

# ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL

April 1, 2019

3:00 p.m. Altgeld 315

## Minutes

Present: Abdel-Motaleb, Barnhart, Blazey, Cripe, Douglass, Einolf, Falkoff, Gordon, McCord, McEvoy, Mogren, Reynolds, Siblik, Subramony, and Zinger

Meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m.

### 1. Announcements

- No announcements.

### 2. Approval of minutes from March 4, 2019

- First motion made by Donald Zinger
- Second motion was made by John Siblik
- Motion passed

### 3. Discussion of subcommittee reports

- Siblik gave an overview of the Subcommittee B report: B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in Chemistry
  - The Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry is large enough to support state of the art labs, but small enough for one-on-one attention and research experience with faculty.
  - The department is under the leadership of Ralph Wheeler who was hired as the Chair in 2016.
    - I. Data showed research funding was low and a change of culture within the department was needed.
    - II. Planning began immediately with discussion in the department about which areas to focus on for the future while also needing to adhere to the strong traditional approach to the four core areas of Chemistry.
    - III. One of the key arrangements with the new chair was the promise of hiring four faculty, bringing the total faculty to 18.
      - a. Have been able to diversify faculty, but hope to diversify further.
  - The department strives to make a difference in students' lives.
  - Departmental Context
    - I. The department's goal is to build a world class department.
    - II. There is a need for more faculty and improved infrastructure.
    - III. One of the major goals of the department is to increase funding.
    - IV. There is a need for transition planning at the department level due to expected retirements.
    - V. The department needs instrumentation.

- a. The external reviewers noted that the department should update the instrumentation, labs, improve health and safety, and perform a general upgrade in the facilities.
  - b. The external reviewers found that the building is past its lifecycle.
    - 1. It is expected that the students be trained on the latest equipment.
  - c. The department has been active in solving these issues.
    - 1. Were awarded a quarter million instrumentation grant.
    - 2. Additional success for the department includes securing one million in National Science Foundation (NSF) funding for scholarships.
      - Will go to rising NIU students and transfers within STEM fields.
  - d. The department offers two undergraduate degree paths that are approved by the American Chemical Society.
- VI. Department Strategic Goals
- a. The department has undertaken a strategic planning process.
  - b. Improve research funding.
  - c. Improve curriculum for both graduate and undergraduate levels.
  - d. Recruit graduate students.
  - e. Increase G.A. stipend to cover health care insurance, as the University's peers do not charge for health insurance costs.
- VII. Additional Initiatives
- a. Improve the department's management.
  - b. The department has a strategy to recruit transfer students.
  - c. Improve Alumni relations.
    - 1. The department has relaunched the Chemistry newsletter.
  - d. The department has been working with Earl Jackson, an NIU Development Officer, and has secured \$50K in unrestricted funding and a commitment for \$15K in graduate funding for three years or \$15K total.
- VIII. Strengths
- a. The faculty is productive with high publication rates.
  - b. The external reviewer found that the department is well organized.
  - c. Strong tradition in regards to assessment, however there is a struggle with institutional continuity.
  - d. Cost of instruction is low, but the department believes the price is borne by overworked faculty.
- IX. Challenges/Areas for Improvement
- a. Credit hour generation is down 10% at the undergraduate level.

- b. There are challenges in regards to finding and updating the labs.
  - c. Health and safety related to ventilation may also be an issue.
  - d. The external reviewer noted a significant concern with operating budget reduction over the past decade.
- X. Resources
- a. There are some morale issues.
    - 1. Some are highly engaged, while others could step-up more.
  - b. Research Grants are currently at \$404K and the goal is \$2.5-4.5 million.
- XI. Staff
- a. The external review noted that the staff is border-line adequate.
  - b. Need three staff for instrumentation, one office manager, one in store room.
  - c. There have been staff losses and faculty have had to step-up.
  - d. The Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships supplements staff needs on an interim basis for the next three years.
  - e. Douglass asked if the needed staff positions were previous positions or a new area of hire.
    - 1. This would be to get to an adequate level.
    - 2. Current staff are updating labs and student workers have been deployed to offset staff shortages.
    - 3. Personnel does not seem to be a safety issue.
- XII. Facilities
- a. The building is an issue.
  - b. Ventilation needs some attention.
    - 1. Students do not want to take the second organic chemistry class due to the fumes.
  - c. Douglass asked if there are any plans to correct the ventilation issue.
    - 1. The Department of Technology has been involved in air quality studies. They are also considering hazardous materials that might be utilized to come up with a disposal plan.
    - 2. The department is reconfiguring some experiments and using materials that are less toxic and prone to fumes.
  - d. McCord stated that it is preferred to renovate existing buildings; however, Faraday Hall might be an exception.
    - 1. An analysis would be necessary to determine whether the building should be replaced or renovated.
- XIII. Research
- a. The external reviewer noted there are areas of strength and opportunities regarding faculty research.

- b. The external reviewer indicated the department should have a goal of at least 15 well-funded groups.
- XIV. Diversity
  - a. Striving for a more diverse department.
    - 1. The B.S. program has good diversity with the intent to recruit Hispanic students and City College students through the NSF funding.
  - b. Working on plans to recruit graduate students from the University of Illinois Chicago and International Ph.D. students.
  - c. Large equity gaps.
    - 1. The department has narrowed the equity gap for Chemistry 110.
      - One of the issues is large class size with about 200 students.
      - One solution would be additional teaching assistant lines for study sections.
  - d. Credit hours are declining.
- XV. Recommendations
  - a. Increase external funding.
  - b. Collaborate with the Department of Technology and Department of Environmental Health and Safety to work on studies such as monitoring the air quality.
  - c. Collaborate with Argonne Lab.
  - d. Partnerships with the Department of Computer Science.
  - e. Work on corporate partnerships.
  - f. Highlight all the majors across NIU that need to take Chemistry.
  - g. Faculty could get more involved with external organizations.
  - h. The department may benefit from a more organized mentoring program for new faculty.
- B.S. in Chemistry
  - I. Strengths
    - a. Strong program with the traditional five areas covered.
    - b. Strong record of accomplishment with assessment.
    - c. The external reviewer found that the curriculum is well balanced, up-to-date, and serves the students well.
    - d. The department places students in top Ph.D. programs.
    - e. Upgraded the computer data collection system, which now is on par with community college protocol.
  - II. Challenges/Areas for Improvement
    - a. Continue to improve curriculum and perform updates on assessment.
    - b. The department has a significant number of transfers.
      - 1. Looking to recruit more transfer students.
  - III. Recommendations

- a. Look more closely into how to recruit students from earlier courses such as Chemistry 100.
    - b. Enhance alumni relations.
    - c. Look to alumni for internship opportunities.
  - M.S. in Chemistry
    - I. Strengths
      - a. The external reviewers felt that this is a strong program.
    - II. Challenges/Areas for Improvement
      - a. Lacking resources for students.
      - b. Enrollment is slightly below average for a program its size.
    - III. Recommendations
      - a. Recruit more NIU Students into the program.
      - b. Continue to develop and launch new Master's online-program, Industrial Masters.
  - Ph.D. in Chemistry
    - I. Challenges/Areas for Improvement
      - a. Increase grant funding so that doctoral students are on paid research grants.
      - b. Graduate students pay for health insurance and fees.
        - 1. This makes it difficult to recruit students.
- McEvoy asked if there was any discussion regarding faculty lines and the number of students enrolled.
  - It seems to be comparable to peers.
  - Blazey stated the department should have higher research productivity.
    - I. Has increased in the last three years.
  - McCord stated that a commitment was made for a caliber Chemistry program with a research profile.
    - I. There was an initial investment to catalyze the growth of research that only succeeded to a certain extent.
    - II. The facilities are much more of an issue for teaching rather than research.
  - Cripe mentioned that each of the faculty members have about 10-15 bachelor students completing independent studies.
- Falkoff gave an overview of the Subcommittee B report from the March 4, 2019 meeting: B.S. and M.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education
  - Departmental Context
    - I. Strengths
      - a. Faculty expertise is wide ranging, have received numerous teaching and service awards, and have generated significant grant money.
      - b. Accredited programs.
      - c. The department's morale is very strong.
    - II. Challenges/Areas for Improvement/Discussion Points
      - a. Hoping to expand online and hybrid summer course offerings.
      - b. There was an issue with the Test of Academic Proficiency.

1. Illinois has suspended the requirement beginning in June.
  - c. Faculty productivity is high quality; however, they cannot produce the quantity due to teaching responsibilities.
    1. Teaching load is 3:3.
- III. Recommendations to the Department/College
- a. Engagement with Alumni.
  - b. Develop a strategy to meet the current teacher shortage.
  - c. Develop a marketing and communications strategy.
  - d. Focus on increasing the number of respondents on the exit survey.
- B.S. in Early Childhood Education
- I. Strengths
    - a. Strong personalized advising program.
    - b. Enrollment as increased by 96.4% since 2013.
      1. Retention has been around 95%.
    - c. Gordon asked about the graduate rate.
      1. In 2013, 35 degrees were conferred.
        - This number went down to 18 in 2017.
        - Enrollment is going up.
      2. McEvoy mentioned that starting salaries vary depending on the setting.
    - d. Graduates are performing strongly on state content tests.
    - e. Received full accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.
  - II. Challenges/Areas for Improvement/Discussion Points
    - a. Recruitment of minority candidates needs improvement.
    - b. Significant gender disparity with an overwhelmingly female student body.
  - III. Recommendations for the Future
    - a. Working on improving diversity.
    - b. Expand online and hybrid course offerings.
    - c. Develop programs such as 3+2 or 4+1 programs that will help transition students into existing graduate programs.
- M.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education
- I. Strengths
    - a. Enrollment has increased by 60% since 2015 along with the retention rate.
    - b. Candidates have done well on the edTPA exam.
  - II. Challenges/Areas for Improvement/Discussion Points
    - a. Marketing could be improved.
    - b. Gender disparities are marked in this program as well.
    - c. What is the program doing to address The Program Prioritization Academic Task Force comments from 2016?
      1. The program is investigating options for additional cohorts. Promoting programs at regional and state

conferences and through distributing updated fliers to local school districts.

2. The program is also working with the College of Education to learn more about opportunities for recruitment and retention at the graduate level.
3. Enrollment in the B.S.Ed. has continued to increase over the past couple of years, in part due to changes in the entry point for teacher licensure.
  - This has provided a quicker pathway for candidates to enter the program.
  - The program is also working with community college partners to create 2+2 pathways and/or better transition services for transfer candidates.

III. Recommendations for the Future

- a. Enhance opportunities for faculty/candidate research projects.
- b. Consider enhancing online and hybrid course options.
- c. Focus on increasing the number of respondents in the exit survey.
- d. Engage with university sub branding efforts to market award-winning Board-Certified Behavior Analyst program.

**4. Other Business**

- Mogren stated he would like items in advance for the subcommittee meeting on Monday April 8, 2019.

Meeting adjourned at 4:11 p.m.  
Respectfully submitted,  
Crystal Doyle and Jessica Jaimes