ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of September 22, 2014
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – 505

Present: Boutin, Coller, Dawson, Douglass, Falkoff, Goldenberg, Gordon, Howell, Kolb (in for Birberek), Li, Molnar, Subramony, Reynolds,

Guests: Chris Parker, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment; Jeff Reynolds, Director of Operational Analysis and Reporting; Ritu Subramony, Director of Academic Accreditation; Derryl Block, Dean of Health and Human Sciences; Beverly Henry, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs; Jan Strom, Chair of Nursing and Health Studies; Mary Koren, Associate Professor and Area Coordinator and Donna Munroe, Professor

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m by Falkoff who is chairing the meeting on behalf of Executive Vice President and Provost Freeman.

Derryl Block, Dean of Health and Human Sciences; Beverly Henry, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs; Jan Strom, Chair of Nursing and Health Studies; Mary Koren, Associate Professor and Area Coordinator and Donna Munroe, Professor were introduced.

Two announcements were made. First, Jeanne Essex will be working with Carolinda Douglas as her Administrative Assistant and will be staffing the APC.

Second, the PLUS curriculum report will be going public in the next few days. The PLUS Task Force is planning on presenting to the APC in December 2014 or in Spring 2015. The report will be out for public comment for three weeks.

Henry mentioned that the Nursing program did extensive work on putting this report together in order to get the most benefit from the review process. She also thanked the provost’s staff and the subcommittee for their efforts in reviewing the report and helping to provide the department with important issues to focus on.

Falkoff commented on how nicely written the report was.

Strom commented on how useful the process is in being able to review the accomplishments over the last 7 years. It allowed her to see where they are coming from, are currently, and where they need to go.

The meeting was turned over to Lan Li for the presentation of the subcommittee report. Li thanked everyone for their participation in the review process.
There are many strengths noted in the departmental section. The program is fulfilling a great need in our state and region. Their student retention rate is impressive as well as ensuring graduates are well prepared for employment. Faculty members assume leadership roles and students are encouraged to participate in research projects.

The following questions were asked of the department:

**To what extent is your offering of face-to-face and online courses influenced by cost, by student demand, and by competition with other institutions?**

Online courses are driven by student demand and as a way to remain competitive within the market. Courses are offered both online and face-to-face in alternating semesters. Does the department have any observations about the quality of learning in the two different settings? Through the program review, we have no reason to believe that the course quality is any different between online and face-to-face classes. There are also syllabi for all courses regardless of the delivery type and a variety of techniques used to encourage participation from our students.

**Are any classes completely online or are they hybrid courses?**

Currently, offered classes are a mix of online and face-to-face.

**Are online courses a way of dealing with the issue of student to teacher ratio being unbalanced?** It would not be accurate to assume that an online course requires less work or attention. There is still an infrastructure that needs to be set up to ensure program integrity. It is possible to grow the online program, but not without careful consideration and planning.

**How will you use the assessment content to ensure there is quality in the online classes that you offer?**

None of our programs are currently offered solely online, so we would use the current assessment processes for evaluation. Additionally, there are learning outcomes for each program that are implemented.

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**One of the areas of interest for the program is the composition of regular faculty teaching courses. Your current rate is approximately 50%-75% , which falls short of AACN standards. What response have you gotten from the university and accrediting agencies?**

In the last accreditation visit report it was stated that there were an inadequate number of qualified faculty at the master’s level. Additionally, the undergraduate program has grown without proper faculty to support it in some cases. The provost’s office is well aware of the issue and of the need for additional resources.

**The provost’s office has hired 2 external consultants to review and provide evaluations. They are expected to report their findings in mid-October, at which point further conversation about resources will take place.**

**Current numbers in your program appear to be approximately 600 undergraduate with another 800 graduate students, is that correct?**

The School of Nursing is currently composed of Nursing, Public Health, Health Education and pre-nursing students. Total for all of those areas is approximately 1400-1700 students.

**And there are approximately 54 faculty and instructors?**

We have approximately 20 faculty in nursing and 30-35 instructors, so yes, that would be about right.

That would make the ratio 17:1, why are the additional resources are needed?
Many of our instructors are teaching 300, 400 and graduate level courses. Due to higher turn-over, most instructors do not have the same understanding of curriculum and student expectation as regular faculty.

**Would you say this is a crisis situation?**
A crisis denotes more of a sudden occurrence, where this has been going on for a long time. It is a situation that needs to be addressed.

**Compared to your peers, would you say you are facing the same changes?**
I believe that all programs of this kind, across the country have similar challenges in finding faculty and clinical sites. I do not believe that it is common to have the lack of resources that this program has.

**Wouldn’t this program be a good source of income for the university?**
Although I myself have not seen the university’s budget I can say that our students help to fill many of the general education classes that are being offered. Additionally, it helps to bring in additional transfer students from the community.

**Note:** Committee would like further data on the income produced for the university by these programs.

**You mentioned you had difficulty filling faculty positions. Can you tell me how many applicants you would typically have for a position?**
One if we are lucky. Often our position are open for long periods of time. This is due to our location (not being close to a medical center) and due to lower salaries in a competitive market.

Recommendations included new organizational structure for better function and additional administrative support to manage the current capacity. Additionally, to work with partners and alumni to increase the number of clinical sites as well as finding additional sources of funds for student internships.

The strengths for the B.S. in Nursing section of the review are enrollment of the program is continuing to grow and supply a significant proportion of the nurses in the state of Illinois. The program also establishes partnerships with community colleges, alumni and clinical agencies which results in continuing growth in enrollment, internship and financial support. Additionally, the program is cost effective with the department use of modest resources.

The following questions were asked of the department:

**Is an internship required for all undergraduate nursing students?**
100% of our students have had a work based experience (practicum) that could be considered an internship type experience. Additionally, there is a Summer internship that is not required and is highly competitive among students to get into.

**In most programs, we are finding over the years that internships are of tremendous value to help students to get jobs at much higher rates. Do you feel like more available internships would be of value?**
Internships are the key to getting a job. Students are reminded that time spent in clinicals is time spent around potential employers that could lead to permanent positions. It is our hope that our students are making the most of this opportunity.

**Just to clarify, clinicals are unpaid?**
Yes.
Throughout the report, we’ve noted the difficulty in finding clinical sites. On page 47, what does it mean: “unlike NIU, some nursing programs are paying directly and indirectly to place students in clinical agencies. Why should NIU not do that too? To pay sites to take our students, we would have to increase our tuition.

If we added fees to help increase clinical sites, would you expect this to impact student enrollment?

Prior to answering that question, we would need to collect more data. It does make a case for trying to find a way to compensate our partners, even if it were not on a per capita basis. Additionally, at a graduate level, what the preceptors want is access to the library online and a title. There is a hope that this might be possible eventually.

Could you interpret why there was a big drop in the NCLEX-RN examination passing rate (from 97% to 81%)?

A decision was made outside of the school to no longer require preparation for the NCLEX-RN examination. There has since been a change of policy that has been made requiring multiple HESI exams.

Another contributing issue is the overcrowding in classrooms which creates an environment that is not ideal for learning.

Are the students being prepared for the components of the NCLEX-RN exam?

Students are now required to take HESI exams to prepare them for the NCLEX exam.

From reading the report, it appears as though the program is really wonderful, but due to lack of resources, it is not able to bloom the way it could.

I would agree, and would note that the success we have had is due largely to the kind of people that we have teaching. They are faculty and instructors who really care about what they do and the students. However, I see these same people stretched to their limits, which has me concerned.

Could you talk some about the simulation lab?

We do have a primitive simulation lab, where students can go and interact with robots simulating patient interaction. This gives them the opportunity to increase their clinical reasoning skills without a chance of hurting anyone.

Recommendations included the need for additional administrative support, improving the quality of the student portfolio, working with partners and alumni to increase opportunities for internships and continuing to improve NCLEX-RN passing rate.

The strengths in the M.S. in Nursing program section of review are excellent assessment of program objective, high academic standards, graduates perform well on certification exam and the program is a leader in graduate nursing education.

The following questions were asked of the department:

If I am remembering correctly, there have been a higher percentage of men that have been graduating from the program?

There are increasing numbers of men entering the program. As time goes on, I think these numbers will continue to increase as more men become aware of the income potential in these careers.

Are there recruiting efforts going on?

There are no resources for this currently.

You have proposed a DNP program. You already have a program that is facing tough constraints.
What effect do you see this having?
In the coming 5 years, we expect that the Nurse Practitioners program will require a DNP certification. So we expect that in order to continue offering a graduate program, we will need to incorporate a DNP certification.

How do you see this ultimately impacting the Masters program?
The DNP were to be required, we might lose one track of the Nursing program but I do see the Masters of Nursing Education Program continuing to be needed.

Recommendations include a need to support and develop a plan for increasing minority enrollments and to work out a plan to provide sufficient resources to support growth or reduce admissions.

The next agenda item is on whether or not to grant the new Doctor of Nursing Practice program. It was moved and seconded to accept. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Essex