

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC SENATE
PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

February 6, 2012

Present: L. Beale; R. Brown; V. Dallas; D. Kessel; R. MacArthur; C. Parrish; L. Romano; A. Vlasopolos; W. Volz; A. Wisniewski; J. Woodyard

Guest: Monica Brockmeyer, Interim Associate Provost for Student Success

The items marked with an asterisk constitute the Actions of February 6, 2012.

1. Plans for Implementing the Retention Report: Ms. Brockmeyer made a presentation and responded to questions about the implementation of the *Retention Implementation Task Force Final Report* dated December 2010. In June 2011 the Board of Governors approved \$3.6 million in the fiscal year 2012 budget to implement the initiatives. The retention of freshmen to sophomore status increased from 69% to 77% from 2006 to 2011. The goal is to increase the retention rate of first time in any college students from 77% to 82% over a five-year period.

Some Policy Committee members expressed concern that the University needed to improve its graduation rate because Governor Snyder and the state legislature are expected to base the appropriation on the graduation rate. Ms. Brockmeyer and the Provost expect the graduation rate to improve as the retention rate improves. In response to a question, Ms. Brockmeyer said that WSU does not conduct exit interviews when a student drops out or leaves prior to graduation, but it does periodic follow-up surveys of the students who leave.

One area of focus is creating a culture of shared academic responsibility, which includes faculty engagement in teaching and learning and communicating expectations for learning to students. Toward this goal the Office for Teaching and Learning is being expanded. The search for an Associate Provost and Director of the OTL is underway now. Another aspect of this focus is the increased use of technology for faculty to facilitate taking attendance in large classes. The OTL provides support for faculty to attend educational conferences.

A member of the Policy Committee expressed the hope that the Director of the OTL would also realize that he or she could learn from the faculty who have changed their teaching methods as the students have changed. Ms. Brockmeyer agreed.

A second member thought the relationship between OTL and the academic departments needed to be strengthened. If resources are provided to Department Chairs, they will get involved and pressure their faculty to get involved. Ms. Brockmeyer sees the OTL as one part of a larger system to improve teaching and learning.

A member saw benefit in collaboration among faculty to improve teaching, but thought webinars were unproductive. Ms. Brockmeyer said that the OTL has focused on webinars because it has not had funding to expand its offerings.

A fourth member did not think that improvements in teaching and learning would necessarily improve the retention rate. Provost Brown explained that the purpose of focusing on the OTL was to improve undergraduate teaching. Some students learn differently and some have a difficult time acculturating to the educational atmosphere. The focus of the OTL, Ms. Brockmeyer said, is to support faculty in teaching effectively.

Another area to improve retention is to meet the needs of the student population who are not ready for college. One component of this goal is strengthening the Division of Community Education (DCE) in the APEX (Academic Pathways for Excellence) program. The Summer Bridge Program and cohort scheduling are part of the program. In cohort scheduling students will be kept together as a group for a portion of their classes. The literature on retention states that cohort scheduling facilitates students' forming bonds and supporting one another.

A member asked how the Summer Bridge Program was being developed. Ms. Brockmeyer, Monica Davie, who is currently the Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions and who will assume the position of Director of APEX, and the current staff of DCE are developing the curriculum. When the program has been developed, Ms. Brockmeyer will form a faculty advisory committee and bring in external evaluators. Mr. Romano stressed the need for a faculty advisory committee to develop the curriculum. Ms. Brockmeyer relayed her experience in running a similar program. Several other members of the Policy Committee pointed to the need to revise the current curriculum in APEX and that the faculty in the disciplines should develop the courses and the cohorts.

Ms. Brockmeyer said that she would seek faculty from the disciplines that would be part of the curriculum and would request a liaison from the Academic Senate. Mr. Romano said that she should ask the Policy Committee for faculty to serve on the committee, not a liaison from the Senate.

Students in the Summer Bridge Program will be admitted conditionally. If they demonstrate that they can succeed, they will be admitted to the regular fall program. The students in APEX/DCE will have a contract that specifies the number of credits they need to take and the grade point average they have to maintain to re-enroll. The Bridge Program is a best practice at several universities.

Ms. Brockmeyer's office is also planning a one-week boot camp around study skills, time management, etc., through the Academic Success Center. These programs are offered currently by the Center, but students would benefit by taking them in the summer in preparation for the fall term. Asked if students could be required to take the study skills program, Ms. Brockmeyer said the first year of the program would be a pilot program. If students were successful, perhaps it could be mandatory.

A pilot Teaching Fellows Program with a focus on general education was initiated. The program will provide \$7500 to the academic department of the faculty for expenses to cover innovative teaching as well as course release. The total budget for the program is \$100,000. The criteria are being developed.

Ms. Brockmeyer continued. The General Education Oversight Committee continually reviews the general education program, evaluating new course proposals and existing courses relative to general education. Her office together with the Oversight Committee is undertaking a conversation with the faculty about their interests and goals for general education. Five workshops have been scheduled in the winter term to learn from faculty what they value with respect to learning objectives. Students will be included in the conversations. A member asked if the goal was to develop a new general education program. Ms. Brockmeyer said that she wanted to begin by soliciting from faculty the outcomes they would like to see from general education. Then there would be curriculum mapping to determine if those outcomes overlap or if there are gaps compared with the current general education program. This mapping would set the stage for proposals to revise the current program. A member noted that the development of the current general education model was a major undertaking. He suggested that the proposed changes to the budget model where credit hours impact budget would be politically charged if the changes were made top down.

Ms. Brockmeyer does not intend the planning as a top-down approach, but as a faculty conversation. She is aware that at most universities it takes two years to make major changes to a general education program. She wants to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The question that needs to be answered is what do we want our students to know. Another member noted that, relatively speaking, huge resources are committed to departments based upon the existing general education program. The process has to be constructed so that everyone agrees in the end to the changes. The General Education Oversight Committee has charged Brockmeyer with setting up the workshops. The Deans, Chairs, the Policy Committee, and the Curriculum and Instruction Committee will be asked for faculty to attend the workshops.

External consultants visited campus to review advising. In their report, they endorsed an academic view of advising and noted pockets of excellence. They recommended that there be more coordination among the many advising units on campus. The University needs a shared mission and set of outcomes whether advising is done in the University Advising Center or in the schools and colleges. We need a better pooling of resources and better communication and infrastructure to meet the outcomes.

Ms. Brockmeyer is working closely with the associate deans in the five colleges that do the most undergraduate teaching. Some of the members of the University Advising Council did not have the authority to implement changes in their colleges, and she has asked the associate deans to assign people to the Council who have the authority to get the information back to the units. A member said that the consultants' report referred to a report about advising that the University had given

them. The member had asked the Provost's Office for a copy of the report but he has not received it. The Provost said that it could be provided.

Ms. Brockmeyer said that the learning communities would be expanded. Her office is exploring the possibility of holding advising seminars for undecided students. Financial aid for equity funding and merit funding has been increased as part of the retention initiative. Although not formally part of the retention initiative, satisfactory academic progress is being evaluated twice a year in Financial Aid.

Scholars Day is an important part of the University's recruitment efforts. It was held earlier this year. The students invited to Scholars Day have applied to the University. A Policy Committee member suggested that WSU might contact high schools in Michigan to notify them of the program and thus attract more students.

Another member requested copies of the surveys that are conducted of students who have dropped out. He has asked for them in the past but never received them. Ms. Brockmeyer will give him the surveys. The University, he noted, does not use state-of-the-art methodology in program evaluation. He believes that the University should take a scholarly approach. The National Science Foundation has grant funding for such studies, and WSU should seek that funding. Ms. Brockmeyer agreed. She has been funded through NSF for activities related to broadening participation and best practices in education. This is something that the University can explore.

- *2. Proceedings of the Policy Committee: The Proceedings of the Policy Committee meeting of January 30, 2012, were approved as submitted.
- *3. Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies: Policy Committee recommended that the charter for the Cohn-Haddow Center be renewed. The Center is totally funded from outside sources except for the Director's salary which is paid from the general fund.
- 4. Budget Reports of the Centers and Institutes: The Statute on Centers and Institutes states that the Provost and the Vice President for Research are to conduct an annual review of the budgets of the Type I and Type II centers and institutes, respectively. Policy Committee received that information. As a result of today's meeting, the Committee asked Provost Brown and Vice President Ratner for the amount of indirect funds designated to each center from grants the center faculty received and assurances that the grant funding listed was assigned to the Center and not obtained by a faculty member associated with the center and assigned to the primary home (i.e., the non-center department) of the faculty.