Institutional Planning Council

Minutes

September 13, 2006

Attendees: David Ahearn, Kim Barber, Quincy Brown, Linda Buchanan, Andrea Fernandez, Stuart Gulley, Greg McClanahan, Linda McMullen, Sarah Beth Mallory, Kim Myrick, Ben Podbielski, David Rowe, Maranah Sauter, Jay Simmons, Tina Whatley, and Phyllis Whitney.

Kim Myrick began the meeting with an enrollment update, showing the status of enrollment just two days shy of the Day of Record. As of the meeting, enrollment stood at 1,133, ahead of the budgeted goal of 1,115. While we did not meet our enrollment objectives in all areas, the increased enrollments in evening, the graduate program, and transfer students we hope assure a better than anticipated overall enrollment. Stuart observed that while the enrollment looks healthy, he could not make a definitive statement about whether salary increases will be made available beginning this fall. The budget is still very fluid, including increased health costs over what were anticipated. It will take several weeks to settle the budget, once we know the revenues derived from tuition. Stuart said that a salary increase will be a topic of conversation at the next IPC Meeting.

Linda Buchanan led the IPC through a PowerPoint presentation given previously to the Leadership Council on the occasion of their having selected the topic of retention/graduation rate as their superpriority for the 2006-2007 year. Linda reported that for the Student Life Committee of the Leadership Council the group is exploring the possibility of the development of the West Point Lake property to accommodate “silent sports.” The Academic Committee will be looking at the advising gap between the Cornerstone experience and students declaring a major. The Enrollment Management Committee will be looking at steps that might be taken to attract students with slightly higher SAT scores, who, presumably, will be more likely to persist at the institution.

Linda’s presentation gave way to a thoughtful discussion about the role of advising in improving retention. It was noted that there is a culture of students not talking to advisors, and it was observed that some students are uncomfortable approaching faculty on advising questions because some faculty seem uncomfortable in that role. It was noted that several departments have created “casual space” in their areas that have engendered relationship building between faculty and those departments and their majors. It was also suggested that faculty might communicate with students via e-mail inviting them to come by their offices for a visit. There are different advising models that are used. Theater and Nursing seem to have advising models, using small groups of students, which have proven successful. There was discussion about the burden of advising for Cornerstone faculty, some of whom have advisees over a several year period in excess of 40.
Linda agreed to communicate with the faculty via e-mail inviting them to notify her of any students they suspect might be having academic difficulty and or uncertainties about their place at the College. There was also discussion about the role of the Major Fair and whether changes are necessary there. Linda will ask that Lyn Schenbeck, who oversees the Major Fair, meet with the Academic Council to discuss improvements in the Fair for future years.

Jay Simmons walked the group through comparative data for the College’s U. S. News and World Report rankings. The data dates back at least five, and in some cases seven, years. In most every area, with the exception of full-time faculty, we have showed a steady trend of improvement. We need to continue work in all areas that U. S. News measures for improvement in our overall ranking. The critical ranking factor is reputation, and we need to continue to stress the promotion of the College with the other 105 schools in our category.

Stuart suggested that the agenda for the next IPC meeting include a report on the activities of the Sustainability Council by Sarah Beth Mallory, a review of the 2006-2007 budget by Phyllis Whitney, and efforts underway in evening college by Linda McMullen.

The meeting ended at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

F. Stuart Gulley