APPROVED

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL  
Minutes of April 22, 2013  
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Baumgartner, Brantley, Chakraborty, Damodaran, Dawson, Douglass, Falkoff, Gordon, Gorman, Hertz, Prawitz, Richard

Guests: Gary Baker, Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry; David Ballantine, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry; Kimberly Buster Williams, Acting Associate Vice President, Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management; Judy Chitwood, Professor, School of Theatre and Dance; Stephanie DeCicco, Assistant to the Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Rich Holly, Dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts; Laurence Lurio, Chair, Department of Physics; Christopher McCord, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Sherrill Morris, Acting Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment, Office of Assessment Services; and Kelly Wesener Michael, Acting Vice President, Division of Students Affairs and Enrollment Management

Prawitz called the meeting to order at 3:05; she is filling in for the provost since he is unable to attend the meeting today.

It was announced that in the packet today you received Revitalizing the Program Portfolio book. The information in this book was used to help the Program Review Process Task Force come up with recommendations on revising the program review process. The Program Review Process Task Force has finished meeting, and now we are working with the provost and we will be working with the new president on the recommendations. Recommendations include aligning the accrediting body reports with program review reports and developing a web-based portfolio. The recommendations include short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals. A presentation on the recommendations will be made to the APC in fall 2013.

The new student member Susie Richard was introduced.

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of February 25, 2013, and the motion passed unanimously.

Gary Baker, director of graduate studies, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry; David Ballantine, director of undergraduate studies, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry; Laurence Lurio, chair, Department of Physics; Christopher McCord, dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Stephanie DeCicco, assistant to the dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Judy Chitwood, professor, School of Theatre and Dance; and Rich Holly, dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts were introduced.

The next agenda item is the consent agenda for a follow-up report. Periodically, programs are asked to provide focused reports on a given issue after undergoing program review. The program that provided all of the requested information was the B.S. in Health Sciences, and that is why this report is included on the consent agenda. Anyone who wishes to discuss the report can bring it out to the regular agenda. It was moved and seconded to approve the consent agenda, and the motion passed unanimously.

The B.S. and M.S. in Chemistry follow-up report is on the regular agenda. The programs were asked to report on assessment findings. There are still some places where data are missing, and we know you are aware of that. Another follow-up report should be submitted to the APC after the capstone rubric is
developed and you have some data from using the rubric. Are you collecting the alumni survey data and placement information separately? These data are not collected separately; we have anecdotal information to supplement the information from the alumni survey. The data collected from the exit interviews were not included in the report. The chair is performing the exit interviews, and we should have some data to include in our UAP report, which will be submitted in May 2013. We are addressing the gaps in the data right now. We will have the data by 2013-2014. Do you have outcome competencies or national standards as well? The national standards would be part of the American Chemical Society (ACS) approval process. We were reviewed last summer, and we met the ACS standards. We did not ask for the standards as part of this report. You state that the departmental curriculum committee requested that the faculty develop appropriate learning objectives for upper division courses and that these objectives be included in the syllabi or made available upon request. Students can request this information. Many of my colleagues don’t recognize the difference between a topic and what the students are supposed to have as an outcome. This has been an educational experience over the years. This information will be included in the syllabi in the future. A motion was made and seconded that the B.S. in Chemistry program submit a follow-up report next spring, and the motion passed unanimously. A lot of progress has been made in the M.S. in Chemistry program. The program has a great assessment plan, but there are little data. You state that 90 percent of the M.S. students will score at least 50 percent on the ACS standardized exams in three subject areas. Does this mean that when students are admitted to the program, they are tested and then they are re-tested at the end of the program? There is a long standing tradition that all incoming students take four background exams, but nothing has been done with these data. Most students don’t do well on all of these exams. We want to follow-up with these students. Students must retake these exams if they don’t meet expectations. The students have to meet a minimum content requirement; one of which is the primary research area. The students complete the degree, but we don’t know how well they do on these exams. You could add those tests to the end of the program as well. I didn’t put this in the report because of a lack of faculty buy in. Some faculty refuse to participate. It is a challenge to get faculty to understand assessment and its purpose and meaning. It is commendable that you have put together a committee. We have completed the scoring measures. Right now we are applying the rubric when students give talks, so we do have some data. We also have a comprehensive exam rubric that will be applied starting in May. If a report is required next spring, you would have all the components. A motion was made and seconded to accept the report and to request a follow-report next year (spring 2014).

The B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. programs in physics were asked to report on assessment findings. It looks like there are data for two of the measures, but we need data for all four measures. I didn’t see a rubric to collect the data for physics 374. We don’t have a rubric, but I can bring that suggestion to the individuals who do this. Having a rubric might make it easier to supply the information. The information here seems more anecdotal. You could also use a check list instead of a rubric. We have backed off on some of the rubrics lately. Some of the questions we asked are not really the questions we wanted answered. Are there guidelines for what should be in an assessment plan? Assessment services has the first year exam data. Is this not sufficient? You state that these data were not collected over the last two years. If you have these data, you should put them in the report. Maybe you were thinking of the supplemental survey. What about the pre- and post-exams? These data are missing. I have been trying to collect the pre-data, and we have the post-data. When I discussed this with the faculty, there was a discussion of whether these were appropriate measures. You have the post-data that you could report on that gives you a measure of student learning. Part of this exercise is a re-engagement of our faculty by looking at assessment measures resulting in collecting some things and reassessing our plan. How should we proceed on this? Should we implement the one on paper? For this committee we do need these data as outlined in the plan. However, if you want to reconsider what is in your plan, you can work with Sherrill Morris on this. We have the same issue as chemistry regarding faculty buy in. We are addressing the deficiencies and thinking about how we will do this in the future. This part is about finishing up the program review process. For the M.S. in Physics program you talk about entry exams that students take in the first year of graduate study. We have graduate students entering into the program in different ways, so for the entrance exam we use the GRE. We also allow students to take qualifying exams as a pre-try. The entry exam by itself is great, but that is not an assessment of learning in the program. If you use the qualifying exam, that would be part of the measure. The other
thing on the methods is that there are no data on the external review of theses. We haven’t done this for a while, but we are doing it this year. We have decided to change the way we are doing the employers survey. We will have an advisory group that will meet once a year. Does this modification have to be approved? You can just talk about your advisory group as the employer group. The master’s students take two exams: The master’s qualifying exam and the Ph.D. candidacy exam. If students pass the qualifying exam, it is hard to get them to take it again at the end of their program of study. This is program assessment, not an assessment of the students. We don’t have to have 100 percent participation. The bias would be hard to correct for. We are more concerned about students failing the exam than what students are achieving. I think this speaks to the student learning outcomes. I can see the value in trying to assess this, but I don’t have an immediate answer to this. Is there a way to compare our program with other institutions? One of the pieces of data that people look at is the level of success that graduates have in getting into Ph.D. programs. There are missing data in the Ph.D. in Physics report. Since this report was written, we have sent out the dissertations for review. The alumni and employers surveys are similar to the other data. I think we will do pretty well by this time next year. A motion was made and seconded to have a follow-up report next spring to fill in the missing data. The motion passed unanimously.

The next follow-up reports are from the School of Theatre and Dance. These programs were asked to report on the internal benchmark indicators and on findings from assessment initiatives and how data are used in decision making. It seems like these two pieces were blended together. Benchmarking is not necessarily about student outcomes. It is related to what a student might do. An internal benchmark could be that we want 20 percent of your student population to be from a diverse background. You want to be able to come up with benchmarks where you establish a pipeline and when you measure it a year from now, you can see if something that you have done has helped you to achieve this benchmark. In the College of Law we could use the passage on the bar exam as a benchmark. Another benchmark could be that students have to write a resume or publish an article. The target could be that we want 80 percent of our students to do this before graduation. Across all three degrees you have some benchmark information, but it is co-mingled with the assessment information. We should sit down and figure out what is the benchmark and what is assessment and then come back next year with another follow-up report. We are trying to standardize this among the degree programs and make it much more school-wide. We are still new at doing this. You are doing a wonderful job in terms of assessment. A motion was made and seconded to have the department work with Carolinda Douglass and Sherrill Morris and come back next spring with a revised report. The motion passed unanimously.

Kelly Wesener Michael, acting vice president, Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and Kimberly Buster Williams, acting associate vice president, Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management were introduced.

A presentation on the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and Vision 2020 was made. The overarching goals are academic preparedness and student recruitment. The ACT scores for the incoming admitted students have increased. These are the things we have been able to do with the funds from Vision 2020: Transfer webinars and live chats, ReadMedia, Virtual Decision Day, and Docufide. ReadMedia allows students to share positive things about Northern. The division now uses a data-driven decision making model that identifies students most likely to apply and enroll; follows up on abandoned applications; and uses name purchases. What is the accuracy of the data-driven decision making model? This is the first year we have used this model, so we will be able to test our model after this year. We do attend to all students. For graduate admissions, weighting the strengths of the applications with those most likely to enroll would let us make offers to those who want to come to NIU. Is there a formula available to do this? We are not excluding anyone. This is a collaborative effort across campus. Are you reallocating resources towards people that are more likely to accept or spending more money on more students? We are reallocating. We are trying to be contemporary. It is new to us, but not new to the field. We would like this to be fiscally sustainable by: sharing scholarship data with the Division of Academic Affairs to use funds wisely; calculating costs of recruitment; and including future projections in the scholarship budget. This year our
targeted outreach was veteran and out-of-state student recruitment. We have to fund the veterans, and we don’t have the money to do this. We have an institutional initiative to do this. There are some funds available from the federal government. Out-of-state students pay out-of-state tuition. We have scholarships available that can help students pay the out-of-state tuition. Nationally the cost of attending college is higher than the tuition students pay. Does this make sense to do? As a possible model, this does not work. Because the number of high school graduates is shrinking, we have to go out-of-state to recruit. This brings diversity to the campus. In terms of money, I don’t know how this makes sense. You have to rethink the model because this is not going to solve the problem. We are having some financial consultants come in to assess what we are doing. Why would we advertise that out-of-state students don’t have to pay more than in-state students? This would be a difficult sell to the legislature. The key thing is to tell the students what the actual price is. Out-of-state students are charged more tuition, but some students receive scholarships to offset the increase in tuition. The average costs for first year students is $28,000. Tuition is $10,000 for in-state students and $15,000 for out-of-state students. When students see this information, they may stop looking at out-of-state schools. Offering scholarships to out-of-state students is standard practice, and students going out-of-state would know this. Not every out-of-state student receives a scholarship. Do you have more success recruiting out-of-state students from community colleges than high schools? There is more student growth in the high schools. The point of this update is that we have moved significantly toward a data-driven decision-making model. The college recruitment landscape has changed. Is the cost for recruitment the same? It is a little different in terms of travel costs for recruitment of out-of-state students. New policies that we are trying are: reverse articulation, transfer transcript evaluation, and fee waivers for deferred admission.

We asked Lisa Freeman to talk about Vision 2020 and the resource allocations for research. She was unable to attend this meeting, so she put together a memorandum showing us what the Vision 2020 research allocations are to date. The memorandum was distributed, and states that $1 million was allocated for specialized research equipment and temporary research personnel over FY12 and FY13. The information shows that about 1/3 of the money allocated to research has been spent. The first paragraph on the second page shows you the amount of funds spent on specific items. In most cases, these investments were matched by the recipient department/college or the Core User Facilities program. We don’t have outcomes yet, but she would be happy to come back and talk about the outcomes. We wanted you to know how the Vision 2020 money has been spent. This information will also be included in the Resource Room when the Higher Learning Commission visits us in March 2014.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck

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