

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of September 26, 2016
3:00PM, Altgeld 315

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Blazey, Douglass, Falkoff, Gordon, House, Hunt, Isabel, Klonoski (for Birberick), Mini, Mogren, Olson, Reynolds, Slotsve, Strom, M. Subramony, Wilkens and Winkler

Guests: None

Meeting was called to order at 3:02 PM.

Falkoff: Our first item on the agenda is announcements. Does anyone have any announcements? Hearing none, our next item is approval of minutes. Would anyone like to motion to approve the Minutes from August 29 of this year?

Wilkens: So moved.

Slotsve: Seconded.

Falkoff: Any discussion or recommendations?

The motion passed unanimously.

Our main order of business for today is the discussion of the subcommittee report. This is from Subcommittee A with Geoff Gordon as its chair. We will be talking about Biological Sciences, the Center for Biochemical and Biophysical Studies (CBBS) and the Plant Molecular Biology Center (PMBC).

Gordon: This is the first time that we will be using this new format. I definitely don't want to just read the report to you all. Let's start in and I'll ask the other subcommittee members to chime in whenever they have something to add. Let me just go in the order that we went in. The first one is the Plant Molecular Biology Center. This took the longest to review, partially due to Program Prioritization categorizing this center for possible elimination or a category five. Due to this center taking longer, we felt like we weren't able to give Biological Sciences the time it deserved. As with many of these centers, we applaud the interdisciplinary nature of it and increase in activities in plant science is to be applauded. The center offers students valuable training in the area of plant research. It appears that faculty members provide many contributions to the professional and university community.

The discussion points focused on if the PMBC should sustain or cease operations. A lot of discussion went back and forth, but I, and my fellow committee members, had a hard time distinguishing between the achievements that people would have made even if the center didn't exist and how this would compare to achievements that they made because of the center. Along the same lines, in terms of confusion, it was difficult to discern what the actual costs of the center were. It seemed to be a low cost to no cost as the expenses that were connected would have been incurred

regardless of whether the center was in existence or not. From the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), the dean commented on the fact that you really don't see a lot of joint projects coming out of the center. This was one of the main reasons for the College wanting to shut it down. I think also, the problem that the department representatives as well as the subcommittee members had, again, was that it was difficult to quantify what they actually do. If you have the report in front of you, it's hard to tell how many students are impacted by a center? What type of joint activities do they provide? Does the center encourage students to engage in activities that they normally wouldn't have been involved in? There was anecdotal evidence provided by Mel Duvall explaining how the center helped him with his research efforts. It was also noted that pretty much all competing schools have a similar center, and that having the center allows us to better attract students to come to school here at NIU. This is a big plus. Now, for recommendations, and this is probably where one of the more profound statements came out. The department was talking about all of the people who are coming up for retirement in Biological Sciences. At the very end, Barrie Bode was asked, what are the priorities for hiring? His response did not include anyone in this area. Whether it's a case of waiting for a second round of hiring to do it or they are just going to let it play itself out, I'm not sure. Our recommendations were for them to provide more detailed descriptions of budget of operations, where funds for the center come from, and fundraising plans. They need to document more, what grants specifically came in because of the center versus individual faculty members. Detailed records of where students associated want to work and activities of the center. A lot of it is, and I notice this also in the next center, that we are going to be looking at, and I am guilty of it as well, as we go further along in these reports, we need to be a lot more specific. Generalities don't really work anymore. Bottom line is that the college and the department really have to figure out what the survival solution of the center is. Is it a good use of their time and energy in light of their teaching, research and service responsibilities? It does appear that the department and the college are going to replace retired faculty. In fact, the department and the dean together have to decide if the battle is worth waging to keep the center and, if not, then the center should consider ceasing operations.

Abdel-Motaleb: I think you summarized it well in the beginning when you said that we have to distinguish between the activities that will take place regardless of whether the center exists or not. What is the answer to this? Is there anything that you are aware of that is because of the center? The second part of the question is, is this a center only on paper or are there facilities that are associated with it?

Gordon: Please tell me if I'm wrong, but facilities are all shared. There is no distinct center that exists. It is faculty member space and departmental space and then activities that come out of it can either be categorized as departmental or center. I think that was really the issue, that I wasn't provided with the information or I didn't absorb it, had to do with the types and amounts of joint activities that go on.

Abdel-Motaleb: Did the department make any suggestion for how they might address this issue in the future?

Gordon: I think for me this is the primary reason for it staying. I'm speaking entirely out of my own view point. It's good for status and good for recruiting to be able to say, I'm associated with the Plant Molecular Biology Center at Northern Illinois University. This is what they talked about. I think this is the biggest impetus. How we approached this was to say, no harm-no foul. If the center is not costing the college or the department any money, then why not keep it? Whether due to the lack of time allocated to us, or my ineffective method of asking questions, we never got

enough information on this. This is why my recommendation for this would be to get some follow-up on this question.

Wilkens: This is where Dr. Blazey's insight might be very helpful. We were trying to distinguish between a center and an institute. What are the criteria that separates the two and how does it affect grants? I know the other center that we vetted threw that out as well as a question.

Blazey: I have a few of comments. The first, is on whether the coherency of the unit is increasing productivity. If you cannot demonstrate that, there you are in the position of, well, is it doing any harm or is it not doing any harm? Personally, I don't buy it, that you are sitting on grant application as part of a center that no one knows about. And furthermore, I don't think that it enhances the unit or our reputation if we have centers that are not increasing the research capacity at the university. We have a collection of these and I think that we should be focusing our time and effort into centers that are actually showing some benefit to the departments they work with.

Mini: I think you are absolutely right. I think what we are talking about here is an opportunity cost. If these faculty weren't engaged in this center, then they would be doing other things and would that be more productive?

Blazey: If they are making a claim that they are not investing in it, so what's the harm, then I have to come to the conclusion that it's really not worth keeping because it is not improving our reputation. I will also say that they are consuming no resources. I have sat down with that unit when I first came in and said, what are you going to do to grow this center into something that is more self-sustaining and results in an increase in its research activity? Frankly, I never heard from them. I was expecting them to come back to me and say, well, if you give us these kind of resources, we can increase our research intensity, and they never did. Did that help?

Wilkens: It did. The other center offered the argument that it is very difficult to get National Science Foundation (NSF) grants without a center. Of the two centers, there was legitimate data that showed that they applied for ten point six million dollars, but only accrued one hundred thirty thousand, which is exactly .01 percent success rate. They are using graduate colloquium dollars to fund their Friday seminars. I don't think they are in the fifth quintile, I think they were in the improve quintile. I thought that their case was even less convincing. Blazey: I will not change my statement for this center.

Wilkens: I thought that they were in the third quintile.

APC Member: I think they might have been.

Douglass: I think there are a couple of things that I just want to point out about this process. This is the first time that we have had these type of meetings where the representatives weren't here, at the full APC. Now they are only at the subcommittee meetings, so in some ways, the subcommittee is speaking for them as well as for yourselves. I was there, so I can also chime in about some of the things that they said. The one part of what we are doing is different because of that. Another part of what we are doing is we are coming right after Program Prioritization, so it is very fresh in their minds and our minds what category they were put in and what their action plans were. They had concern, and I will say this much from that meeting, about not only being in category five, but also the action plan to eliminate them. Both of those things came up at the meeting. And you're right, we probably didn't have enough time to do everything, but we also didn't necessarily know that it would be this contentious a conversation and that it would last so long.

Blazey: One more statement that I want to make. As researchers, they are very, very well positioned to contribute something in the Data Sciences. The Petunia Project is sitting in that bin, and very much could be a contributor to the sciences program. If I were them, I would be positioning that set of research to be coherent with what is emerging from the college of flora and sciences and have conversations with data sciences. I actually think they are in a position where they should pivot and get more on board with the Data Sciences. That would be my advice to them.

Falkoff: Ok. My question is, Dean McCord was there and participated, so I was curious what his contribution to the discussion was like?

Gordon: He spoke on the center. He spoke out in favor of closing the center. The college would like to see it close down.

Wilkins: I think your question is an excellent one Marc. These centers were similar but also very different, where one was fighting for its life and the other was just rolling along and didn't seem to have a convincing case. And I do agree with you that Dean McCord was making the recommendation that the center should be swept away or taken down.

Douglass: In the past, this body has not taken a vote to close a program. It certainly has never taken a vote to second guess Program Prioritization recommendations, because we have never had them before.

Gordon: We also haven't really revised the subcommittee reports.

Douglass: You are right, we have not historically, the reports presented at the full APC stood.

Blazey: I would not advise this committee to vote on the program, I would suggest if you want to do anything, take the census of the committee. For example, a sense from the committee that there is opportunity elsewhere, or whatever you would like to come up with.

Abdel-Motaleb: What do you mean by a sense of the committee? Is it a recommendation or..

Douglass: Typically, what this committee does is to suggest things like: We think you should watch enrollments or we think you should validate and track the funding that you are getting, or we think you should do better assessment of your students or an academic program. I'm not saying that we can't do more things, but that is what this committee has done historically.

APC Member: What do the bylaws of the committee charge it to do?

Douglass: Those are in the notebook.

APC duties were read by Douglass, which are found in the APC notebook on page I-1.

Winkler: It would be great to hear the updates from the other center and then compare and contrast. The second point sort of goes back to the category five. Does category five say just elimination or elimination and transformation?

Douglass: No, category four was transformation, category five was review for possible elimination.

Winkler: Then the APC could play a role for helping the college to make that decision. We seem to be moving in that direction at this point.

Douglass: Do we want to move on to the second one? Are we all comfortable?

Gordon: Sure.

The second one is a center also. This is the Center for Biochemical and Biophysical Sciences. The big strengths of this center were, we talked about Friday afternoon seminars and provided students with an opportunity to further their education. The discussion points/areas for improvement tended to make this center appear more appealing. The whole idea of how it was connected to pre-med and medical careers for our students. Also, the fact that, according to the presentation, we really don't have anything that promotes pre-med to the degree that this center does. As with the first center, you can see from the discussion points, and the idea of objective measures would indicate, the CBBS facilitates research beyond that expected of the individuals involved. Relationships between the departments and centers. The whole idea of faculty members from five different departments in a collaborative effort versus individual efforts publishing. How many graduate and undergraduate students are being served by the operations of the center? How large is the graduate concentration in Biochemistry and Biophysics? You're looking at all of these questions and there are a lot of statements made. What I would ask for in another follow-up report, this whole idea that we are providing some specifics. The analogy that I would give is to say that Marketing works with the business community. They need to give some specifics there. Likewise, some steps to get more donor funding. Additionally, that Alumni relationships are important, not only for donations, but also through job placement, etc.

Recommendations for this center are very similar to those with the PMBC. These include a large number of retirements on the horizon. It's unclear if those are actually faculty hiring areas that these will go to. On this one, I didn't really get the impression that it was up for closure. Also, Jerry, I think you brought up some valid points. With this one, I think the real difference, and I could be mistaken on the importance of this, but the whole idea of pre-med. I don't know enough about the sciences to know if there are other venues for those type of students versus this center.

Wilkins: However, there is no data to back that up. How long is that partnership? What is the benefit? How many students? How are the faculty connected with that? Other than the Friday afternoon graduate sessions, what are they bringing to the table? Who are the faculty from those departments? Even the narrative talked about this antidotally but I don't think they have the data to back that up.

Falkoff: Where did this program fall in?

Douglass: I think they were a three.

Wilkins: That kind of shocked me. There didn't seem to be the contentiousness in the college plan to eliminate this center the same way as the other center. I'm a little mystified because they neglected to provide the data. They did have five dissertations out of Chemistry, but how did that connect with the center? There is no direct link.

Abdel-Motaleb: How does this center help or how is it linked with the graduate program?

Strom: I would like to say that in the two presentations, what I didn't hear is what I would call deliverables. Another way to say it is expected outcomes. What are they supposed to be doing?

And how do you measure whether or not they are doing what they are supposed to be doing? The lack of this made it difficult to even evaluate the center.

Falkoff: What was the department's attitude on this center?

Gordon: I couldn't tell you. Ambivalent maybe. The first center he advocated for elimination, this one.. help me out...

Winkler: Did we come to the point where we requested his opinion on the second center? I don't recall that. In that sense, it could have slipped through, due to the overall time constraint that we had in the meeting. That could also have been part of how the meeting went.

Gordon: Sure

Mogren: I had several conversations and one of the questions, it seems to me and I may not understand it but, the center needs to provide deliverables, benefits. I am not certain how we are really defining those things. We heard a statement, I think from Carolinda and from the IBHE. I recall and I could be wrong, that it was very heavy weighted towards deliverables in terms of funds, and that's fine and I understand. What I am having trouble with is, what is a deliverable or a benefit in terms of these kinds of things? The representative suggested that in their group, members published regularly. And when they talked about it, their publications were fine and within the realm of what's expected and perhaps even good, . I think as we are moving forward on this, one of the troubles that I am having is analysis. How do you balance winning a grant against providing education and equal opportunities for undergraduates in a program? Or, is there cohesion on faculty, although they might not generate a great deal of income, perhaps they don't cost the university that much between salary and benefits. Is there some other way of balancing that? I don't know. That is really sort of a tough conversation for me. So, when I heard them speak last week, first of all, there is not a lot that we can do here, right? The Prioritization train has left the station. And whatever ax is going to fall will fall. I'm not in a position to make recommendations one way or another, on the operational quality of Program Prioritization. But as we move forward and units are thinking about how to present themselves and make their arguments, maybe they need to also think about how to value what they offer, beyond perhaps, the cold, hard numbers. It would make the conversation very challenging. You know, what is the benefit? Some have suggested that the benefit might be that it give us a grant proposal and greater recognition. I don't know if that is true or not, but they suggested that. There was a suggestion made that the perhaps intangible costs outweigh the negligible costs that the university provides. Maybe that's true, maybe it's not, but quantifying the intention stuff is tough. So moving forward with this, I think that we can report the conversation. However, I'm reluctant to make recommendations. That's sort of where I'm at.

Douglass: I would like to interject a couple of things. I really appreciate where the conversation is going. Two things I would like to interject and then a third that is really more of a question. The first is that they were in category three, which is reduction. The second is that we sent you all the definition of the center, from that meeting. And another thing from that meeting was that a center should really provide outcomes that are above and beyond what the faculty would typically do. This was another part of that definition. And then the third thing that I wanted to interject is, do centers get a certain amount of money? How are they normally funded and what is it costing the university?.

Blazey: Neither of these centers receive any funding from Research and Innovative Partnerships, nor do I know if they ever have. There are very few centers that receive funding, partially, just to comment on our financial situation. We do however, have funding, for individual scholars. They are allowed to even come and make a pitch. I will say this again. I have a feeling that we are trained not to do that. The Plant Molecular Biology folks have never come and said, "I have a great idea for fixing the productivity of our center." I can listen to them and hear their investment and think about whether it's a good strategy or not. Sometimes I agree and I'm able to assist them. Perhaps they didn't make that point, but that is the case.

Falkoff: In their Prioritization narrative, extramural funding has materialized over the last five years from interactions with the CBBS membership and facilitated by the weekly seminar series. Treatment for neurological cancer with a grant for six hundred and fifteen thousand dollars and another NIH grant for one hundred fifty-six thousand dollars for research on anti-microbial compounds, has been the focus for all of the centers activities. We take them at their word, is that adequate for keeping this center chugging along?

Blazey: Is that actually a question?

Falkoff: Yes.

Blazey: Is it a question that you want an answer to?

Falkoff: Is it a question? Oh, I agree. Maybe we shouldn't be suggesting up or down for a program, but maybe we could offer observations that could influence the conversation.

Strom: So Marc, what I would say is, again, what is the goal? What is the... I mean, I can't set the goal for them. They perhaps could set their own goal. What is it that they are trying to accomplish and did they accomplish it? What is the dollar amount that is appropriate for them to bring in? That's one way to answer the question.

APC member: And how was that money spent for those that actually did receive it? The actual evidence of what was spent. There was a discrepancy in what was recorded when compared to the documentation that was attached. They are in quintile three, which is a reduction in costs. The only cost that they submitted included the graduate Colloquium and that they were receiving grants. How were those monies used? How did students benefit? How did the faculty members, the program and the pre-medical school students benefit? I don't know, and that is for the center to answer. Those would be deliverables. I do like it a lot and think it is quite powerful. That is for them to identify, not this committee.

M. Subramony: I think the original question about intent is an important one. What is it that the center is intended to do? What are the achievables? What would they like to achieve over a one year, three year and five year period? And then all we really need to do is to go back and see if they achieved these things? If they did those things, then great. And if they did not, then we can have a discussion about what they should do to change or ease the operation. I think that is the missing link. From the IBHE proposal or approval.

Douglass: I think some of these centers have been approved quite some time ago. The issue is, they are not carrying that forward necessarily.

M. Subramony: That is my point.

Winkler: It would probably be too simplistic to go back to the original proposal since those could potentially be quite old. So instead we need to ask, has it been put forward in an appropriate way? Is the research evolving? And to measure the center only based on what they originally proposed or have they been able to continuously update their ideas? Have things been moving forward?

M. Subramony: That's a big one. To talk about how the center has evolved over time. I guess the question here is really about... again, I like the idea of is it up or down? I like Eric's point too, what is an outcome? I think this is pretty much where this is going. Here's what I'm supposed to do and do it. It looks like at this point in time, is there a gap between A and B and is that gap substantial enough to say that this is not a center. We should look through the data that we have, and this should give us a starting point. Again, they have not provided any full data, over and above the proposed, which is too bad. We could ask them or do what we have to do.

Klonoski: The Program Prioritization Task Force recommended this program for review and the dean supports recommending...

Douglass: No. This program was recommended for reduction. The first one was for review.

APC: Which is slightly ironic, as it uses almost no resources.

Klonoski: Two thousand dollars.

Douglass: That's why I was thinking maybe they were considering the time that faculty invested that could be used for something else. An opportunity cost.

Strom: Are they stronger individually or stronger as a center? If they were doing something else for this percentage of time, what would they be doing?

Reynold: To speak to Jan's comment on deliverables. There is an initial metric that the IBHE set up long ago. And they did, at least back then, set an expectation for centers. Reading from the IBHE site... The IBHE expects that for every state dollar invested in the center, that at least two external dollars must support the center, especially once they get to the second or third year. These centers have obviously existed for some time. They existed back when the college did its' first external review for Biological Sciences in 2009. The question there was brought up by external reviewers. They were looking at benchmark data and they said that the Plant Molecular Biology Center was not necessarily up to par. They also said that the Center for Biochemical and Biophysical Studies was up to par. We are here now, eight years later, having the same, but more rigorous conversations. I will remind this committee that we have external reviewers coming in again in October. They will look at the same type of things. We can make a recommendation. My area and the college can work up some comparable and aspirational peer benchmarking. For the case like CBBS, I too have wondered, given the medical hospital argument, what are their peers? We can leverage off of these data, and know whether this or any other center is aligned correctly in mission and outcome. Of course with peer benchmarking, you have to keep a balance, not only with respect to the Department of Biological Sciences or biological centers, but also the centers in terms of the disciplinary norms and standards they should at least meet, if not match to. And are they in par with where they should be, whether we go by the added metric of the State, the IBHE,, or if we go by something a little more productive.

Blazey: I think there is a question that you asked, that is pretty straight forward to answer. What has the center added that they would not have without the center? And if they can't point to one, then

there is no reason for the center to be there. And if this group asked that question, I think it's a good thing to put forward when they are trying to make that decision.

Mogren: I find it interesting, what was it, for every state dollar invested, the center needs to match two dollars. We really have to kind of assume that is a governing from on high. This is actually a curious ratio, right? The ratio suggests that for every dollar invested that you have to have two, but if there is zero dollars invested... That's the first thing. And believe me, I'm not here to defend them. I am trying to get my head around your argument. That's the first thing. The second thing, when they met with us, they suggested that the collaborative interaction that they have together, produced greater scholarship than would have been produced had they not been within a collaborative audience. Is that true? I don't know. However, that is certainly the argument that they are making. There was a document that was handed out during the review of the publications that had been produced and it was suggested that these were completed as a collaborative effort. It comes down to an easy metric of dollars or a more complicated metric of scholarship. For those units that are being considered for cuts, I think they need to think of other ways to present themselves in either the immediate operational phase of Program Prioritization or even more long term, how do you quantify the intangible? How do you quantify benefits in ways that show something beyond simply finances? This is a tough thing to do.

Falkoff: I always come back to the same question, which is what are we doing here? The whole conversation is pretty interesting, and we would like them to be able to articulate the metrics by which they should be judged, gather and present meaningful data in a way that we can assess whether they are meeting or coming close to meeting their goals. That's all really good, but even if they had done that, what are we expected to do at that point? I honestly don't know.

Douglass: Again, let's talk about this, but then I think we need to move on or we will utilize all of our time again on the centers. I told you what this body hasn't done before, but what this body has done historically is provide recommendations back to the departments and centers themselves, as well as summaries to the administration as to the health of the program. It is really about the health of the programs and centers. Here are some things that we think you should be doing. The report has a whole section on recommendations for the future. And also to the upper administration here, this is how we think the programs are doing. We have never had the role of yea or nay on a program. We have highlighted where there were issues, we've asked for follow up reports, we've brought programs back when there were concerns, but it's about recommendations.

Gordon: My concern is I just don't want to get into, and it won't the further that we get out, just because Program Prioritization suggested that a program be eliminated doesn't mean that we have to agree with it. I think it seems like there is pressure to do that. I think the big thing is really maybe helping to determine what the metrics they should be evaluated on. In this case, and I am just making this up, number of med students that went on to med school, number of peer reviewed.

Blazey: I would challenge them to provide those metrics.

Gordon. That's what I'm saying and what I think we did in here. I think then, and even more so, if they survive, then I think next time or next year at least, we can give this to them beforehand and say, these were common metrics that were used last year, recommendations. This could be for next year because we are trying to improve too. This is a whole new era for us.

Falkoff: Would you say it's fair that our role is to listen to the reports and have enough information that we can offer some insights from non-experts colleagues about how we think they can improve their programs? Articulate strengths and weaknesses and offer what we can as suggestions for potentially, proving and simply leave it at that? Is it fair to say that's what our role is?

Gordon: Yes. I think that is. I'll be honest, I would not feel qualified to be the decision maker in, shutting down Dan's division. I don't know enough about.. you know what I'm saying? There are certain things, and I think that's where people have problems with Program Prioritization. One person filed for the College of Business and others are saying, that person doesn't even know what's going on. For us, and especially in areas where they don't have a representative on the committee, it's good to have someone that can help us to understand.

Douglass: The performance indicators on the dashboard, this is what we were thinking about, that the performance indicators would be set individual targets by each program. They have these indicators that they are going to follow, but then they have their own targets. We are trying to get that rolled out and an understanding of that.

Gordon: I don't think they will be the same. I think for each center and program, they will be dramatically different.

Douglass: For the centers, yes. I think we have more standardization or more similarity among the programs in term of what the indicators are, not necessarily the targets.

Gordon: Maybe that's something people or maybe put the responsibility on Jeanne and me to sit down and quickly go through these reports and say, here's the criteria that we came up. We can ask the subcommittee members for help. And say, go and find or ask for.

Reynolds: To both of your points, Carolinda and Geoff.. Some metrics or measures are easier to just put up on a dashboard, enrollments and degrees conferred. Some are more challenging like, what is research or grant activity? With these measures, for Visual and Performing Arts, you're off on another chart. Grant activity in the Natural and Physical Sciences, though, is an expectation and you should have that data. We can also parse that by discipline.

Mini: I have another question. I didn't think that this body would be making decisions about Program Prioritization. Can they make a recommendation whether they agree or disagree with Program Prioritization?

Douglass: I think we are in uncharted territory. Jerry said earlier, maybe a sense of what people are considering? I leave that to the members. It would strictly be a recommendation, we don't make any decisions. Anyone can do that.

Wilkins: It seems like we need to go to the administration to define the constructs of centers and provide some guidelines on them. This is because they are different than academic programs, where we are all more comfortable because that is the world that we live in.

APC: I think that would be very welcome.

Douglass: If you wanted, you could make a motion to make that recommendation. Then it could be official and voted on, if that is the direction that you feel like you would like to see our committee going in.

Abdel-Motaleb: Could you explain what you mean by that? Are you saying the administration would give us some instruction or what?

Wilkens: How to define the construct of the center. There are some people who say it should be self-sustainable. Other people say, not so much, it give people a place to hang their hat at and work collaboratively. What does NIU mean by a center? That is going to be something different than the University of Wisconsin at Madison, or Ohio State or another institution.

Abdel-Motaleb: Why do you see this as being this council instead of University Council or another similar one?

Wilkens: I didn't come up with Program Prioritization. The administration came up with that idea. And they were the ones that came up with the metrics to decide how to value it. I think the point that Jerry brings up is a good one. What is a construct, how do you define a center? Then they brought up, what is an institute? What is a center?

Blazey: An institute is a collection of centers.

Wilkens: Well, they weren't able to define it, so now I'm curious. Should we have an institute at NIU with all these little centers underneath it? I don't know.

Winkler: I would think in the opposite direction. Right now, I see less of a need for a formal definition which could somehow be applied for all of the centers. However, the discussion that we had earlier that it is, first of all, the centers themselves that have to formulate the direction that they would like to go. What are the possible benefits and to continuously update these ideas. Each center should individually formulate what kind of overall advantages they see from their existence because ultimately, it will always boil down to comparing apples with oranges. I remember from last year when we were discussing the Center for Southeast Asian Studies and Burma, where ultimately the things that one could possibly talk about in the good things that one could talk about in the center. These will be completely different than when you are reviewing these two centers. Due to this, I am much more in favor of letting the centers themselves formulate the advantages they see from their existence. Additionally, they should be the ones to measure the results. Updating and composing along the way. And then when you talk about the question of is this overall a meaningful way of measuring the quality of this or that center? The criteria from each center may be very different.

APC: Could you please rephrase your question? I sort of lost track what you originally asked.

Winkler: The people that work together in a center, are they stronger together or would they be the same if they were only doing individual projects? Do I need a center to collaborate with George? No. Does that make it stronger? I don't know.

APC: Thank you.

Isabel: Just to say something about Program Prioritization. I believe that the questions that were posted were a place for them to think about what their purpose is. And, that should have been an initiative to say this is why we are doing this. If they didn't really think carefully about what they are putting in there, then it didn't give much information.

Falkoff: Geoff, would you like to discuss Biology.

Gordon: Sure. I think one of the biggest things with Biology that we could praise was that four of their professors were recognized by the university, for research and one for Presidential Engagement. The department is active in research projects and overall has high demand. I think one of our questions was in regard to lowering demand and that Jeff said that it reversed after one year in the updated data. A lot of what I am going to say and it rolls over to all of the degree programs, but we ask the college and the department about plans for growing overall tenure-track faculty numbers and replenishing the supply of newer, younger faculty. I will say it quite honestly, I didn't hear an answer from either the dean or the chair. It seemed like there wasn't a plan. And the dean had kind of eluded to, it's kind of a year by year decision with finances, and, the finances for staff almost is a year by year. This is out of necessity, I'm not going to knock that. I think more so, what we were looking for is for them to say, the first need is in this area. Cancer research is the second in this area. We were hoping for a prioritization from the subset areas within the program. I think there was some concern, we didn't really get a chance to discuss it in detail. We looked back, and this was information provided by Jeff, does well in publishing conference papers, but didn't do as well in publishing articles. We ran out of time to talk about this further.

I think the biggest discussion we had was in terms of use of instructors, versus tenure track professors. I don't know if it's the proper use of the word, but melding of the roles. At least in that field, where they are able to find instructors that had Ph.D. degrees. One of the problems they were running into, was figuring out how to offer these people longer term contracts. They are pretty good in our area about offering several year contracts. It was just a discussion, which we didn't get very far into. How are you going to go about replacing your faculty? If you are going to cut back on the number of faculty hired, I think you Eric, brought this up, if you are cutting back on faculty, how do you replace them with qualified instructors who can entuse students to then move onto your major, from those freshman courses.

In terms of recommendations for the department overall, the primary one was to outline short and long term hiring plans. I'm not saying you will be able to carry through with it due to budget constraints, but at least everyone is on the same page. We talked about a larger part of their faculty that is getting ready to retire soon. There was an issue as the information that they provide or talk about providing, how the department makes money for the college and the university. Maybe we should come up with clearer cut standards for that. I think it was painted throughout Program Prioritization report. I think coming up with better measures for that. The B.S. program serves a significant role in providing coursework to non-majors, educating over 1,200 students per year. Playing a big role in general education classes. Overall, graduates of the program are satisfied with degree time to completion. The discussion points that came up were hiring, prioritizing between disciplines in the department. How long term lecture positions will be filled. Some of the things that we didn't get to, but that they kind of eluded to were online courses. We asked them what role that plays and we asked about recruitment strategies and retention. They talked about communicating with different schools and working with community colleges.

In terms of recommendations for the future, the same problem that we have in a lot of departments here at NIU, is differentiating us from our competitors. We talked about major competitors, which included SIU and Illinois State, both have programs and why are we better? The whole theme of collecting more data. They can do a better job tracking their own graduates, to get information on employment rates, whether people are happy or unhappy with their education.

Moving onto the M.S. and the Ph.D. I've grouped them together for information. I think that an issue with both of them is the stipends. I think we talked about this the longest. With lower

stipends it was making it difficult to attract the better students that didn't go through undergraduate here. On the plus side, Dean McCord said that they were reallocated more assistantships to Biology from other areas. There were a lot of conversation about assistantships and how their role is becoming more important when searching for tenure-track faculty in terms of being able to offer better teaching assistants. We also asked about what percentage of their graduate students came from the undergraduate program. Surprisingly, I think they said only about twenty-five percent. It's great that seventy-five percent are coming from outside the university as new students. And then we ran out of time.

M. Subramony: I do remember one of the subjects that we talked about. In the graduate program, in connection with potential loss of faculty create kind of an uncertainty that makes it difficult to recruit. When you have that person that might be retiring they might not be able to create that long term opportunity and the strong impact on graduate recruitment. If someone is considering retiring or maybe they are retiring, it is difficult, in good conscious, to take on graduate students. And graduate students themselves may be less attracted to coming here because long term projects might be winding down. It seemed to me, that a lot was impacted by the faculty turnover, and all of these things really hinged on this stuff. It is really troubling to hear actually.

Gordon: I think a lot of it is, there are people that are near retirement. It's kind of going back to your point, what's the incentive that could be offered retain them?

M. Subramony: Two-thirds of the faculty are retirement eligible and there is not a lot on the horizon to offer them to stay.

Gordon: Right.

Wilkens: One of the committee members came up with the phrase, an impending apocalypse.

M. Subramony: And it's not just that the faculty member is leaving, that effect just ripples right out along the line. And this is something that is going to be challenging for the unit. Especially for a unit that is as successful as they are.

Strom: The other thing that I have heard them say was that the faculty problem could be addressed by hiring a different type of worker, for lack of a better word. Instructors don't seem to be the right category. Clinical Faculty didn't seem to be the right one either. Nor did Visiting Professors, but they felt like they needed someone to teach, particularly, the lower level classes.

Douglass: And they wanted something that sounded more prestigious than an Instructor. The Visiting Assistant Professor, they could only have for a year.

But everyone in the classroom has a Ph.D. I was wondering if you could comment, and maybe you can't, about the issue of the stipend and how the level is set?

Mini: The base level is set by the Dean of the Graduate School. The Science Departments are allowed to suggest to the Dean, what the level of their stipends should be. Over the years, having been in CLAS for very long,

We discouraged them from taking their budget and parsing it out to fewer students at a higher budget. Research granting departments, departments that should be research granting, so the

Physical Sciences and the Life Sciences, are expected to have, as part of their grant, graduate stipends in it. With the sciences, we expect them to be higher than for example, a Liberal Arts.

Reynolds: That college especially, there are cross-overs, so we benchmark accordingly in reference to the Oklahoma State University graduate stipend survey. At least when Sue and I were in the college, we made efforts to maintain stipend levels that converged to 80 percent of the OSU benchmark. We try to be as competitive as we can.

Gordon: And are we?

Reynolds: We are competitive in some disciplines, but not in others.

Gordon: Not in Biology.

Mini: It's mainly the Liberal Arts. We are actually fairly competitive in the Sciences.

Gordon: Any other comments? Anything I've forgotten?

Douglass: I thought that Beth made a very important comment. It was the one where you asked the Dean why they hadn't had a hire.

Wilkins: I said all of this impending apocalypse, how is it that they have all this meat, but I don't see any lines coming into it. He did come back and say, I gave them five hires five years ago.

Douglass: You also discussed the load issue.

Wilkins: It is different across the university. And his argument was that they have labs. Well in the College of Education we go out and do in-school experiences, and we don't get paid for that. It's part of our jobs. I get it, in the hard sciences, it's a two-two load, but not everyone at NIU has a two-two load. If you talk about working harder, you do.

Further discussion developed regarding teaching loads and effects of impending retirements versus budget and line constraints.

Isabel: This whole discussion moves toward the idea that these centers are not helping at all with this dire dilemma with faculty. It doesn't sound like the centers are doing much of anything to help.

Douglass: You would expect the centers to be more helpful with recruitment or retention?

Isabel: I don't know.

APC: They don't have the lines, so how would they help with recruitment?

Wilkins: We currently have about nineteen thousand students with expectations for that to level off at about fifteen thousand students in the next few years. That means fewer students, fewer students to take Biology classes. Barrie Bode I thought played it well. He said, I'm kind of caught. I need to work with this dean, but I also have to support my faculty. I'm arguing for lines, but when the dean says there's no money, then there's no money. But they have no plan, and I guess my advice to them is to get something written. Either starting thinking outside of the box or in new ways, because times are changing.

Falkoff: There was a question raised about the format of the report, which is the same as it has been for many years. Does it make sense to continue that, given that we don't have representatives at the big meetings now. There are a lot of questions that we would typically ask and have answered...

Gordon: I think it's too early to say that. We were so pressed for time on the first one. The first week was not a fair indicator. I think after our next one, there should be a lot less. I'm going to ask to hold off for now on that.

Douglas: I don't know how subcommittee B is going to operate. I think you are going to find a similar situation where you are going to have a lot to cover in a short period of time. It's a good question, do we want to know more of what was said. Just think about that maybe.

Further discussion of possible future scheduling changes.

Falkoff: Let's move onto the next agenda item which is election of two new chairs in training. This would be like Geoff and Jeanne, interrogating our peers. I guess we will start by soliciting volunteers.

Gordon: I will be coming back and will be happy to help whoever chairs.

Falkoff: Anyone want to nominate anyone? Well, maybe we can revisit this.

Douglas: We have to have chairs for next year, so it's always good to have someone that knows they are going to do it.

Falkoff: We also have to elect a representative for UAP, University Assessment Panel. Also very interesting. Any volunteers.

Douglas: It meets the first and third Fridays of every month, from 10-12pm. Actually, that's when it's scheduled to meet. It has some similar duties to the APC, but they also review the mission statement and benchmarks. They are looking specifically at learning outcomes as well as other activities. Ibrahim is on that committee, but we do need a second person.

Falkoff: I think maybe we should table this one also.

Douglas: If anyone has any other questions about either of those roles, you can let us know.

Falkoff: Is there any other business? If not, then we have reached the end of our agenda. Thank you everyone, we are adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Essex