

Minutes
Curriculum & Instruction Committee
March 24, 2011

Present: Bielat, Feathers, Furtado, Hoogland, Moseley, Vlasopolos, Retish.
Guest: Jon McGlone, Digital Projects, WSU Library

Absent with Notice: Browne, Ku, Saperstein, Shapiro.

Absent: Austin, Bosch, Golebiowska, Young.

Two major issues were discussed, the Retention Report, and the Graduate Compact. Committee members were generally in support of the Retention Report, but felt that there were areas not discussed that should be part of the retention plan. A motion that the Report be supported with the inclusion of additional recommendations was made by R. Hoogland, seconded by A. Furtado, and approved by the CIC. The recommendations are:

The CIC felt that the report should have included a plan for evaluating the various initiatives in the report to determine their impact. Therefore it is recommended that mechanisms be developed to study the various initiatives to determine their actual effect on student retention.

Related to the issue of the lack of a plan for evaluation, there is also no clearly identified individual or group who will monitor how the funds are used or the evaluation itself.

Committee members were concerned that some of the initiatives could result in an increased burden on faculty, for example additional student advising or mentoring of learning communities. Therefore it is recommended that there be a clear plan for compensating faculty for these additional duties.

The plan could also result in an increased cost to colleges, for instance increasing the number of advisors, or replacing faculty who are given a reduced teaching load as compensation for leading a learning community. These costs also need to be considered in the plan.

That, given the success of learning communities with certain types of students, it is recommended that participation in a learning community be required for at risk students as determined by GPA, ACT score or some combination of these.

Additionally, while there are basic classes in math and writing for students who do not place into the General Education math and composition courses, there is neither an assessment of the reading ability of incoming students nor a course that would help students improve their reading/study skills. Because skill in reading is necessary to succeed in college, it is recommended that the reading ability of at risk students (determined by low ACT scores) be evaluated and that successful completion of a basic reading course be required of those students. Courses such as this have been successful

in other colleges, especially when they are taught by faculty who specialize in reading and are linked with a content course such as history or psychology.

While taking a full load of 15 credits is a worthwhile goal that is possible for some of our students, we must remember that many of our students are non-traditional and 15 credits is more than they can successfully manage. For some who are at risk, for example, successful completion of 9 credit hours may be more beneficial than obtaining poor and/or failing grades in 12 or 15 credit hours.