

## **Council on Retention and Graduation Steering Committee**

**March 25, 2010**

**UC 3171**

**Presiding: Scott Evenbeck**

**Present:** Zephia Bryant, Cathy Buyarski, Scott Evenbeck, Mary Fisher, John Gosney, Steve Graunke, Michele Hansen, Sarah Lang, Susan Montgomery, Gary Pike, Rebecca Porter, Frank Ross, David Sabol, Jeff Watt, Gayle Williams, and Marianne Wokeck

**Regrets:** Sarah Baker, Kathy Johnson, and Uday Sukhatme

1. Evenbeck welcomed committee members.

2. Update on Department of Mathematical Sciences:

Watt explained that he gets many questions about the math placement test. The score cuts had not been changed for a long time, but last year the cuts were moved. Watt distributed a handout about the math courses a first-year student can take. He also passed around a brochure about questions that students have on the math placement test. This is available on the Web site (see [www.math.iupui.edu/faq](http://www.math.iupui.edu/faq)). Watt discussed what he tells students who think they should have received a higher score on the math placement test. These students have several options. Watt encourages them to go to the Web site to look at the problems in the courses. There is also a link available to the COMPASS Web site with sample problems. The placement cut scores are more in line with Ivy Tech now. Watt said they are still tweaking things. He discussed DFW rates in math classes, four-day-a-week classes, and courses meeting students' needs. A majority of campuses in Indiana use the COMPASS placement test. A student can use that raw test score on other campuses rather than retaking the placement test. When the placement cuts were raised, it affected about 400 students. Those students were moved to lower-level courses. Watt gave a PowerPoint presentation. He discussed students who took the placement test and the first math course they took in fall 2009. MATH 153 and 159, two courses with large DFW rates, have around 200 students who are not compliant with placement tests. In other words, they should not have enrolled according to the placement tests but did anyway. Watt discussed changes that came about with the Core 40 requirements. Williams expressed concern that this information is not getting out to the community. Parents and community leaders are often shocked to hear this information. Watt told about a simple 20-question test they admit to students (such as add  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$ ). Many students cannot do the simple problems; they lack basic math skills. A total of 6,035 students took a math course in fall 2009. He reviewed math courses offered at IUPUI. A basic skills course is not offered on our campus. Watt gave the K–12 equivalent to some of the math courses that are taught on this campus. Fisher wondered if we could notify the high schools that send unprepared students (in math) to our campus. The high schools need to know if their math program is not working. This was discussed by the committee as well as establishing communication with high school teachers and administrators. Williams said there is already a vehicle to do this: Talent Alliance. Watt explained that introductory algebra and above are offered on our campus, but prealgebra is no longer offered. Williams asked about M001. Watt said that course is slated to be discontinued, but it could be years

down the road. Watt discussed messages that students receive after taking the placement test. Not everyone takes the placement test, such as honors students and transfer students. After taking the placement test, students receive a message. They need to speak with an advisor before selecting a math course. Students need to take the appropriate math course for their academic tracks. Watt reviewed the 11 messages that students receive. He reviewed how the placement test works; most students are placed in less than 20 questions. Watt gave examples of why some students do not want to place out of courses because they want the credits on their transcripts. The committee discussed MATH 159, including whether the placement test is accurate for this course, the DFW rate, and why students take it. Watt reviewed what math courses students took by the message they received after the placement test. He also reviewed the full-time, first-time 2009 cohort. Many students in the cohort are not compliant. When Evenbeck asked if class size made a difference in math, Watt replied that it does not. The best DFW rates usually come from the large lecture courses, depending on the instructor. It is all about good instructors devoting time to class. There are several new instructors for M118. Watt said his department plans to work with the new instructors. Having faculty move to Taylor Hall (in the Mathematics Assistance Center) from Indiana Avenue has made a big difference. There are fewer complaints from students about not being able to find their instructors. When asked about Ivy Tech transfers and math, Watt replied that they are still tracking this. His department is working with department chairs at Ivy Tech. Almost all students going into MATH 166 have done fine, but there is still work to do. Watt gave examples of this and discussed what he thinks will happen in the future, including feeder institutions marketing to students that they will be set for success when they transfer to places such as IUPUI. Watt discussed math education in central Indiana. More math is being taught than ever before, and better math is being taught. However, students in the bottom levels are not making gains. He compared today's students to those of 10 to 15 years ago. He discussed math teachers and their preparedness to teach math. Evenbeck asked Buyarski to talk about math placement and advising. Buyarski explained that when students come in and take the math placement test, their scores will be posted to SIS within 48 hours. For those who are told they must go to Ivy Tech, they are given information as to who to contact. The problem is that a large number of students take the test two or three days before orientation. Buyarski is uncertain if students are reading their e-mail messages when taking the test so close to orientation. She said they have been talking to Ivy Tech. Some math sections will not be offered due to funding issues. Ivy Tech is aware that our students are coming. There is a message for students who need adult basic education. Watt said this involves 52 students. They are working on a message for students who need to retest (probably had a bad test day). The rest of the students who do not pass will get the Ivy Tech message. They are trying to get the message out to students to get plenty of sleep, eat a good breakfast, etc. before taking the placement test. When Williams asked if many students are taking the placement test the day before orientation, Buyarski said they are working with Howard Mzumara on this. He is going to track that information this year. The Testing Center gets a lot of phone calls from students who need to take the placement test because orientation is the next day. The committee discussed finding out who these students are. Williams said they hope pre-orientation will help students to do what they need to do in a timely way. Porter thanked Buyarski for taking a leadership role on this issue. We are doing much better. Buyarski told how students used to come in thinking that they were going to enroll for classes, but were told they could not due to placement scores. She shared some of her experiences working

with Ivy Tech. There was discussion about getting Ivy Tech transfers registered. Watt gave an update on a project that Judy McBride was working on. He told about efforts to help students brush up on their math and allowing them drop back to a lower math course in the first four weeks of the semester. This did not work well because students continued to fall behind. Watt said eliminating the Pass/Fail option has helped. When students know they will receive a letter grade, they work harder. There was discussion about math models.

3. Final Report of Transfer Students Task Force:

Buyarski distributed drafts of two final reports for her task force. She reviewed how the task force was formed and who served on it. She discussed the definitions of a transfer student such as true transfer, swirling transfer, and masquerading students. Buyarski reviewed the ways admissions handles transfer students. The task force divided into five subgroups. Most of the subgroups focused on entry advising and orientation. They also found out information about other offices on campus and the services they provide to transfer students. Buyarski reviewed the work of the subgroups. The subgroups developed great questions for further consideration. When is the best time for a student to transfer? There are ethics to recruiting transfer students. The academic schools are usually the first contact for transfer students rather than the admissions office. International students comprise a considerable number of the campus transfer student population. The committee discussed orientation for transfer students and whether it meets the needs of the students. There was a subgroup for advising and academic policies and procedures, which focused on advising. Transferring can be cumbersome for students if they have a lot of undistributed credits. There are some policies designed for entering students. Do these policies work for transfer students? Another subgroup looked at the issue of a transfer center and services. Buyarski explained the transfer center gear and cog system recommended by the group. Another group looked at data and research. They discovered that we can break out surveys by transfer students. Buyarski discussed other recommendations. We need a centralized Web presence for transfer students. We need a communication stream to get messages to different groups of students. We need a campuswide group advisory council for transfer students. We need to create a regular system of reporting and sharing data on transfer students. We need to provide training about the needs of transfer students to faculty and staff. We also need to establish a task force to examine the transfer credit evaluation process. Williams discussed the work being done by Andrea Engler. Her job is to begin the intake on what students want and need. There are a lot of things that we do not know about our transfer students. This is a slow process. Watt expressed concern about swirling students who shop around and take courses out of order. Buyarski said her sense is that students have circumstances, such as moving back home, that cause them to do this. This is the kind of data we need. Evenbeck said the CRG Steering Committee needs to look at these recommendations. There was discussion about who should take the leadership role on this issue, given the state of the budget. Porter suggested Buyarski add something to her report: the proportion of entering students who enter as beginners and those who enter as transfers. Buyarski agreed to add this. Evenbeck said this will stay on the agenda.

4. Task Force Reports:

Ross said he is putting together a group to look at career development for sophomore students. He told about the restructuring in the Division of Student Life. There is a new position that will focus on transfers and sophomores.

5. Other Business:

Williams discussed the retention report that she writes every year. She told when she will be asking for information. She hopes to get the report finished and distributed by early July. Evenbeck reminded the committee about the Access and Success Conference on March 26. He told about the speakers and workshops.

6. Adjournment.

Submitted by:  
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