

Council on Retention and Graduation
October 14, 2004
UC 3171

Present: Renee Akins, Melissa Biddinger, Vic Borden, Mary Fisher, Sharon Hamilton, Susan Marie Harrington, Amanda Helman, Kathy Johnson, Steve Jones, Susan Kahn, Erin Kilbride, Bill Kulsrud, Nancy Lamm, Claudette Lands, Anastasia Morrone, Ted Mullen, Becky Porter, Catherine Souch, Regina Turner, Mark Urtel, Rick Ward, Jeff Watt, Gayle Williams, Kathryn Wilson, Robert Yost

Presiding: Scott Evenbeck

Evenbeck began by commenting on what a productive/talented group had assembled. He noted that some are on more than one council; one is Enrollment Management (EM), this is Retention and Graduation (RG), and there is a third on Civic Engagement (CE). There will be some overlap in the work of all three councils, but particularly between EM and RG. Porter and Evenbeck are on all three. The difference is that the primary charge of EM is to look at recruitment and student flow across schools; predictability; things campus can do to manage enrollments; find out where students are or are not going; EM is more concerned with numbers and what goes on with doubling the number of graduates. This group (RG) is more focused on programmatic things we can do like e-Port, TLCs, etc., with the assumption that more students will be retained as we give them a stronger undergraduate experience.

A number here are also on the steering committee for the council. They meet alternatively with the full council. Dean Plater's vision is that the councils will in some sense write their own agenda; as we identify issues the campus ought to attend to, we will take action, make recommendations, be in touch with deans and schools, and do the work that we need to do.

Evenbeck distributed the Doubling the Numbers report; he noted that a few members had served on this task force. The first order of business for this council will be to revisit that report and see what out of it that we need to attend to; it is not the work plan, but a good first step. Evenbeck recommends we mine it for things we ought to cull out and attend to. That group put in place having real intensive work at each school's level looking at doubling, but that didn't get attended to by the schools. Borden put that website together, and each school was asked to give an in-depth look, and only 3 or 4 responded. We may want to go back and encourage the schools to do that.

Evenbeck distributed the Doubling report from the Diversity Task Force. He suggested we need to figure out how to get a handle on doubling diversity and increasing the number of graduates that represent diversity. Only 2 schools represent 44% of all degrees awarded to African-American students: Engineering and Continuing Studies. We need to figure out the numbers and how to support the students.

The Foundations project group has been at work on all year. You will get the action plan for that group in a couple weeks. It is an intensive look at what we do for the first year.

Gayle Williams is the retention coordinator for IUPUI, with representatives coming from all the IU campuses. This group is convened by Charlie Nelms; it originated with the Lilly Retention Grant. Nelms asked each campus to keep track of each initiative so he can report to the President and Trustees about retention. Gayle has put together a report that culls out what those Lilly interventions are and how we have used the Commitment to Excellence dollars and the assessment that has been done on those interventions.

Williams explained that Nelms has asked that the report be expanded. We have 47 initiatives on the list presented last May, but it's likely not inclusive of every single initiative—it's hard to find that info; Williams keeps trying to make connections. She asked the group to let her know if they have a program that is not on the list. Her report is due December 1. She has contacted all schools, but it's a matter of finding the right person. It's new for IUPUI to collect this info. She is also collecting assessment, which is also new to some people. The hope is to eventually have a Web site. It is challenging to figure out a way to do this for all of IU. IUPUI has the largest number of retention interventions by far.

Evenbeck distributed Tinto's Retention and Graduation report. He thinks Tinto did a good job of pointing out issues that come from some national policy decisions that have been made, focusing on low-income, first-generation issues and how we can increase retention and graduation rates nationally. There are a lot of reports out looking at the number of students with Pell grants on a given campus. Tom Mortenson who writes Postsecondary Opportunity looks at issues of students with Pell grants and gives campus grades on how they're doing. IUPUI got a B-.

Porter said that one can always argue methodology. The study doesn't take economic issues in the state into account. We are the best for publics in Indiana. Evenbeck added that our sister campus to the south got an F. Those are the sorts of issues the council will get into.

Evenbeck distributed Gayle's Increasing Student Retention report.

Williams explained that the report followed a specific pattern that was developed by Nelms. This year the retention coordinators requested assessment info from the stakeholders. This piece does not include, but we will include by December 1. It's self-explanatory and in no particular order.

Evenbeck suggested the council spend time on thinking through what agenda items to set for ourselves.

Borden said that the goals in doubling numbers is to double the number of baccalaureates by 2010. Part of that is doubling the graduation rate; this is more important externally because it is used in ranking. We are currently at 20–22%, and we're going for 40%. It's

the freshmen who entered this fall on whom this benchmark will be based. It could be strategic to follow this cohort to think about what makes a difference for these 3,000 students graduating in 6 years.

One member raised the issue that some students do not have that goal of graduating in 6 years. Borden replied that in the entering student surveys, 95–96% state that they intend to get a BA; it is a myth that they don't intend to get a degree. They may think they'll transfer elsewhere to get that degree, but we count and continue to track them.

Ward commented that about 60% of Liberal Arts students are transfer students; we don't get to count them in our retention rate, but they count for graduation. If you're going to double degrees without doubling admissions, it must come from transfers or retention.

Borden suggested the council look at who's going to graduate in 2010. 60% of our students who graduate started elsewhere. We could take that as the focus and do reverse engineering. We've been improving freshman retention rate for the past years (till this year). WE haven't tracked the success of getting our seniors out. More than ½ our seniors are part time. And very few graduate. We have twice as many seniors as full time first time freshman.

Lindsey commented that a new student service director has just been hired and there is currently not a formal community of practice for people in those positions.

Porter said there are components that have already come into play. The strategic scholarship coordinating committee has been formed. Individuals in different units who are responsible for diversity recruitment have been brought together. Bringing people around specific tasks or jobs is how this should be done.

Borden suggested having guests in to train staff within the campus to participate in the improvement process. Once you decide what we need to work on, we can also look at how to improve the process.

Williams commented that so much of the reporting coming out is that low-income students are most at risk; how many of our students are low-income, and what can we do about that?

Borden replied that Tinto says generally there will be 20–40% low-income at community colleges, and for 4-year institutions it's about 8–12%. We're probably around 20%.

Williams added that we're higher first-generation, too. The correlation could have some impact, but might have limitations as well, and context is important.

Borden said that is always a bind with retention, because sometimes you exclude those who won't do well, but with an access mission you have to support exactly those students.

Porter recommended looking at not just low income but also unmet financial need. Lowest income students are eligible for more financial aid than someone a step higher. EFC and unmet need becomes beyond grasp.

Evenbeck remarked that Buyarski has convened advisors with a daylong retreat that is once a year. He is intrigued by this community of practice and wonders if would be good to systematically convene advisors across the campus. Helman commented that UC advisors have each other, and a day to day community of practice, whereas advisors in schools may go weeks and weeks without seeing another advisor. That's an unmet need.

Evenbeck asked if there are other unmet needs.

Porter said that EM is trying to (EM) develop what do we mean by "EM," and what does that encompass? Don't just react to data but use in an informed way to make decisions—those decisions shape your future, that's a process that takes time to build and there are a variety of processes.

Biddinger said that for student support professionals, it would be helpful to share best practices.

One member cautioned that we need to be conscious and considerate of small schools where one person does all those things and can't do so many meetings.

Jones agreed that it is good to be judicious about what people can realistically take on. At previous institutions in which he has worked, advisors were the default for new initiatives. One would hope faculty would take initiative.

Helman added that schools also have faculty advisors.

Fisher asked what kind of data we have about utilization of crisis resources on campus, and referral patterns. Students fail around crises in life and don't get proper support—what do we know about how supports are being utilized; do some schools not refer?

Borden said that NSSE findings with urban universities show that students say they don't get the kind of support for personal/life problems. That is a function of the high need level of students at urban universities.

Borden explained current assessment: We have things we do to assess/address/figure out what's going on. We have to think about applying those things more diligently than ever. We need to make sure we identify when they're having problems, etc. Need to think now when they become sophomores, juniors, etc. What happens? How do we pass off responsibilities and commitments—that is the target to pay attention to.

Biddinger suggested coordinated communication for campus life.

One member commented that we already have initiatives to cover transitions from high school to freshman year and transitions for transfers at whatever points they come in. Should we look to see if we need more or improve the ones we have?

Helman added that we could look at prior learning assessment, work experiences, and how those do or do not apply to their experiences at IUPUI.

Fisher added that there is also the cultural accountability issue; difference in undergrads. What are we doing to help them appreciate their responsibilities? How systematic is it?

Williams linked that to the K–12 operation, but noted that some of those efforts have not continued.

Ward said that UC has done a good job with probation students; schools could follow that lead. Liberal Arts has 10–15% of students on probation, and is just now looking for best practices for that. There may be interventions that would be useful to share with the schools.

Evenbeck agreed, and noted that the Gateway Group has tried to do that with a web site.

Jones said it seems that it would be helpful to identify characteristics of students who don't persist and those who do. Then focus on specific needs; some interventions work across the board, and some need to be tailored to groups of students. If a group is low-income, and students are dealing with a combination of personal factors and financial aid, then mentoring won't be effective for that cohort of students.

Porter said there will be a broad telephone survey for those who didn't register for fall semester. They will be looking at general categories.

Helman commented that we now have 5 years of data on 56-hour students. We could get Kristi and Barb Metzner to put together an analysis of that population.

Borden asked about the issue of getting into capped majors and what is being done for those who don't get into Nursing, Business, etc.

Evenbeck said UC has been writing to those who don't come back; the dominant response is I can't get into nursing. Same with dental hygiene. We need to get a handle on ways to help students

Ward said that career counseling would help. If we can get to students early enough and present them with options to help them pursue a Plan B, they might come back.

Evenbeck noted that the advisors/career counselors have an all-day retreat tomorrow to figure out how primary work with career center will be with first-year students.

Wilson commented that she has worked with a cohort of 24 McNair students. Common characteristic is scattered academic records. She has seen seniors without enough credits in one area to put together a major. Intensive counseling is key.

Watt agreed; he has seen the opposite scenario in students in science on a direct path to medical school. Often they made the decision to go to this campus in middle school and had the benefit of an early focus. Outreach to middle schools is when counseling needs to start. It's almost too late once they're on campus.

Harrington added that we also need to pay attention to who needs to know and how it's disseminated. Who do those students come into contact with? Those who teach students on probation can be isolated. Those who need to know information don't always know it. Clearly not all students are developing bonds with advisors. Look at the communication infrastructure.

Williams agreed and said this is a policy issue—we don't require them to get good advice. We say they're adults and we won't be intrusive; then on other hand, students are floundering. Only freshmen in their first semester are required to see advisors. The university has to look at this philosophy. We speak with forked tongue to students at this institution.

Helman agreed and added that students see faculty constantly and advisors infrequently.

Lindsey asked if there is data on the probability of capping hours. Some have financial aid issues with insurance and they need a minimum of 12 hours, but we've determined that it's essential to limit hours.

Borden countered that this is a self-selection issue. The more credits you take, the better you do because better students tend to take more credits. We don't have flat tuition. Generally that increases graduation rates. Some overload, but more benefit from it than don't. But all predictors break down when we move to an at-risk population.

Ward added that a tie-in is students working who get financial aid. A lot of probationary students take 12 hours because they have to, but they also work 30 hours a week.

One member asked how many 21st Century Scholars we have, what services we provide for them, and if we require they take 12 hours to get the scholarship. Evenbeck explained that IUPUI has about 1,000, but only 600 are on scholarships. They have to go full-time. We know they're low-income and we're making them go full time. The scholarship only covers tuition; not books, fees, or living expenses. We will get more of these students. A recent meeting with Plater and Bantz affirmed that they want to do more for them. Students can sign up in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. UC houses the Central Indiana support office. It's a challenge to figure out how to serve them once they're here.

An agenda item should be to serve students who reflect diversity. There are curricular things we might want to talk about. Elizabeth Ruebens is leading IPAS, a Lumina-

funded project to look at retention efforts across campus. Williams is looking at Ivy-Tech collaborations. Passport program, also interventions that could be undertaken. Elizabeth is looking at diversity in the curriculum.

Diversity should come under Communities of Practice. At the School of Education, looking at diversity is not just one person's responsibility but everyone's.

Hamilton said she would like to talk about e-Port at some time. They are looking at its relation to retention. Susan is preparing a pre-proposal for FIPSE to look at Ivy Tech and e-Port through engagement; NSSE showed engaged students are more likely to be retained. We are looking at e-Port across a range of courses.

Hamilton added that we've also started a COP around each PUL. Part of the work is looking at what does it mean to be a campus that values "X?" What does that mean in terms of curriculum, engaging students, etc., so all makes sense. A lot of our students are overwhelmed by so much coming at them. We need coherence and wholeness in their experience. There will be a November 8 Town Hall to look at PULs. All are invited.

Evenbeck spoke of Powerful Pedagogies—things that make difference in education. It would be good for council to talk about those areas; have on agenda. How we can help ramp them up. I talk with students who get scholarships. Best/worst about IUPUI. Study abroad one year students don't want to do.

Ward said it is important to look at the structure of course offerings. Once we made an effort to ensure that those who could only come at night could still get degrees they were seeking. There are other structural things in the curriculum that may be inhibiting working students from completing degrees on time.

Watt agreed support your comment; we're the only public university in Indy and our traditional base has been those nontraditional students; we still have obligation that we have to be different; lifelong learning; have families, etc. Having a lot of programs day-based or full-time based is not doing service to central Indiana. Turning a lot of people away. Just go to Marion, U of I.

Fisher added that some schools are good at technology and making it accessible; some schools aren't going there at all.

One member raised the concern that we have the assumption that all students have access to a computer, can do Oncourse, etc. Many have dial-up modems if at all. We do them a disservice to move to technology when they can't access it at home.

Borden said that we have good data on technology availability to students.

Jones said that Put prior learning assessment here but CE council; Bringle has talked about in addition finding ways in which work (students' current work) could be assessed.

Akin to credit for prior learning. Also find out where students do work and work with employers to ensure they get to class.

Evenbeck agreed that the campus has a chance to do something with the work area. We always look at it as a deficit; we need to figure out how to view it as an asset. Maybe with e-Port faculty could ask students to look at what they've done at work and how coursework applies. Commitment to Excellence looks at having staff be students here, and getting students to work on campus.

Borden suggested that the group focus. Some discussion has to look at overarching goals and strategies. We know the bottom line. Let's look at more mid-term achievements. Will we increase the number of transfers? Or try to deal with the high school transition?

Fisher asked if we know where we could get the biggest bang for our buck.

Borden explained that a lot of things are accounting for a little of the problem. Our phone survey will help, as will the non-returning student surveys. But if it were simple we would have solved it a long time ago. Porter added that based on phone surveys, one of Mark Grove's observations was pregnancy and family obligations.

Ward asked if we have enough data to make these decisions; Borden explained that we don't have in a specific format to answer specific questions. When you focus you find the questions to bring data to.

Ward asked if we know what factors are most associated with those who don't return; Borden said you need to know what you mean, how to conceptualize factors, then you can talk to people. We have surveys and know what the correlates are, but don't know what factors are behind that. One engagement question on NSSE was degree to which students spend time with other students outside of class.

Porter questioned whether we want to query those who didn't return vs. those who *did* about what made the difference?

Turner suggested the group think about what urban means: mission differentiation, characteristics of students; curricular interventions; pressures presented in an urban setting that are not present at residential schools. Also climate. Try to get inside that concept—what it means in a higher ed setting. How does gender connect with what we're doing? We all know about African-American males. Some are saying all males find higher ed less inviting. Wonder if can begin to look at some things that may be more friendly to females/males.

Lamm added that it could be different for different schools; for example, pregnancy is not an issue in engineering—we see students working too much. Tried working with students on probation but couldn't get them to participate. We need to get to them before they get in trouble.

One member suggested asking those in individual schools why they believe their students aren't returning, and compare with what students say. Maybe our perception isn't correct.

Borden qualified that the problem with asking people why is that they give different reasons. There is a difference in how we perceive causality; it is hard to uncover the real reason vs. what they think will be socially acceptable. It's always helpful to get people to discuss this process—it gets them outside the box and they can think about it differently.

Surveys ultimately show that students are overcommitted.

A listserv will be set up for the council. Evenbeck said he will come back and use a combination of notes, board, and get to you soon and ask steering committee to come up with some priorities of things we want to do. There is no time limit; if we can cull out handful of what we want to have substantive presentations on would set a good agenda.

Ward suggested asking the Steering Committee to consider generating a database of questions to give Borden; it would help to have handle on the problems.

Borden said he could put out a targeted set of links to existing reports.

Porter recommended the EM council's Web site where they are posting info; some is background, minutes, etc. <http://registrar.iupui.edu/emc>

Evenbeck will look at what can be done about cross-linking information and being coordinated.

Morrone recommended that the council look at the work of the Doubling Task Force: we might also look for convergence there.

Evenbeck distributed the Mortenson article; it is aimed at policy makers to make decisions that will serve students. He also distributed recent articles on student income.

The next meeting will be in UL 1126 November 11.