Northern Illinois University

COMMITTEE ON THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

139th Meeting
Tuesday, March, 20, 2012
Altgeld Hall 225

MINUTES

APPROVED

Present: A. Birberick (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), K. Bak (Student Association), G. Chen (EET), K. Chung (HHS), W. Johnson (LIB), J. Jones (Ex Officio, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs), R. Layfield (Campus Activities Board), M. Manderino (EDU), M. Mehrer (LAS), G. Schlabach (EDU/UCC Rep), D. Sinason (BUS), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing Services), J. Zambito (Ex Officio, Student Involvement and Leadership Development)

Absent: B. Wardell (VPA), J. Camery (Student/EDU),

Guests: T. Griffin, Ombudsman, Dana Gautcher, Director, Student Academic Success

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Sinason, seconded by Mehrer, to amend the agenda to move the presentation by Dana Gautcher, Director of Student Academic Success, to the beginning of the meeting, right after the adoption of the agenda. The motion carried.

A. MAP WORKS presentation by Dana Gautcher

MAP works has been utilized on campus for about 3 years now. The program begins with an initial survey the third week of the semester; it is available to students for three weeks. The survey contains a myriad of questions pertaining to study habits, what kind of grades the student expects to earn, how they feel about resident hall experience, are they making friends, what are the activities they participate in, what are their concerns, what are their challenges. It also includes pre-entry characteristics of the student including, ACT scores, high school GPAs, etc. Reports are produced by the system. Students get a customized report that highlights areas where they might face challenges. It will also show areas where the student is well equipped. Faculty and staff have the ability to see what is going on with students. The dashboard allows faculty and staff to see information pertaining to the students. A color coded system highlights the areas of most concern (red), less concern (yellow), etc.

Ball State created the program in the mid ‘80s due to their concern for their students’ preparation for the college experience as well as their overall success and retention. They started as a paper and pencil test and have become fully institutionalized and they have almost 100% participation rate. They have been successful with the tool; they have seen great increase in their
retention rate. In 2005, Ball State partnered with EBI (Educational Benchmarking Inc.) together they made the product available to institutions throughout the world. She indicated there are over 100 institutions utilizing the tool.

Gautcher indicated that although support intervention was already going on at NIU, MAP works has provided more information about students in a timely manner. This allows students to be referred to campus resources earlier in the student’s time at the university.

There are three surveys offered to students during an academic year. Two are offered in the fall, one three weeks into the fall semester, then again about mid-term and then one in the spring semester. She indicated that even if a student didn’t complete any of the surveys a risk can be assess using the pre-entry characteristics. The information form MAP works is dynamic – it changes with continuous addition of information, such as when fall semester GPA is loaded in.

170 direct connects at NIU currently (started at 40, 2nd year 70). The direct connects consists of the academic support specialist in each college, Outreach and Academic Advising Center as well as academic advisors throughout campus and counselors through CHANCE, SAASS and other centers on campus. The program gets great support from the UNIV program. About 83% of the students enrolled in UNIV take part in MAP works. Many instructors make it a part of their class as an assignment or as extra credit. A great partnership exists with resident life; the hall directors, complex coordinators, and CAs all help students get involved with the program and assist the students in getting the appropriate campus resources.

Looking at the MAP works outcomes, she provided data that showed that the students taking part in MPA works earned higher GPAs than those that didn’t participate. Likewise retention rates were about 10% higher for those who participated. In looking at the entrance characteristics, it was found that over the three years, these characteristics have remained constant.

This year included all new students, not just new freshmen but transfer students as well. The response rate for new transfer students was about 43%. The freshmen response rate did increase 5% from the previous year.

Committee members discussed the impact of MAP works in regard to self-selection. Ways of validating MPA works impact were discussed. Data showing MPA works students vs. non-MAP works students in the utilization of resources. Birberick added that the students that participated in MPA works were less likely to be placed on academic probation at the end of the first year. They tend to successfully complete more credit hours. There is a lot to suggest that MPA works is having an effect in terms of having the student self-assess as well as the university being able to reach out to the students.
II. Announcements

A. Approval of Minutes

Birberick provided corrections to the minutes. Schlabach made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected, seconded by Chen. Motion passed.

III. Old Business

Sinason brought up the matter of the World religions course. He sent committee members two responses, one from Professor Buller and one from Dean Doederlein. Professor Buller indicated that the committee should not be involved in this matter. Some members felt that he misinterpreted what was asked. Review of the Bylaws and discussion followed. The problem seemed to be that although there was faculty support for the course and that a strategic planning proposal initiated ILAS 170, there were no resources available from LA&S administration to support the course after the departure of its champion, Dr. Jeffrey Johnson.

Griffin suggested that perhaps the committee should focus on non-academic means of meeting the students’ needs. There have been discussions over the past several years about a series of presentations or programs offered to meet the spirituality component. Bak indicated the Academic Convocation committee will be addressing this issue.

Sinason put forward that without objection the committee would continue to look for non-curricular means to meet the students’ spiritual needs. Further discussion can be brought up at the next meeting as well as again to the committee next year.

IV. New Business

A. Baccalaureate Review

Birberick stated that after a two year process, the baccalaureate review task force came up with a new mission statement with eight baccalaureate goals. It has gone through the curricular process, been accepted by the various committees and is now in the undergraduate catalog. The next step is to come up with measurable student outcomes. This will be accomplished by creating a rubric.

Originally Birberick along with Greg Long and Dave Changnon created eight student learning outcome teams made up of NIU faculty. Each team consisted of two or three faculty members representing all colleges. Each team was assigned a student learning outcome. Teams were charged with designing the student learning outcome measurements for their rubric. The AAC&U value rubric was used as an example; utilizing the benchmark, milestone, milestone, capstone configuration. Wendy Garrison who provided the guidance for AAC&U
was invited to lead a workshop for the team members. Teams were asked to prepare and submit drafts of their rubric prior to Thanksgiving. Some rubrics were adapted from AAC&U’s rubrics. Some were created from scratch. By the end of the fall semester the draft document was completed.

The next step will be testing the rubric. This will involve review of specific NIU student work and theoretical, non-NIU student work. She said using 8-32 faculty members, at least four per rubric, testing at the different student levels (freshmen, sophomore, etc.). All the student learning outcomes will not be in every course or discipline. Faculty will be asked to identify assignments that would be relevant to one of the student learning outcomes and then evaluate the quality of the rubric. Once the data is collected the team will reconvene and adjust language and the rubrics followed by another test. The second round of testing will be to talk to students and perhaps co-curricular and extra-curricular activities because some of the outcomes have items concerning globalization or speak to questions of engaged learning, leadership, etc.

Sinason brought up the issue of congruency with the rubrics that colleges or departments may already have. Birberick indicated these documents were drafts and that feedback is being sought through various means, such as curriculum committees, college and faculty senates, curricular deans and other various groups. This is just the initial introduction of the material prior to implementation and more information will be presented as different groups are approached to test the rubric.

Bak questioned the overall purpose of it. Birberick stated the purpose is two part: one being for the external accrediting body and the information they want. The second, equally important, that members of the NIU community have an understanding of how our programs line up in relation to the eight student learning outcomes. There is that sense that with a baccalaureate, the programs and students should be coming away with quality and what is defined as an educated individual. It is about reflecting on what we are doing and making adjustments as needed.

B. Topics for Next Year

Sinason invited suggestions for topics to be discussed next year. Suggested topics included:

1. The spiritual environment for the undergraduate – outside of the curriculum. Stang suggested that a representative from the campus religious organization, ACRO, be invited to let the committee know what is already happening.
2. Birberick suggested having Denise Hayman, Director of CHANCE; speak about the program, which will be celebrating their 45th anniversary as well as their receipt of an NSF grant for underrepresented groups going into STEM fields.
3. Birberick also suggested having Greg Long, chair of the Presidential Commission on Persons with Disabilities speak about universal design.
4. Sinason suggested a discussion on esprit de corps – ways to improve pride in NIU.
5. A visit to the new dorm was also suggested.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Jill Zambito at 2:45 p.m., seconded by Kyle Bak. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Ratfield