This initiative is focused on the undergraduate student experience. There are required information and required formats. All of the students participating in the
Academic Convocation are asked what their plans are after graduation. The CLA test was administered to freshmen and seniors. The test measures critical thinking, analytical reasoning, written communication, and problem solving. CLA testing measures the value added by an NIU degree. The institution reports on testing results annually. There are nine things that NIU chose to highlight on the College Portrait (why NIU, academic life, athletics, getting started, hands-on learning, parents, student life, support services, and money matters). NIU can be compared to any other institution that participates in the College Portrait.

The quorum requirement was met. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of December 3, 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 programs that provided the information requested were the B.S. in Mathematical Sciences and the Ed.D. in Adult and Higher Education, and that is why these reports are included on the consent agenda. Anyone who wishes to discuss the reports can bring them out to the regular agenda. One of the reports has names in it. Should they just report numbers without the names? We can ask that the names be removed. It was moved and seconded to approve the consent agenda, and the motion passed unanimously.

The M.S. in Sport Management program was asked to provide an assessment plan and report on its implementation. The program has done a lot of work on the plan, but it is not implemented. We want to see data from them. It was moved and seconded to require another follow-up report providing data from the implementation of the assessment plan in one year. The program is probably participating in the Annual Assessment Updates; sometimes there is disconnect between the assessment information and the follow-up reports. However, this looks like a new plan, so they might not have data from this plan. Recently, this program has gone through reaccreditation. We could send a letter and request that they contact Sherrill Morris to help them report on the implementation of their assessment plan. A motion was made and seconded to amend the motion to ask that the follow-up report also include the use of the assessment results. What are the consequences if they don’t implement the plan? The chair and the dean would have to come to an APC meeting to present the report. A vote was taken on the amendment to the motion, and it passed unanimously. The original motion also passed unanimously.

A presentation was made on the baccalaureate experience. The baccalaureate goals are important because they provide the foundational context for student learning by creating learning priorities, focusing our educational commitment, and integrating curriculum. The baccalaureate process has taken awhile. It was started in 2008. In 2013, we are testing the student learning outcomes rubrics for each of the eight goals. Part of the mission of the baccalaureate process was to have an integrated curriculum and to have students become life-long learners. The baccalaureate goals are critical thinking, creativity, and communication. The eight outcomes are global interconnections; intercultural competencies; interconnection of human life/natural world; critical, creative, and independent thought; communicate clearly and effectively; collaborate with others; quantitative and qualitative reasoning; and synthesize knowledge and skills. Teams were formed to work on the rubrics for the student learning outcomes. Sample rubrics were provided to the teams if they were available. The value rubrics from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) were also provided to the teams, and Wendy Garrison from AAC&U provided a presentation. These rubrics need to be fine-tuned and tested in spring 2013. We need faculty volunteers from across the university to test these rubrics. Faculty would select a single relevant assignment, read the work of three to five randomly selected students, test the rubric against the student work, and then answer the evaluation form. Testing the rubrics should only take 15-20 minutes because a faculty member does not have to look at the entire class. Once we have feedback, we will make adjustments to the rubrics. Data collected from this process will be shared with chairs and college councils. By fall 2013, we would like to have a set of rubrics where the language has
been tested and we feel comfortable with the rubrics. This information will also be on the Baccalaureate Review website. Departments will be able to use this information in the program review process and also to help them figure out what their mission is. There is no expectation that a department will meet all eight of these goals. We still need to have a university conversation about how we want to assess the baccalaureate goals. The most common approach is to pick one or two of the goals on a yearly basis and then provide data across the university. Who is the oversight group? Frankly, we haven’t figured out that piece yet. The UCC would be one of the possibilities. Why can’t we use the accrediting body outcomes? Colleges that have external accreditation can use this information if it fits within the eight learning goals. All undergraduate programs are responsible for general education. We need to be aware that there might be problems, and address them if we can.

The APC turned to general education. General education fits into the Baccalaureate Review. General education is important because it helps develop patterns of life-long learning, emphasizes basic reasoning skill sets, and encourages scholastic breadth. The last time general education was looked at was in 1983. Revising general education came out of the need to review the baccalaureate experience. A task force was formed in 2013, which has a diverse membership. A charge was given to the task force to:

- Prepare and develop a strategy for the creation and implementation of a “new” NIU general education program that is integrally tied to our newly revised baccalaureate goals and mission statement as well as our Vision 2020 goals;
- Gather, review, and analyze information about general education at NIU; and
- Restructure the program within the context of the current state of national trends in general education.

General education is very important. If you don’t have an engaging program, then first year students aren’t going to stay at NIU. StraighterLine and Wiley have joined to offer an online program for the first two years of college (the general education piece). If we want our general education program to survive, we have to come up with the value added piece for general education. UIS in partnership with Orange County Community College offers general education programs all online at a low cost. We need to demonstrate that general education at NIU is worth the effort that students put into it. The program should be intentional and deliberate and enrich the students’ experience. Students don’t think that general education is important. We are going to look at the curriculum and do some data mining. In 2013, we would like to come up with a mission statement, do focus groups, build a couple of general education models, and get feedback on these models.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck