

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of October 17, 2016
3:00PM, Altgeld 315

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Blazey, Douglass, Falkoff, Freeman, Gordon, Hunt, Isabel, Mini, Mogren, Olson, Reynolds, M. Subramony, Wilkens and Winkler

Guests: Laurence Lurio, Chair/Professor for Physics Department

Meeting was called to order at 3:03 PM.

There were no announcements.

Douglass: Provost Freeman is here today to talk with us about the involvement of APC with the Executive Budget Committee (EBC).

Freeman: I'm happy to come back again. I didn't bring slides. I thought that the easiest thing for me to do would be to explain the current thinking and the process that is going forward. I also ask for your questions and I thought that we would have a richer dialog without slides with a bunch of arrows and boxes. Dr. Phillips, who sets the agenda and invitee list for the EBC, should be inviting Marc, as the faculty lead of the APC, and the faculty chair of the Resource, Space and Budget (RSB) to an upcoming Executive Budget Committee meeting. And at that meeting, we, as an Executive Budget Committee, will be making a presentation to those two chairs regarding how we've incorporated Program Prioritization and Task Force Recommendations and Action Plan outcomes into the criteria that were used for academic hiring. That's transparent and the deans have had copies of that. Those of you in colleges have seen that. And into the criteria for managing unfunded requests. Our question to them at this stage will be, do you think the structure of the rubric, the weighting system that we have set up, the way that we have incorporated Program Prioritization outcomes as well as the things that were influencers of Program Prioritization outcomes, honors the process's intent to link Program Prioritization and our university's mission with budget. This will be the first step in the interaction of APC and RSB. Then, as we move along and start implementing that framework to allocate resources and make decisions, we will be inviting them back periodically to show where our process is leading us to and ask for feedback. It's really more about not asking you to come in and vote on things, but asking you to be communicators and provide feedback, is the process doing what we said it would do? What we told the campus that it would do? Are we using the data that we developed through Program Prioritization and, subsequently, through RSB or APC, faculty senate requests, etc. to inform our budget process and effectively link our campus strategic priorities to our budget in a tangible and transparent way. That's how we see it going and I think there will be an opportunity for the APC faculty lead and the RSB chair to ask more questions, bring it back to you as an interactive process. The reason that we

haven't had the opportunity to have the two chairs at our Executive Budget Committee to date, I'll be honest, we have been crazy overwhelmed with having to deal with the five and ten percent budget cuts in areas and the requests coming in from Springfield. Every second of our budget committee has been usurped by something that was due yesterday. Dr. Blazey is on the EBC, I don't know if you want to add anything, maybe you could repeat what I said in a clearer fashion.

Blazey: I will just stress that this is an iterative process. We are still developing the policies and how we are going to take input from the various directions. The feedback would be welcome and you can rest assured that we will iterate at least a few more times before we set up our policies. I will agree with Lisa, that it is very hard to get to the regular order because we are reacting to situations as they arise.

Freeman: Any questions?

It was moved by Hunt and seconded by Wilkens to approve the minutes from September 26, 2016. The motion passed unanimously pending potential input from Blazey.

Subcommittee B with Isabel presented their review findings for the following programs:

Institute for Nano Science, Engineering and Technology (INSET)
Northern Illinois Center for Accelerator and Detector Development (NICADD)
Physics Department

INSET

Strengths, Discussion Points/Areas for Improvement and Recommendations for the Future were all covered.

Additional comments:

Lurio: INSET, as an institute, has not been performing up to the needs that it could, but that doesn't mean that the university doesn't still get benefit from its function. The institute needs to carefully consider its mission and reorganize. I don't know that its mission has been clearly defined. In terms of outcomes, the institute promotes research and collaboration in Nano Science with an ultimate outcome of more externally supported funding. That should be the clear outcome or goal. In terms of its role, the advisory role is what it is doing now, but I think that there are more important roles that it could have. In particular, there is the need for support of shared physical infrastructure for research in Nano Science. Specifically, there is scientific equipment in Chemistry, Physics and Engineering, which have a high cost for maintenance. This should be shared between faculty. As an institute, this is the ideal place whose function it is to share resources. The fact, I think didn't come across clearly, is that this center has not been functioning to do what it should be doing. I think in principle, that's the goal. I think its function is to support shared facilities, which enable scientific research in Nano Science and the outcome should be externally supported funding to support those research activities.

Winkler: Thank you for that clarification. One of the questions that we did specifically ask was for clarification on whether the research resources were shared. And we never really got information to clear this up. The other question that we asked was whether there was an interdisciplinary collaboration or if there was an interest in this. External speakers, internal cohesion with members of the group, and the answer was no and there didn't seem to be a vision for the future where these

things would exist. It is good to know that there are some physical resources that are shared and that might form the bedrock of this institute.

Lurio: I do agree that finding good leadership for that institute is needed. I don't disagree with your ultimate conclusion but I do think it would be wrong to consider its main goal as advisory. Its main goal should be to be in the trenches helping to further research goals.

Isabel: Do you see the leadership coming from the Department of Physics?

Lurio: I think, to be most successful, it should be collaborative. I think it should involve Physics and Engineering and Chemistry, in particular. Engineering is going to be under new leadership soon, so I don't know how that is going to work out in terms of their efforts in Nano Science. Chemistry is currently hiring a large number of new faculty. I think that presents an opportunity to redevelop that interest in Nano Science. I talked to the chair in Chemistry and he is enthusiastic about that option. Conversations with Engineering should probably wait until there is a new dean.

Discussion on the Program Prioritization categorization for this institute.

NICADD:

Strengths, Discussion Points/Areas for Improvement and Recommendations for the Future were all covered.

Additional comments:

Lurio: I think a lot of the activities of the center that you mentioned are important, but I think that the central function of the center was, again, the ability to fund scientific staff who are non-faculty is absolutely central and uses a large part of the central funding. This is a unique ability which allows us to work for Fermilab. In fact, a large portion of the joint projects with Fermilab allow us to design, assemble and test new equipment. This relies critically on the ability to fund scientific staffing. This center really makes that possible. The other activities are outcomes of that center. I would like to make a point about the fellowships because I think it's a bit more than just, if we could pay people more, we would get better students. Essentially, every senior graduate working in NICADD is funded by external grants after their second year. We have more external grant money than qualified students to work on those projects. However, we can't get the good students in because the grants are not going to fund them in their first year. We bring them in as teaching assistants. The good students are successful and we can support them at a higher level of pay once we bring them onto grants, but if we can't get them in the door on the level of teaching assistant (TA) stipends. This is a real problem for us. The other thing that I would like to say, similar to INSET, I think there are very exciting opportunities for enhanced collaboration. They have been very useful partners in a number of projects. I think that could probably be expanded. I think we have to wait to see how the new dean will set priorities for that school. I think this is certainly a place where the centers could become an important part of the university.

Isabel: Do you feel like the center is well known? The marketing for it is such that students know about the center?

Lurio: That is an interesting question. I haven't thought of it in those terms before. It is hard to say. I would have to think about it more.

Isabel: I think of it in terms of how do they find us? If students are looking for a program, our proximity to these accelerator labs and the opportunities, you would think that would be a draw.

Lurio: Marketing to students, from communications with NICADD, there have been a lot of personal contacts. Chiefly through faculty and collaboration on large projects with other universities that would recommend our university. That has gotten us our top notch students. I don't know how you would enhance that through marketing. I think to some extent, the quality of the program speaks for itself. That is how you get the best students. However, if a student is considering attending NIU, but the pay is two thousand dollars a year less than somewhere else, they may choose not to come here.

Isabel: Do the students understand when they come in that the second year funding increases considerably?

Lurio: They are guaranteed funding by departmental rules for two years as teaching assistants. And then after their second year, we tell them they have to find a grant somewhere. They may not know that coming in the door. Honestly, that is a difficult argument to make to somebody, we pay you less, but maybe we will pay you more after two years. I would say that the second year students are strongly encouraged to get into a research project that is funded as soon as possible.

Freeman: Can I add something? I often function as the Vice-President for Research where this particular institute is concerned because of Dr. Blazey's possible conflict of interest. Having been at this institution for six years, and having dealt with both INSET and NICADD for a significant amount of time over time, I think your insights are very appropriate. In rich times, it was easy for NIU to get earmarks to launch research initiatives. How faculty responded to that money in terms of using it to build something sustainable varies. It varies across the institution. I will just say that scientists in NICADD have done everything right to take the investment that came to them through federally appropriated funds, to vigorously pursue federal funding in all possible forms, to make possible for this institution faculty hires in very lean times by leveraging the resources they brought in, in partnership with the federal laboratories and that there are things that they are responsible for as a center and institute that most people are not aware of. We would not have STEM outreach if it weren't for NICADD. Their scientists are very good citizens. The degree of Engineering collaboration in that center that exists is because the Physics Department was aggressive in making partnerships and seeking collaboration. My experience in the time that I have been here, when there was a student issue, a student that needed to be rescued, student that had potential, these are our best faculty. Our best scientists, excellent leaders and every aspect of this institutions mission is considered by those scientists. I just wanted to go on the record as saying Jerry would be too shy to say it, and I think your insights were completely appropriate and this is a very valuable asset to NIU.

Discussion on which category this center was in for Program Prioritization and what this might mean to the center in terms of resources. Additionally, the value of the center to the university as somewhat covered previously.

Blazey: One thing that characterizes all of the center and institutes here at NIU, is that we have not given them any administrative help at all. They are piggy backing on departments and offices and sometimes augmenting that themselves with indirect resources they receive as centers. One of the things that I did add to the narrative for the division plan as part of Program Prioritization was some sort of centralized administrative services. Initially, it could be centralized, but maybe they should be in the colleges. The fact that they are spending their indirect funding, which we would like them to use to promote research activities on their administrative activities, you could argue that's an appropriate expenditure. However, I would think there would be some economy of scale and more

appropriate use if we somehow funded it out of somewhere more centrally. That is the \$10,000 that Dr. Vishnu Zutshi was talking about.

Isabel: Thank you for helping us understand that.

Physics Programs:

Discussion of departmental context occurred first. Strengths, Discussion Points/Areas for Improvement and Recommendations for the Future were all covered.

Discussion of B.S. in Physics. Strengths, Discussion Points/Areas for Improvement and Recommendations for the Future were all covered.

Discussion about assessment for this program and using the information received.

Discussion about the best roles for teaching assistants to fill.

Discussion about strengths of undergraduate and graduate programs.

Additional comments:

Lurio: I think a lot of your summary was accurate and useful. I would like to address two issues. In terms of recruitment, I have not found it easy to find resources to help my department to improve. In some ways, there seems to be the admissions office operating entirely independent of the college at large. No one has ever come to me from admissions and asked for an opportunity for them to try to attract students to the major. I sincerely appreciate the point, but we need to advertise the appeal of the major to students and I would like to see a partnership that is stronger between the admissions department who has an opportunity to talk to and work with students.

Freeman: There are a number of conversations going on right now about how the colleges can work more effectively and efficiently in synergy with admissions. And in fact, two weeks from tomorrow, the entire Council of Deans agenda is devoted to a conversation among marketing, communications, admissions, and the colleges to figure that out. I think that you, Larry, and your department and your college are not alone in struggling to figure out how they can help with admissions. I think the feeling is, people are leaning forward, they want to make a difference and they are not really getting enough guidance as to how to do that effectively. That is going to be the topic of conversation. Leading up to it, by now everyone has seen the funnel model for admissions where you start with inquires and you go to application and then admissions and yield. The questions that the colleges have asked specifically are at the very top of the funnel where we are essentially buying names from the testing services. Is there any way to provide colleges and departments with the names of students that have specifically indicated an interest in a discipline? That way, they can be aware of those students and then, even more importantly, as you get to the bottom of the funnel, and we are trying to get admitted students to come here, how can the college be deployed effectively, so they are reaching out to students with an interest in what their discipline is, rather than being randomly asked to come to a call center and call people that may be part of any type of effort for the college. This will be the focus for more than an hour in a half discussion because it is really important and your view is shared widely across the academic community.

Lurio: The second point that I wanted to make was in regard to assessment. I won't hide the fact that I have experienced a lot of frustration with the assessment process. I understand the importance of the assessment goals, but I have a lot of difficulty connecting the process that we are

using with achieving those goals. We are administering exams that may or may not actually assess what's relevant that is coming out of our program. Just because one can identify what information you would like to have doesn't mean that you can identify a process that gets you that. If the assessment office would work with us to provide real help with connecting our goals with our process, that would be very useful. I think my frustration in the past has been that they spend most of their time explaining the process, which I have not been satisfied that it has been working for our department. I actually think that would be great and I would love to engage more closely in a conversation with them to work out how to do assessment that is meaningful. My experience has been extremely difficult process to know how to do. If you were to ask me what's the right way to assess I'd say let's wait until someone is ninety years old, who graduated from NIU, and ask was your life well lived? However, that's not a process that we are working on.

Douglass: I would suggest, having worked in that office, that one of the most effective ways to get really meaningful assessment, is by someone in the assessment office attending your faculty retreat and really talking about assessment together, instead of the chair trying to translate that information to a whole group.

Falkoff: I think that is definitely true. I hear what you are coming from too. If we are going to be jumping through these hoops and put forward that effort, we have to make this meaningful.

Lurio: I appreciate that advice and I think that is probably a place where we need to put our energy into. That might be a good place to start.

Douglass: Again, when I was in that office, there were times that I would actually go to a class with faculty members. You have to understand what people are doing before you can really help them assess what they are doing. Meeting with faculty and trying to figure out what they are trying to achieve is critical to that process.

Isabel: I'm sure you're doing a lot of assessment, but you may not think of it as an assessment activity. You have labs. So something that we do is just pre and post lab tests to make sure that people are ready for the lab. If you look at those over a period of time, that is an assessment activity. That's why I think what Carolinda said, is have someone from assessment just come and talk to the faculty as a whole. What kind of activities are you doing and then look at how that can be an assessment that you can report on.

Freeman: Can I make one comment about the master's degree and honors society? I thought about it. Many of our students from diverse backgrounds chose other honors societies as their vehicles for recognition other than university honors, even though they certainly have the qualifications for university honors. John Henry Clark, or there are a number of other ones. I think our documents should reflect and track participation in any honor society and we should make that correction.

Discussion of M.S. in Physics. Strengths, Discussion Points/Areas for Improvement and Recommendations for the Future were all covered. A lot more progress could be made rather than having to duplicate efforts that we may not even be aware of.

Additional comments:

Lurio: In terms of job data, we actually have had very strong success with placing students in positions. And we have met with people who run companies that place people and they have said that the skills that you are learning in the Physics Ph.D., which are how to analyze experimental data

and making rational decisions about what's meaningful and not, are actually the skills that they value much more than the technical computer skills and how to run the latest version of software. In some sense, I think that we are actually succeeding very well in that area.

Discussion about collaboration.

Lurio: The trick is that our graduates could use about six month of work in an internship with internal programs to translate their skills into opportunities. And that is an area where I think it would be very powerful for our students' success. Something like the Business School with a Ph.D. could then take that Ph.D. and when they transition to a job search, they could do a three month or a six month internship from the Business School to learn about how to translate their skills to business. I think there are lots of conversations that could happen. In regards to diversity, we had a conversation recently and one interesting point came up. The graduate school supports Rhoten Smith Scholarships, which supports fifty percent of a stipend. A long time ago, we used to take in students on Rhoten Smith as half time TAs with a half time scholarship. As our TA funding is cut, they ended up having Rhoten Smith scholars do full time TAs. We took Rhoten Smith's money and that encouraged us to take in as many minority and female students, which is where we tended to be lacking. We were not actually given enough support to actually have Rhoten Smith scholars get half time relief from their teaching duties. We have had a number of borderline students, that I suspect, could have really used the extra time to have been more successful in their graduate studies. I think there is a tie in between our ability to court minority students who are having difficulty and the benefit from the scholarship and our total TA funding. I would like to come back again to that issue. I'm not saying that all minority students are going to necessarily need more assistance than our other students, but my point is, if you have a scholarship there, that is to provide an opportunity to folks in their studies and gives them a higher chance of success. You never know why a student does poorly, and within the students that we had, eventually they were able to graduate, but I would say that there were issues where having more available, certainly helped. In some sense, those opportunities would work. There is a problem getting people to come in the door in the first place is another challenge. Honestly, we are not turning away students that we know will be successful. I would say rather, we have more students that we have to take a risk with whether they will be successful. Sometimes that pays off and sometimes it doesn't. In those cases, having a scholarship to reduce their load would help.

Discussion about internship availability to graduate students.

Discussion of Ph.D. in Physics. Strengths, Discussion Points/Areas for Improvement and Recommendations for the Future were all covered.

Additional comments:

Lurio: We prepared that information for our external reviewers. It turns out that if you want to find out what your graduates are doing, sending them letters is useless. Tracking them down individually works.

Freeman: Facebook works too.

Lurio: We have actually been able to track, I would say seventy-five percent. If you would like that data at some point, it is available.

Douglass: We have it, at least if it is part of the information for the external reviewers.

Reynolds: There is data from the alumni survey, there is also data at the local level within the department. In terms of the external reviewers, that seems to be more relevant to the questions that were being asked in this new and ever changing cycle.

Douglass: That is something that we could put on Blackboard.

Isabel: Are a lot of them going into academics?

Lurio: I wish I had the table in front of me now. I think about forty to fifty percent are involved in academia, but that's not always at the faculty level. We have some that are involved as faculty, some that are research scientists with academic centers. And with faculty, there is community college and university. The biggest surprise that this exercise created for me, would be the number of students that are involved in data analytics. That was a much higher number than I had anticipated. And then those in the medical field, was also much higher than I expected. Either medical physics or medical related.

Physics dashboard was shown by Jeff Reynolds.

Discussion of pipeline between undergraduate to graduate studies.

Mogren: I've been thinking about this the last couple of sessions. We've had Biology and Physics. I don't know quite how to phrase this. One of the things that I'm noticing is that we are offering a consistent messaging to units. Some of it is, seek better efficiencies, maybe share equipment for example. Maybe there's better coordination between units and things like that. The bottom line message that we are giving everybody is do more, work harder. Fine, we can get the names of people to talk to in the funnel, but someone has to sit down and make those calls. We want to have great retention, so that means that we need to have some greater advising in departments and that takes time. We are asking people to provide greater and greater assessment and I guarantee that if you ask a chair from ten years ago, what their job was compared to what their job is now, the chairs are pushing out a blizzard of stuff. And it is frustrating for them. We used to have chairs that could pursue research agendas, maybe even teach a couple of classes, now they are frantic to get the paperwork out on a day to day basis. Go out and talk to recruiters, go out and talk to community colleges... that's great, follow up on alumni, give them calls, put Facebook posts on. Then take all of that data and derive some kind of meaning from it, for an outcome that none of us are quite sure yet, what it will be. I think that's a... I don't know if it's a troubling message, but I think it is one that is being pushed out a lot. I suspect that there are a number of faculty who feel that they are already working pretty hard and the last thing that they need to do is to sit down and spend six hours some night calling families of potential students. I get all of that, but that is the message that I think is increasingly difficult to deal with in situations like this. I don't know what the solution is exactly, but you will especially see it in the Regional History Center. They can't even fill their basic functions, much less go out and try to generate revenues or start up a campaign. These are all great ideas, but this all takes money, and time and resources. I'm actually feeling really uncomfortable with saying to people, you just have to work harder, you just need to give more. Eventually, the message is just going to stop and people are going to say, I'm not going to do it again. This is just something that I am a little concerned about as I hear reports and we talk to people that are doing incredible jobs and we say you're not doing enough. That makes me very uncomfortable. That is my two cents.

Isabel: I would counter that we are not telling people that they are not doing a good job. I thought this committee is all about reviewing things and giving feedback. We know that we have the quality here, but does the outside world know that? I think when we say something like connect with your alums, or try to work with marketing.

Mogren: I'm not suggesting that we don't do a good job. There are terrific units here on campus but making the contacts with alumni, going out and making connections, all of these things take time. They take someone having to do it, and we can ask that, and we certainly have in the last three or four years, the message is we have to pull together. I see it in my colleagues, I see it when we talk to departments, and they are just tired and are being asked to do more. And they are being asked to do more of the things that don't seem to genuinely be creating the outcomes that would warrant the investment in time. What do I know about student recruitment? Sure, you could put a billboard on HWY 88, but does that work? We can hire someone for the administrative staff at a higher rate, and I don't mind doing that if I can see that there is a tangible return on the investment. Now if we are asked to produce assessment data, great, assessment for what? What is the outcome of the assessment to be? How can we generate assessment if you don't have a goal that is driving the assessment in the first place? Then it is just an exercise in trying to figure out what the moving target is. And there was a time when I think we were able to do more of that. Now, I think that people are finding that we are really stretching the limit on this. I'm not comfortable saying, you need to do more. You need to do more with retention without offering some kind of hope or some incentive that those kinds of efforts are going to be paid off in the long run. And I'm not alone on this. There are a lot of people feeling the same way. It's hard and I don't like to make recommendations to units like that. I guess that is my sense of it. I didn't mean to usurp the agenda.

Freeman: I think it is a very fair comment. We also have to remember that this committee work is going on while the resource reallocation plans are being developed. Perhaps it would be useful to remind everybody that some of the suggestions that are made by the committee will require resources and they may or may not get those resources. And whether or not they take up the suggestions of the committee is going to be completely dependent on what the available resources are. That is reality. We cannot, as a university, do everything we have always done and just keep doing more. It is not going to work. I don't dispute that at all. In this case, we had a department where one of the two centers was fairly successful. The graduate programs were identified as candidates for enhanced resources. The bachelors program was identified as a candidate for transformation, and the department chair actually asked about how he could work better with admissions. I think the responses that the committee gave were appropriate, but the overall frustration level that you are expressing I totally understand. Our faculty are doing the best they can, like squirrels in a wheel without seeing a future and without seeing the hope and the incentives. On the other hand, I think that the administration is also working very hard to try to figure out how not to just keep doing the same things and wishing for a different result. We think about that every single day. We care deeply about the institution and the faculty although I know that is not always apparent. We are dealing in very difficult times too with having a seventy percent budget cut last year, and fifty percent of our budget awarded at the beginning of this year is certainly creating a financial stress on the institution.

Mogren: I'm not meaning to dis the administration on this. You are working on this.

Freeman: We know that this is really hard.

Mogren: I don't think there is anybody that is just sitting back and letting it slide, but it's hard. It's hard for me to come to a meeting like this and say, really what I think you need to do is figure out how to raise more money. Now grants are a little different because that's the sciences, but in my world, we don't have that. Also, I think in a broader conversation, what is our function in doing these kinds of reviews, do we ask for information or make recommendations? Up to this point, making recommendations I thought, has been important. Right now, I'm reluctant to make recommendations because we don't know what the outcome is going to be. How do you take a program from point A to point B when you don't know what point B is? You can't make recommendation like that. On a whole, individuals are doing good work. That is my frustration. Thank you for hearing me out.

Freeman: I want to add one more thing. Maybe part of the recommendations that emerged that haven't been a part of our recommendation as a committee before, are when we actually know it's a program that was in a category that was suggested for reduced resources or a program that is struggling to do some of the core function is asking the program what they could stop doing to save themselves. Some time, some money, some frustration, and take the limited amount of human and other resources that are available and put it more towards the core mission of their unit, their department, the university. Those aren't really conversations that we've ever had before. And they are hard ones to start having and to figure out how to have.

Isabel: That's the impression that we got from this institute. If they are not putting effort towards that, could they put effort towards the things that are working well? I don't know.

Discussion on subcommittee chair-in-training for 2016-17 (subcommittee chair for 2017-18). Jan Strom was nominated by Gordon and the motion was seconded by Wilkens. The motion passed unanimously. No nominations were given for the second chair-in-training.

Discussion on UAP member. No nominations were made.

Request for members of subcommittee A to stay and fill out a short survey regarding their last meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Essex