ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of December 2, 2013
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present:  Abdel-Motaleb, Borneman, Boutin, Chakraborty, Chandler, Douglass, Falkoff, Freeman, Goldenberg, Gordon, House, Kolb (for Birberick), Molnar, Shortridge

Guests:  Stephanie DeCicco, Assistant to the Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Judy Ledgerwood, Director, Center for Southeast Asian Studies; Christopher McCord, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Chris Parker, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment; and Kendall Thu, Chair, Department of Anthropology

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Assistant Chair Falkoff.

Two announcements were made. First, this is the last meeting of the semester, and next semester the council will not be reviewing programs but will have other business. Second, certificates of appreciation were presented to the subcommittee chairs, Marc Falkoff and Geoff Gordon.

Kendall Thu, chair of the Department of Anthropology, and Judy Ledgerwood, director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, were introduced.

Falkoff thanked the subcommittee members, the chair, and the director. These are nice reviews. This makes our job easier. The subcommittee met in October, and now we will talk about the same questions we raised then.

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies has many strengths. The center promotes interdisciplinary research and learning and prepares students for careers in a global and interconnected world with programs in Thailand, Malaysia, and many other Southeast Asian countries. The center has been in operation for 50 years, and it has received tremendous grant money from the Department of Education, the Department of States, etc. The center is a Title VI National Resource Center. NIU teaches six of the major languages in the region.

One question we had is how do you measure whether students are part of the center? What is a concentration in this context? How do students interact with the center? A concentration is used at the graduate level, and it is viewed as being equal to a minor. There are only a few concentrations left at NIU, and we are changing this concentration to a certificate of graduate study. This request is currently going through the curriculum process. Students take three additional courses and fulfill a language requirement. We offer Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships, and many of students receiving fellowships take language and other courses in Southeast Asian studies. We have a Southeast Asian group that has undergraduate and graduate students in it.

How do you get the word out about the center? There is an interdisciplinary gateway course that fulfills a general education requirement. All of the professors who teach upper-level Southeast Asian courses teach a portion of the gateway course. The center is developing a new outreach program.
that allows it to provide outreach to community colleges. We would like to increase minority enrollments, and we are applying for grant funding to do this. The center also uses social media to reach out to potential students. The center has a regular outreach program with the community high schools. The center also reaches out to students in environmental studies and engineering, but it is hard for these students to complete the concentration because they would need to extend their time in college by one semester. Is the language requirement a stumbling block? For the master’s students there is a one-year language requirement, and for doctoral students there is a two-year language requirement. Changing the language requirement has been discussed at a national conference. Some programs have set up weak language programs (i.e., language for Thailand business). Our program does not want to do this. Another issue is that some institutions offer online language courses. Some centers swap languages. NIU doesn’t offer Vietnamese, but we do offer Burmese; the University of Wisconsin doesn’t offer Burmese, but it does offer Vietnamese. Can we swap? Some programs are starting to do this.

Are you thinking about an online presence? Yes, we are watching this. Right now we offer a limited number of courses online; the language courses are not online. Students from the region can have the language requirement waived.

Does the center try to attract students from multiple disciplines (history, political science, anthropology)? Yes it does. The director and faculty associates try to spread the word about the center.

Has the typhoon heightened awareness? Some of the students have been working on fundraising activities for that community. The Filipino community in northern Illinois raised $30,000 in one night at one event, and many of our students were volunteers at this event.

Is the center able to attract alumni? The university does not track students who complete minors. The center staff tries to do this on their own, but we do get a very small response from the alumni. The FLAS Fellowship has changed its requirements, and these students are now required to keep their email addresses current and respond to an annual survey for eight years. This is a federal reporting requirement.

The center has done well at bringing in grants, and enrollment is increasing. Are there other grant opportunities for the center? The center recently received a State Department Southeast Asia Youth Leadership grant for $1.5 million over a three year period. The center also hopes to renew its fourth year of grant funds from the Department of Education, but this program was cut dramatically this past year and again with the sequester. The legislation authorizing this program is also up this coming year. We are trying to find other grant opportunities to offset this grant. The center received some money from the Thailand government, and part of the money was used to set up an endowment.

Until recently, centers didn’t offer degree programs and didn’t have faculty members hired exclusively in the center. This is changing. The faculty that teach Southeast Asia courses are funded by their own departments, but the center does provide some travel funds for faculty associates.

The center is working across departments to set up research opportunities.
The Department of Anthropology is a master’s only department with faculty that are clearly of the research caliber for a doctoral department. The faculty should be commended for thinking strategically about what they want to do. The department is looking at whether or not it wants to have a Ph.D. program, and it is very thoughtful about this. The department is using this opportunity to strengthen the interdisciplinary programs to leverage its own growth. The department has consciously aligned itself with the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, and Energy and the Center for Non-Governmental Leadership and Development (NGOLD).

The Departmental Context section for the Department of Anthropology has many strengths. The department has a highly accomplished and productive faculty that has terrific scholarly productivity. It provides students with interdisciplinary experiences and engaged learning opportunities, including off-site field schools. The department maintains the valuable Anthropology Museum, and it is good that the department will have renovated space in the future.

The subcommittee members noted that the department is looking for a linguistic anthropologist. At the time the initial report was drafted, we did not know that we would be losing three faculty members, so I sought advice from the subcommittee members about how to address this in the report. The subcommittee’s recommendation was to leave this information as is in the report. If we had this discussion this year, a linguistic anthropologist would not be a priority. With only one linguistic anthropologist, it is hard to attract graduate students to this area. Are the new hires likely to be minorities? We will invest in more minority recruiting. We hired two faculty (with NGOLD and the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, and Energy), we used specialized advertising venues, and we were not successful. This is not satisfactory. The next time we are hiring we need to take a more personalized approach. We should contact the leaders of the minority associations (Association for African-America Anthropologists, Association for Indigenous Anthropologists, etc.). There are not a lot of anthropologists who are minorities on the faculty at Illinois public institutions. Illinois State has one minority faculty member, and SIU-Carbondale has two minority faculty members. If we can get minority faculty, it will elevate our minority students as well. Anthropology is a field that really values diversity. Would having a Ph.D. program help with this? I have visited two departments that have recently minted Ph.D. programs, and in one case I would say yes, and in the other case I would say it was unclear if having a Ph.D. program helped minority hires. We have met again this fall to talk about the Ph.D., and we want the three incoming faculty to look at the information we have gathered, then we will look at developing possible programmatic options. The external reviewer gave us two options: we could strive to be the best master’s program in the country or we could have a Ph.D. program. We also need to look at the consequences to the master’s program if we have a Ph.D. program.

Can you describe the field schools? We have archaeological field schools in Sicily, Cambodia, and Madagascar. These are the primary field schools. These schools run for four weeks every year. We encourage students to participate in one of the field schools. More students could participate in a field school experience. The biggest constraint for students is the costs. We do try to figure out ways to reduce the costs. When students participate they have life changing experiences, the students involved in the field schools maintain contact with each other, and they develop a NIU identity. I also think that these experiences would have an economic benefit for the students. In order to get a job as an archaeologist, you have to have dig time. The college has been supportive of the field schools; it pays the faculty salaries. Approximately 2/3 of our students go on to graduate studies and then go into education. One of the selling points of participating in a field school is that it looks great to have that international experience on a resume. Also, this appears on students’ transcripts.
Let’s move on to the B.A./B.S. in Anthropology. The B.A./B.S. programs provide a common substantive education with some flexibility for students with different career aspirations.

Are you concerned that there are very few African-American students enrolled in the program? There were only 14 over the past four years. Why? I don’t have a good answer to that question. This is lower than the portion of African-American students at the university and at the Illinois publics. I suspect it is because we don’t have minority faculty, our location, and we do not have a strong African-American program. We have to continue to work on this. We also need to work on recruiting Asian-American and Hispanic students.

Female enrollment has also been going down (32 percent over the past five years). This percent is not right. The 2008 data was compared to the 2012 data. If you look at the number of women students and the total number of majors, it has gone down, but not this much. This decline mirrors what we are seeing at the university level. Nationally, most programs are 50 to 56 percent women, so we are doing well compared to other institutions. Are there efforts made to increase minority enrollment? We don’t have anything in place right now. We have expanded our exposure to other programs so our presence is felt. I am open to suggestions about how we can increase minority enrollment. We also need to do this at the college and university levels. Think about reaching out to Southeast Asian countries and going out to the community colleges. Foreign students aren’t counted in these numbers. International students are determined by their visa code. We don’t have a lot of international students at the undergraduate level, and this is also true for the university as a whole. We do go to high schools to recruit students, but we don’t specifically target minorities.

The number of majors has gone up slightly, but at some schools enrollment has increased substantially. Why? We have experienced a decline this past year, and we are worried about how moving out of Stevenson will impact the department. Now we have staff that can’t find us. We don’t get the traffic flow in Grant Towers. Are you collecting data about how this has an impact on the students? I would have to give this some thought. I have asked the faculty to give me feedback on how the environment is impacted. One faculty member does her advising in the café part of the library. We do expect an uptick in enrollment because we are going to have new facilities that will be close to the museum. We are also retooling the curriculum. In reviewing our master’s program, we noted that we need to look at the undergraduate program. This fall we started looking at the possibility of developing an internship. We went to the internship fair, and we are developing a survey of students to see what skill sets they need in the workplace. We have to look at the kinds of experiences students are getting in the field schools as well. For the master’s program an internship is required.

The alumni survey responses are small, but are you concerned about the 57 percent self-reported employment rate? The Women’s Studies Program brought back one of our alumni who had opened up a business to discuss the skill set she got from studying anthropology, but we haven’t captured this information in the department. We are brainstorming on ways to better track our alumni.

We should move into the master’s program. There are not a lot of different topics to talk about from the B.A./B.S. program. What kind of employment is a student looking for after graduating? We did an internal survey of our graduate students (sampling 45 students), and about 1/3 entered Ph.D. programs and the remainder went into a variety of jobs. We should track these students to see what programs they were not able to get into. Most of our students get some sort of support (tuition
waiver, FLAS Fellowship, etc.) We get some excellent students that go on to Ph.D. programs, but some of our students have expectations that are too high. We do get a broad spectrum of students. We also get quite a few students from our undergraduate program.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck