ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of August 25, 2014
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Birberick, Bond, Borneman, Boutin, Chakraborty, Coller, Douglass, Falkoff, Freeman, Goldenberg, House, Howell, Li, Molnar, Olson (for Dawson), Subramony, Reynolds, Shortridge

Guests: Chris Parker, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment; Jeff Reynolds, Director of Academic Analysis and Reporting; Ritu Subramony, Director of Academic Accreditation

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

Freeman welcomed the Council back for another academic year and asked them to go around the room and introduce themselves by stating their name and academic unit.

Douglass thanked the Council for for attending the meeting on the first day of the Fall semester and noted that the group would be re-examining the book by Dickeson entitled Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services. The Office of the Provost has provided copies of the book for any of the Council members that did not receive a copy last year and has also ordered copies for the Vice Provosts and the members of the University Council’s Resource, Space and Budget (RSB) Committee.

Douglass stated that each year an assistant chair is selected to fill in for the chair if Freeman is unable to attend a meeting. She continued that Falkoff served last year in this position. She asked if anyone would be interested in serving as the assistant chair. Falkoff volunteered to serve as assistant chair again for the 2014-2015 year. Chakraborty moved that Falkoff be appointed as the assistant chair and Abdel-Motetelab seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Douglass introduced subcommittee chair A, Li, and subcommittee chair B, Shortridge. Both Li and Shortridge were in training last year and have now taken over as chair. Both subcommittees will need to identify a new chair in training.

Douglass asked if there were members that were interested in serving in the chair in training in order to become a chair for subcommittee A or B during the next academic year. Shortridge said that Boutin was interested in volunteering as her chair in training. Boutin said he will serve as the chair in training for subcommittee B. Li said she has not asked anyone, but subcommittee A will have a meeting immediately following the full Council meeting and she will ask then.

Douglass stated that the agenda is set for September and October, but after that there will be multiple items for the Council to review and discuss including taking a look at academic prioritization, the current academic review process, and lining up the review schedule with accreditation. There are also opportunities from this Council to think about what additional items to bring before the Council, especially during the Spring semester. The committee to set the spring agenda includes Freeman, Douglass, the subcommittee chairs, the chairs in training, and anyone else
who would be interested to be involved in it. Shortridge moved that the composition be maintained for the Agenda Committee, Falkoff seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. Douglass said that she would notify the Council when the agenda meetings are scheduled as any member is welcome to attend or notify one of the members of items to consider.

The notebook distributed to the council members was reviewed. Douglass highlighted two of the duties listed under the first page of the Committee section, including (1) the responsibility for academic program review and (2) the responsibility of providing input on academic priorities and strategies, including budgeting priorities, to the Executive Vice President and Provost. She noted that there will be opportunities for the both the Council and RSB Committee to provide feedback to the Provost on budget priorities. Freeman interjected that last year, the Council was only asked to comment on process. This year there may be a roll in resource allocation. There are many concerns across campus regarding what that will like and rumors about how far along the process is. She clarified that decisions have not been made and the university will be looking at both an academic and administrative prioritization process. The process they are currently evaluating is the one created by Dickeson.

The Dickeson book is a couple of years old, but he has continued to go out and work with universities on setting investment priorities first for the academic side and has also created a process for the administrative support side of the institution. There are well developed processes for both the academic and administrative support services. Freeman saw him speak in May about this and has notes and a handout that she will share with the Council. Additionally, she was at a panel of five universities that had gone through the process with varying degrees of success and spoke openly about their experiences. The President also went through academic prioritization at Idaho using a process relatively parallel to the Dickeson model and both President Baker and Provost Freeman like the Dickeson model as a starting point because there is a set of criteria for academic programs and a relatively parallel program for Administrative Support.

Freeman continued that there will be an Academic Impressions conference on October 9 and 10 that features Dickeson, IT support that have built platforms for this process, and institutions that have been through it. NIU is sending a fairly large team including herself, Douglass, Reynolds, Sue Mini (Vice Provost for Resource Planning), Denise Schoenbachler (representing the Deans), Brett Coryell (representing Cabinet), Bill Pitney (President, Faculty Senate and Executive Secretary, University Council), Marc Falkoff (Assistant Chair, APC), and Ibrahim Abdel-Motaleb (Chair, RSB Committee). She expects that the group will learn what has been done and what will work at NIU. NIU will be doing Academic and Administrative prioritization because the university would like to allocate funds in a more strategic way. The administration will not hand out equal pots of money or make across the board cuts, but the investments will be aligned with our strategic priorities. The first step will be to decide what criteria are important to NIU and then assign weights to those criteria. The Dickeson process uses 10 different criteria, but most institutions do not start with 10 and may use about 6 of those.

One of the goals of the fall will be coming up with a plan regarding which criteria are most important. For the group that attends the workshop, Freeman hopes a discussion regarding what type of process NIU should implement will evolve out of the information they receive. This is the goal for the fall, so in the spring a timeline can be set for the prioritization process. Typically it takes around 9 months from the when the university starts discussing this process to work through the whole process. Last year, vacancy control was done to close the gap in the budget and because there
were so many vacancies due to retirement. This was a first attempt to allocate resources more strategically than had been done in the past. The overall goal is not to have vacancy control permanently, but to have both an academic and administrative prioritization process that are parallel and that have integrity.

Douglass continued to move through the notebook and noted that the graduate student position is filled by Borneman, but the Council still needs an undergraduate student. She noted that there is a light schedule this year and the program review portion will be done by the end of October. She asked the Council to hold the dates into November and December for additional meetings related to Freeman’s comments. As she continued to go through the book, she mentioned the Program Review Process Task Force that recommended accreditation be aligned with the program review process to alleviate departments from doing repetitive work for these processes. The IBHE gave the institution permission to align the cycles, which Subramony is working on now. The APC will still look at the information provided to the reviewers, but additional information requested will be selected judiciously which should limit redundancy and departmental workloads. Freeman stated that there is new flexibility in the leadership at IBHE and they are looking very hard at eliminating redundant work or data requirements that are not useful. This is an opportunity to create a more streamlined process.

Subramony added that they have taken a first try at aligning these processes and developed a set of guidelines while working on this. She stated that one of the guidelines is that a program’s accreditation process occur prior to the program review, so that the external feedback received during the accreditation process can roll into the program review. Douglass mentioned the other important piece is a place to have annual updates from programs, which would consist of smaller more targeted data. This will depend on the metrics that come out of the fall planning and type of electronic process we will be using. She continued going through the notebook with the Council and asked House to comment on the data provided by Institutional Research. House briefly described the data pages within the notebook. Douglass will provide all members with electronic resources going forward by distributing agendas through email and maintaining the APC BlackBoard site with all the information available.

Douglass asked Wright to show the BlackBoard site access, navigation, and documents.

The APC has two representatives on the University Assessment Panel (UAP); one is elected and one is appointed by the provost. Brantley is the appointed member. The Council unanimously elected Coller to also serve in this capacity.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Wright