Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education

February 18, 2013
(12-13, #3)

APPROVED

Members present: Pat Anderson (Alumni), Billie Giese (VPA), Jason Hanna (LAS), Brian Mackie (BUS), Sarah McHone-Chase (LIB), Kathleen Musker (HHS), Joel Stafstrom (UCC), Robert Wolf (Student/HHS).

Members absent: Abul Azad (EET), Kyle Bak (Student/SA), Anne Birberick (Vice Provost), Richard Blecksmith (LAS), Chris Jones (Honors), Mark Mehrer (LAS), James Sykora (Student/CEET).

Others: Dr. Julia Spears, Director, Office of Student Engagement & Experiential Learning, Dr. Greg Barker, Director, Testing Services, Jeanne Ratfield, (Administrative Assistant to Vice Provost) Recorder.

I. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made by K. Musker, seconded by S. McHone-Chase to approve the agenda. The motion passed.

II. New Business

Dr. Spears indicated that she and Dr. Barker were making presentations to various committees across campus sharing the 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data. Student engagement is one of the priorities of the university as it focuses on its strategic plan and Vision 2020. She stated there are two components of student engagement. The first is the amount of time and energy a student spends in studies and other educational activities and secondly how the university uses its resources, plans its curriculum, and other things it does to encourage student participation in engaged activities.

Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research administers the survey. It is the most comprehensive assessment of effective practice in higher education. NIU provides them with a list of students and they take a random sample. First year students are those with less than 30 hours and seniors are students with 90 or more hours.
Dr. Barker talked about the 2012 sample. He indicated that the composition of the respondents was close to the university’s diverse population except for having a larger number of females. The response rate was 12% for first year students and 14% for seniors. He did say that the response rate was comparable to the 2009 survey results despite the offering of incentives, cash and other prizes for participation. In addition the response rate was comparable to other institutions that participate in the survey.

The five benchmarks of effective practice in the survey are: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment. Questions on the survey correspond to each of the benchmarks and that is what is compared to other institutions. NIU’s results are compared to the Great Lakes Public institutions which consist of about 25 public institutions that are defined fairly regionally (IL, IN, MI, WI). The results are also compared with the Carnegie class institutions. Carnegie institutions consist of about 30-40 institutions from the east to west coast.

Barker indicated that for the Level of Academic Challenge benchmark NIU student results were similar to both the Great Lakes Public and Carnegie institutions. For the Student-Faculty interactions, NIU first-year students perceive they have a greater student-faculty interaction than both the Great Lakes and Carnegie institutions. In addition Barker pointed out that there was an increase in this component from the 2009 survey indicating that the initiatives enacted for first-year students have been successful.

Barker talked briefly about the statistical significance of the student-faculty interaction data. Large n size translates into statistical significance whether or not it’s meaningful. What is more interesting is the effect size, which is a way of evaluating the difference in score independent of n size. Barker indicated the effect size of .5 (34 Carnegie class – 39 for NIU) is a pretty moderate effect size. It suggests there is a real difference and that difference exists regardless of the number of people responding.

The next benchmark Barker addressed was the Supportive Campus Environment. He indicated that like the Level of Academic Challenge, the results are pretty flat; NIU students feel much the same as the Great Lakes Public and Carnegie class. This is true of first-year students as well as seniors. He indicated that the result (45) this year in comparison with the 2009 results (41) shows a moderate effect size and once again he mentioned the initiatives the university has undertaken to improve this area.

Barker addressed the Enriching Educational Experience benchmark in which he said that NIU is doing comparable to the other institutions at the first-year level. This is also comparable to the 2009 data. However NIU is lagging behind at the senior
level. He suggested this is still an area that NIU needed to work on. This area includes talking with students with different religious beliefs/opinions, interaction with a diverse population, study-abroad, foreign language and other learning opportunities.

III. **Old Business**

B. Mackie indicated that the only other business is the review of how the evaluations would be handled for the selection of the EUIA/EUTA awards. He briefly reviewed each category of the rubric. He indicated that each committee member uses their own discretion when it comes to giving the ratings. Stafstrom pointed out that although each category of the rubric is linked to certain parts of the nomination, the packet may provide input to more than one category. In addition, the CV should be used where relevant, focusing on what applies to undergraduate teaching and is most recent.

J. Ratfield will send the committee members an email indicating the Blackboard site where the files are located. She will include a score sheet for each member to complete and email back to her with their individual rankings. Those will be compiled for the meeting on March 18, 2013. Deadline for committee members to submit their numbers is Wednesday, March 13. Since this is during spring break submission can be prior to that date.

**Adjournment**

J. Hanna made a motion to adjourn at 1:45 p.m., seconded by Stafstrom. **Motion passed.**

*Respectfully submitted*

*Jeanne E. Ratfield*