Present: Borneman, Boutin, Coller, Dawson, Douglass, Falkoff, Gordon, House, Howell, Molnar and Shortridge

Guests: Katharina Barbe, Chair and Associate Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Chris McCord, Dean of College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 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 3:03 p.m.

One announcement was made. Several of the members in the group attended an Academic Impressions Conference last week. This served to give information regarding strategies that NIU might use to think about our existing resources and using them more purposefully and intentionally.

Two guests were introduced: Katharina Barbe, Chair and Associate Professor, Foreign Languages & Literatures (FLAL) and Chris McCord, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

McCord stated that FLAL is a strong example of a department that has reinvented itself in very creative ways. They are embracing their mission of broad service to the institution and Barbe has worked to promote bilingualism at a time where language majors are declining.

Barbe stated that they offer 3 majors and a large collection of minors and classes. We offer many services to students and have an exciting, engaged learning program which we offer to students.

The meeting was turned over to Rebecca Shortridge for the presentation of the subcommittee report of FLAL.

There are many strengths noted in the departmental context section. The report is comprehensive and well written. The department clearly supports the NIU Mission by providing quality educational experiences for their students through research and other engaged learning activities. Additionally, their use of new technologies increases students’ opportunities and experiences.

**The following questions were asked of the department:**

**In the department, do you need to offer so many different majors/minors?**

We only offer 3 majors and a larger number of minors. We have a nice number of languages offered and we do have student interest in taking these courses. Students tend to come to me and ask for us to offer more languages, not less. Every single language is important for different reasons. Additionally, we are trying to foster joint programs with other departments.
Can you explain how the special topics classes work?
If we do not have a class on the books, and someone would like to teach a class, we will use the special topics classes. Additionally, these are used in cases similar to independent study courses.

Can you talk a little about teaching online courses?
Some classes are fine to have online. Those that are reading intensive will typically work well online. However, our beginning language classes do not tend to do well online. The type of students that tend to be in these classes need to be led and guided and, without that, they tend not to finish.

How does this differ from distance learning?
Distance learning would be like a normal class here, with the use of technology for others to hear and see what is going on. With these classes, we are still struggling with the technology, getting everything to connect and work. This often leads to losing the first 15 minutes of class, which are often very valuable minutes.

How do you go about testing with a distance course?
We use a proctor. The distance course can be really useful when they offer a class to students that would otherwise not be available.

You mentioned that there is an issue motivating students who are taking a lower level language class. What are you doing to address this?
We see a lot of unmotivated students that do not show up for class. We are working with Debra Miller to help us with this and retention on a whole. Additionally, I have also been employing the 62 tips for retention.

Recommendations for the future:
Continuing to provide the Foreign Languages Residence Program in the new location as this really enhances students’ learning. Develop ways to improve assessment or oral communication proficiency and streamline opportunities for students to be in the best position for them to be successful (i.e. have the best opportunity for gainful employment).

The B.A. in German has many strengths including its’ students achieving a high level of recognition and the unique use of student portfolios for assessment. Additionally, the engagement activities provided for students are tremendous. Their study abroad experiences and the immersion through the Foreign Language Residence Program are particularly noteworthy.

The following questions were asked of the department:

The report indicated that although the enrollment for some of the minors has increased, the overall enrollment has decreased by 35% from 2009-2013. Can you elaborate on why you think the numbers are going down and are you doing activities to help increase enrollment?
Our numbers are very similar to other schools, with these numbers being very cyclical. We are trying to engage graduate students who are now teachers to bring their students to NIU for dinner and a chance to practice their language skills. We have done that with Barrington, Addison Ridge and Prairie Ridge and the students have found this to be fun to do. I would also like to work with other
departments to encourage more double majors with language and business, etc. to make students more employable after graduation.

The report highlights the significance of the pre- and post-test for assessment, but only one student took both. Can you provide some additional information? We’ve just recently started employing this assessment and it has taken some time to create and implement it.

Can you talk about portfolios and what you do with the information that you gather? Each May, a group of faculty members in each language comes together to review the portfolios and complete rubrics. This helps to determine what the students have learned while in the program.

Does faculty then meet internally and discuss this information so you can best determine what changes might be done? Yes, there are always way to improve.

Is there a foreign language proficiency requirement? There are proficiency tests that our students can take from the American Counsel of Teaching for Foreign Languages. We would like our students to take this assessment and score at least an intermediate high level, but this is not currently a requirement.

What about for minors? We do not currently have a requirement for language minors.

Recommendations for the future: Given the importance of the “global” mindset, consider offering courses to non-majors or increasing the size of the certificate program. Additionally, develop an advisory board and mentor program to support and promote the program.

The B.A. in French has many strengths including serving a significant role in providing coursework for non-majors. The potential job opportunities for students are strong. The assessment plan is well thought out and utilizes variety of measures to assess learning.

The following question was asked of the department:

While the percent of majors (vs. the state) is growing, the percent of graduates is declining. Do you have concerns about retention and graduation rates? These rates tend to go through cycles. Additionally, the mix of transfer vs. non-transfer students is shifting and affects the graduate ratio. This happens because the graduation rate for transfer students tends to be much higher than for someone coming into the university as freshman.

What are your current concerns with this program and retention? I am always concerned about retention and keeping all of the students we are able to. Currently however, we are in a difficult position with our French program.
If you could please talk more about the position you are in. The report indicates that you currently have sufficient faculty for the classes but it sounds like you’ve lost a significant amount more recently.
We had a resignation in July and a second one in August. The only faculty member that we currently have is Anne Birberick and she is not teaching French due to her administrative responsibilities.

How are you addressing that?
We have visiting assistant professors and instructors. We are proposing to hire two tenure track faculty members, one in the literary area and one as a linguist.

With just two, can you continue to offer the Bachelor’s program?
Yes, although I do not think we would be able to offer a Master’s Program.

Recommendations for the future:
Given the importance of a “global” mindset, the ability to communicate in other languages, and the expanding importance of international understanding, consider offering courses to non-majors or increasing the size of the certificate program. Additionally, continue to work on the assessment plan and develop new recruiting efforts.

The B.A. in Spanish has many strengths including an increase in graduation rates and the number of Spanish minors remaining fairly stable over time. Additionally, engagement activities for students are tremendous and the program serves a significant role in providing coursework to non-majors.

The following questions were asked of the department:

The assessment results are somewhat concerning. How can students’ oral proficiency be improved?
The concern here is not with their proficiency, but an efficient way to test our students. The method we are currently using is very time consuming. We are currently investigating other methods that we might use.

Recommendations for the future:
Continue to work on student competency in oral communications and to refine the curriculum to meet the current needs of the student. Additionally, continuing to develop recruiting efforts that might include additional outreach to high school programs or community colleges.

The M.A. in French has many strengths including providing the option to complete either a thesis or a practicum to appeal to a larger group of students. Additionally, the program provides good service to place-bound, non-traditional students by offering courses and faculty at night.

The following questions were asked of the department:

Due to faculty restraints which you are currently facing, what is your plan for the Masters’ program?
We would work to allow the current students in our Master’s program to finish.
The M.A. in Spanish has many strengths including the flexibility to complete either a thesis or a practicum to appeal to a larger group of students. Additionally, the program offers strong counseling and guidance to ensure that students can complete the program.

The following questions were asked of the department:

**Enrollments have declined, can you elaborate on this decline?**
Many of the students that are in this program are currently teachers and working during the day. This means they will sometimes take a class one semester, but potentially take the next semester off in response to a heavier regular workload.

**The report highlighted that faculty staffing was a significant concern during the prior review. Has this been resolved?**
We currently have a position that is posted and we are receiving applications.

**Would filling this one position make a difference?**
Yes, we need another linguist.

**Recommendations for the future:**
Continue to explore on-line or hybrid education and work on the means to increase the number of students participating in the Master’s program.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Essex