

**President's College-Wide Advisory Committee on Academic Planning
Meeting Minutes
3.22.10**

Present: J. Cullen, W. Cunningham, N. DeChillo, N. Dennis, B. Doran, M. Fregeau,
A. Greenstein, E. Haran, K. Kuehnle, L. Little, K. Mallick, K. Ratner, P. Sablock,
M. Sweeney, L. Swiniarski.

Guest: Kristin Esterberg, Academic Vice President/Provost

Chair Mark Fregeau called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. in CC 131.

He welcomed Provost Esterberg, and thanked her for coming.

Remarks of Provost Esterberg

The Provost thanked the committee for its hard work, and began by addressing several concerns which have been brought to her attention.

Concern #1: Will the departmental review process result in faculty layoffs?

Answer: No. Salem State does not have enough full-time faculty as it is. The process of program reviews will not be the first step or the last step towards layoffs. Layoffs are definitely not on the agenda.

Concern #2: Will the departmental review process lead to the merging of departments?

Answer: No. Doing mergers against the will of faculty is not a good thing and will not be done. There is very little to gain in forcing mergers on faculty against their will. Faculty have the Provost's clear statement and clear pledge that forced departments will not occur as a result of the departmental review process.

Concern #3: Why hasn't Lucille McCarter been at work for the past week or so?

Answer: Lucille, unfortunately, has been very ill with pneumonia. She has not been laid off.

Discussion

Recorder's note: The following questions, responses, and comments were made during and following the meeting with the Provost. The majority of items are recorded in the order in which they were made. However, some points are clustered with similar thoughts to promote continuity in reading.

Merging of departments

Committee Member: Would you clarify what was meant by the statement that the merging of departments will not occur against the will of departments? Does this mean that mergers might still take place?

Provost: The Provost will not initiate mergers. Mergers will occur only at the behest of faculty. However, if faculty from different departments see valid academic reasons for mergers, and submitted a proposal, the Provost would consider it.

Flow sheets

Committee Member: Will cost cutting come from reducing the number of flow sheets?

Provost: Yes. Reducing the number of flow sheets seems a likely way to reduce costs. There are hidden costs involved with managing flow sheets. For example, there are administrative expenses related to academic advising and recruiting students. Further, some chairs must spend significant amounts of time administering large numbers of flow sheets.

The Provost expressed concern about the large number of classes that run with only four to six students, and about the fact that many students must do independent studies to fulfill requirements. This is a real cost that should be reduced.

Committee Member: Independent studies count as only .25 of a course teaching load.

Provost: We should not rely on arranging independent studies to enable students to graduate.

Committee Member: Many departments have already made changes in the content and number of flow sheets. Could we have not just requested that departments reduce the number of flow sheets in the first place without instituting this big process [departmental reviews] that has disturbed faculty?

Provost: The Provost understands faculty concerns over departmental reviews. Perhaps, though, it takes direction of a campus wide process to foster a cross-campus dialogue and interdepartmental cooperation.

Committee Member: If the evaluation process focuses solely on the reduction of the number of flow sheets, we might miss good possibilities for program expansion and interdepartmental cooperation.

Arts and Sciences departments and data gathering

Committee Member: I am concerned about the fact that the evaluation criteria (student outcomes, for example) rely on data not typically gathered by departments in the School of Arts

and Sciences (SOAS). These departments might not be able to get this type of data by the end of the departmental review process.

Provost: While liberal arts departments within the School of Arts and Sciences may not have gathered evaluative data in the past, they will need to put evaluation processes in place soon for NEASC. While NCATE and other accrediting organizations have not required quantitative data, NEASC is now insisting on it. If SOAS departments do not have time to gather quantitative data by the inception of the NEASC evaluation, they could still show that they are making progress towards gathering data. NEASC is exerting clear pressure on liberal arts departments to conduct evaluations. I believe in making steady progress even if that progress is a series of small steps.

Our academic programs excel in many different ways. Some prepare students for jobs; others prepare for admission to graduate school. Still others help at-risk students graduate from college. Therefore, the evaluation criteria need to be flexible enough to accommodate all departments and their differing goals.

Committee member: Could new majors be proposed as a result of the program review process?

Provost: Absolutely. But, we have to make sure resources are there to support the new major, and that there is a demand for the new major.

Participation in the departmental review process

Committee member: Why can't departments see the program reviews as opportunities to "toot their horns" instead of sticking their heads in the sand, fearing job losses?

Committee member: The faculty need to view the department reviews positively, as ways to improve.

Comment member: If Salem State does not make changes in its academic programs, outsiders will – just look at what has happened in K-12 over the past 20 years. We need to showcase who we are, and to get rid of obsolete programs. We need to put a good spin on this - to make our own decisions on how to be better - instead of having others tell us what to do.

Definition of a program

Committee member: Can departments self-define what a program is, and provide a rationale for it?

Provost: Yes, but we should consider if there is a downside to this. What is gained by this approach?

Committee member: Departments could analyze how many students are in various programs, for example, options. If enrollment is low and students are not graduating, there should be

more scrutiny. The fact that people like particular options or that we've always had it are not reasons enough to keep an option with low enrollments.

Committee member: There definitely is a need to differentiate between weak and strong options, and most departments would provide separate reports for each option.

Committee member: The definition of a program should be open-ended. We should let departments apply criteria as they wish to each program.

Logistics of gathering, organizing, and analyzing data

Committee member: We need to make a matrix for analyzing data. I am concerned about the feasibility of creating a matrix – a simple matrix – to accommodate data from all departments and all programs.

Provost: One possibility would be to construct a grid with flow sheets on the left side and various criteria across the page.

Committee member: Would departments be expected to submit a separate report for each flow sheet?

Provost: No. For instance, Education has thirty-one flow sheets. Only one report, with references to the various programs, would suffice.

Provost: Are there any programs that don't have flow sheets?

Committee members: Yes. Many minors are courses selected at students' discretions. Yet, there is an implied structure to what constitutes a minor.

Committee member: Why don't departments start their reports by describing what they have in terms of academic program structures?

Committee member: Perhaps the best approach would be to adopt a "building block" approach, in which one starts with the basic courses and builds up to majors, minors, etc.. In this way, we could see how programs are aggregations of courses.

Committee member: After the process is complete, we will have developed criteria. However, we haven't developed a rubric involving the criteria. What will we do with the data collected?

Interdisciplinary courses

Provost: Who will write reports for interdisciplinary courses? Should the responsibility for the report lie with the Interdisciplinary Studies Department (IDS) or academic departments? If

some interdisciplinary studies programs don't have flow sheets, can they be considered programs for purposes of the departmental reviews?

Committee member: As one who advises an interdisciplinary studies minor, I would like to see both the academic department and IDS involved in the writing of the report section concerning interdisciplinary studies minors, etc..

Chairs and data

Committee member: I am concerned about the amount of work this process will put upon chairs. Can they get help with gathering data to take off the pressure?

Provost: I am thinking of breaking the process into chunks. For example, in this semester, the process would involve a) writing learning objectives and b) looking at data on enrollments. Harder tasks, such as writing occupational outcomes, would be done next year, along with other items for which data is not easily accessible. At some point, though, only chairs and faculty, persons with expertise in the academic field, can assess the effectiveness and suitability of programs.

Committee member: Enrollment Management's reports and other data on market trends don't get distributed to faculty and chairs. If the departmental reviews warrant numbers, relating to for example, who's coming to us from community colleges; what did they study at community colleges, and what is appealing in terms of fields of study – we need access to more sources of data.

Provost: The administration could see that this data is sent to chairs. Scott James can provide admissions data. In addition, we can get data on all configurations of student enrollment in courses, majors, minors, and any other cluster of courses.

Committee member: What was the motivation behind asking chairs to gather data when they have not been given the evaluation criteria for departmental reviews?

Provost: I do not believe that gathering enrollment data depends on having the criteria. The chairs need to keep moving forward, to keep gathering data. Tracking enrollment trends is a basic, fundamental activity. You have to know your numbers before you can move on.

Committee member: What is your intention, once the enrollment data is reported to you?

Provost: The Chairs and I will look at the data and think about its implications. I will urge chairs to send a narrative to accompany the data. This cannot be put off until next semester. There is still a lot to do. This summer, I will look at five year trends of enrollment data. It's in a department's best interest to provide a narrative along with the data. The narrative will tell the story of tracks and majors, and provide an explanation of enrollments. For instance, a program with low numbers may be relatively new.

Committee member: What about governance? How does all of this (gathering data on enrollments) fit into the governance structure?

Provost: The criteria for departmental reviews will go through governance. But, enrollment data analysis by department chairs seems to be related to policy decisions, not part of the governance process.

Committee member: Who will get the enrollment data submitted by chairs? What are you going to do with the data?

Provost: The Advisory Committee could get them. Everyone could see them.

Committee member: Whom can chairs consult if they need assistance retrieving data from the Z drive?

Provost: Amie Goodwin and Karen Sayles are available to help chairs retrieve data and resolve computer issues.

Committee member: To clarify, when you are talking about enrollment data, are you referring to Item IV, "Indicators," on page three of the "Format and Guidelines for Departmental Reports" (12.17.09)?

Provost: Yes. This list of criteria was taken from the arts and sciences program review documents that went through governance.

Departmental reviews, curriculum, and enrollment

Provost: Enrollments are currently down at Salem State, due partly to demographics, but maybe also – for other reasons. We're not appealing to students for some reason. Should we look at fast-growing fields, where an investment of resources is worth it?

Committee member: At the end of all of this, we don't want Salem State to become a vocational school. We can translate liberal arts into career areas.

Provost: There are other studies that can be helpful in defining our vision. Peter Hart Associates (<http://hartresearch.com/clients/higher.html>), has written studies that show the role of liberal arts colleges in developing skills like critical thinking.

Committee member: We shouldn't be fearful of enrollments being down.

Provost: But, we need to be cognizant of: Are we preparing our students for new fields? Graduate school? Or, to continue on in graduate programs here?

Committee member: The College has made changes that help retention and recruitment, notably the reduction in the number of credits for graduation and the easier acceptance of transfer students from community colleges.

Provost: Many students elect to transfer to the University of Massachusetts Boston, instead of coming here, since it's easier to transfer credits. I would like to attract more of these students.

Committee member: What are you going to do with the enrollment data?

Provost: The Board of Higher Education stipulates that any program that doesn't graduate five-six students a year should be ended. However, I will wait for the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and departments' recommendations before cutting a program.

The process - summarized

Mark Fregeau, Chair of Advisory Committee: I will send an email to chairs telling them that the committee minutes and evaluation criteria are posted on the Academic Affairs web site.

Committee member: To summarize, this is what we are doing. Departments are creating learning objectives. They are gathering numbers on enrollments. You (the Provost) has to address budget concerns in summer 2011. It seems that we are looking at the intersection of reality and the academic process. Is this correct?

Provost: Yes. I will not be making big budget decisions (such as ramping up departments) before seeing the report of the Advisory Committee. I will be looking at narratives to explain the enrollment data.

Committee member: The bottom line is that we are letting departments determine what their programs are.

Mark Fregeau, Chair of Advisory Committee: From my perspective, the main job for chairs is to present as complete a picture as possible of their programs and enrollments.

Provost, in closing

Provost: The Provost said she was happy to visit with the Advisory Committee, would be happy to come back, and would come as often as needed.

Mark Fregeau, Chair of Advisory Committee: On behalf of the committee, Mark Fregeau thanked the Provost for her time.

Discussion following Provost's visit

Enrollment data

Question: I have been putting enrollment trends into my annual reports for five years now. The Z drive has made this much easier. Am I alone in doing this?

Comment: I am still having problems with the notion that we are not going through the governance process. It seems that the administration is pushing the whole process too fast, especially the collection of enrollment data. This is problematic because the Provost will be looking at data by itself, not in the context of the entire report.

Comments: We've all been gathering data. The Provost will always look at numbers. It's her job.

Comment: The Provost is under time constraints to make budget. She cannot wait until the academic planning process is complete. In some situations, she needs to make decisions now.

Comment: It seems that the Advisory Committee is not in power. The Committee should be asking chairs for enrollment figures, not the Provost.

Response: I don't care. She's asking for input from the chairs.

Comment: The Provost will not wait until the Advisory Committee can respond. She is looking at the numbers independently.

Chairs' concerns

Comment: It seems like there are two levels of discussion: what the chairs are saying, and what we are doing on this committee.

Question: Did the chairs meet after the March 3 meeting? *Answer:* Yes. There was an informal meeting of chairs on March 10, at the Enterprise Center.

Comment: The chairs are very concerned about making data reports without knowing what the criteria will be.

Response: Would it help to provide them with our proposed criteria?

Comments: It sounds like people are operating from fear. The Dickerson book fostered fears.

Comment: The Chairs are concerned and confused about how the numbers will fit into the departmental reviews.

Board of Higher Education Vision Project

Question: In the *Boston Globe* last week, there was an article about the Board of Higher Education's plan to tie the curriculum and mission of all public higher education institutions in Massachusetts to needs of the Massachusetts economy. Is this related to what we are doing on the Advisory Committee?

Answer: Yes. This [the Vision Project] is related to what we are doing. President Meservey is a member of the initiative's "Working Group on Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment." Among the aims of the Vision Project is to compare colleges within and outside of Massachusetts.

[For informational purposes, links to the original article and related links about the Vision Project are provided].

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2010/03/17/mass_aims_to_tie_goals_of_colleges_to_economy/

<http://www.mass.edu/aboutus/whatsnew.asp#board0316>

<http://multimedia.boston.com/m/29912488/twib-vision-project.htm>

Motion to accept the Minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting, with attached criteria

- Elizabeth Haran moved, and Louise Swiniarski seconded, to accept the Minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting, with the attached criteria draft. The motion carried, 13-0.

Discussion on the motion

- It was requested that plans to establish the "Subcommittee to Identify Programs to Be Reviewed" as described in the minutes of March 8 be scrapped. As a result of today's discussion with the Provost, each department will define what is meant by "program." The request was noted.
- It was noted that the minutes and criteria should be posted for one to two weeks to enable chairs to become familiar with the criteria.

Motion to approve the Minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting, with attached criteria

- James Cullen moved, and Keith Ratner seconded, to approve the Minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting, with the attached criteria. The motion carried, 13-0.

Actions following this meeting

- The criteria will be posted for one week: Tuesday March 23 to Tuesday March 30. Feedback will be sent to Mark Fregeau, Chair of the Advisory Committee.
- Recorder Nancy Dennis will notify Amie Goodwin and Vickie Ross that the minutes for March 8, 2010 and the attached criteria were approved, and are ready to be publicly posted. Dennis reported that there will be two places for postings: the Academic Planning web site and the Governance web site.
- The minutes for this meeting (March 22) will be sent out by email and approved electronically to expedite posting. It is important for the campus to be able to read the Provost's remarks and responses as soon as possible.
- Chair Mark Fregeau will email all faculty explaining the posting of minutes and criteria. The criteria will be attached to this email.
- There will be no meeting on Monday, March 29.
- The next meeting is on Monday, April 5.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:46 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

**Nancy Dennis
Recorder**

