Council on Retention and Graduation
November 11, 2004
UL 1126

Present: Renee Akins, Vic Borden, Nancy Chism, Garland Elmore, Scott Evenbeck, Mary Fisher, Sharon Hamilton, Susan Marie Harrington, Sara Hook, Kathy Johnson, Steve Jones, Bill Kulsrud, Claudette Lands, Anastasia Morrone, Ted Mullen, Becky Porter, Fred Rees, Catherine Souch, Regina Turner, Mark Urtel, Michelle Verduzco, Rick Ward, Jeff Watt, Kathryn Wilson, Robert Yost

Regrets: Melissa Biddinger, David Bivin, Linda Brothers, Amanda Helman, Steven Hundley, Pamela Jeffries, Susan Kahn, Nancy Lamm, Erin Killbride, Stephen Leapman, Brad Lighty, David Martin, Andy Klein, Ken Rennels, Ingrid Ritchie, Elizabeth Spears, Bret Shambaugh, Karen Whitney, Gayle Williams

Evenbeck began by saying that financial aid is a key issue of concern. He invited Becky Porter to present her FASPAC PowerPoint. Porter distributed a quiz on financial aid and a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. Evenbeck asked if IUPUI has data on retention as it relates to financial aid. Porter suggested talking to Vic to see if it's available. One member asked if students can apply for aid prior to admission to a graduate program, or if they have to wait. Porter said they do receive info on what they will be awarded once accepted—so they should apply prior to admission.

One member asked Evenbeck if the 21st Century Scholars students are being planned for with the Career Center, for students coming in earlier. Evenbeck replied that Drew Appleby chaired a task force on how to link academic advising and career counseling. The Counselors and advisors had a joint retreat a month ago and more collaboration is to come.

Hamilton presented the potentials for ePort. It has been picked up as a national model, but IUPUI stands out as having asked for student input throughout its development. Based on the Principles of Undergraduate Learning, it can be customized by major and show students' entire undergraduate career. The portfolio provides direct value added because of students' reflection on their learning that is inherent in the process. Evenbeck asked if Hamilton will be sharing the pilot portfolios. She replied that currently they are working with one student in growing her portfolio. They hope to have one student in each program volunteer to have model portfolios to create an institutional portfolio. Chism asked about levels of permission to view information or use students' progress in statistics (which would require viewing portfolios). Hamilton replied that with Ken Crews, we have a statement on access, authenticity, etc. for students to sign. Hamilton offered to bring it to the next meeting. Students can either agree or not that IUPUI can use materials that could be identifiable, and they will still have access to all aspects of the portfolio. We just would not get viewable things from those students. Wilson asked how a biology major would know that they were a biologist at the end of their undergraduate career. Beyond general ed, where do we store stuff from the major? Hamilton explained

that all of the documents that are stored are documents that would be assigned in the major courses.

Harrington asked, if the portfolio asks what did you learn at IUPUI about the PULs, does it also prompt for major-specific benchmarks? Hamilton explained that each department can do that. Departments can also use matrices or the capstone course. There are many ways of doing it.

Evenbeck asked about other populations, like student governments, McNair scholars, etc. Hamilton explained that it is very easily customized. The matrices can be cross-referenced and cross-indexed. It's a matter of going to the matrix and uploading it—the students' document will be there regardless of how it is looked at. Wilson asked if one could incorporate a research portfolio matrix. Hamilton answer yes; we're able to do more building it than we could get buying a package.

Hamilton hopes that this will give rise to important departmental conversations about what it means to be a graduate of each department.

Johnson asked how nimble the system will be—many students have convoluted paths to the major. Also, what is the motivator for students to write the reflection piece?

Hamilton explained that this is why we have the general introductory level. As for the motivator, we're considering well-begun is half done. In the learning communities, we're requiring that students complete one cell; this will be reviewed by an external reviewer. That becomes an intrinsic motivator. There are little built-in motivators such as the cells change colors and there are automated messages. Hamilton has asked students, and they see the value of doing the portfolio in terms of creating resumes and applying for jobs. For schools with capped majors, the portfolio could help students. All of these are policy things we have to build.

Hamilton said we will suggest to Gateway faculty to upload assignments that are good for a specific unit of the PULs, for example—a sentence or two in the assignment dragging out what is implicit or tacit in the assignment and making it explicit.

Verduzco said there is value in helping students realize and articulate what they know. Students are excited about it when they go through the process and see what they're learning that they hadn't realized.

Jones suggested discussing how the ePort could be integrated into the capped majors. We should look at how the ePort could become a supplement for GPA. Fisher said Nursing is in strategic planning right now; the current problem is we don't have enough faculty. We're looking for a way to increase capacity by having the state invest more in the school. Hamilton said portfolios could help make the case.

Kulsrud pointed out that the reason we look at GPA is because it's simple. For some programs with lots of applicants, they are not going to have the time or interest in a large

complex portfolio. Hamilton said you can develop targeted skills. Kulsrud said they could not be compared externally. Hamilton said that a common vocabulary is being developed nationally. If you have 65,000 applicants, it could help you choose among the finalists. It won't be a panacea. Kulsrud countered that we don't have the resources to sift through this information. We're already required to do too many things. Students are really interested in getting a job. The employer is interested in looking at something, but won't be able to assess that information. Hamilton replied that each document in the portfolio has already been assessed. She is currently working on getting external assessors so it can become a true community of practice. We haven't put the package together yet.

Kulsrud said he once graded CPA exams. It gets to the point that all you do is look for buzzwords. It's so difficult to grade essays. We're getting overloaded in information—particularly the administrators. Jones said look at how students get motivated to do this, and look at the primary purpose—that students look at what they've learned and how it's defined. Tell students, all things being equal, what will make the difference? My guess is that the degree to which a student can convincingly articulate, "Not only did I have a 4.0, but I've learned this about myself along the way, and this is why I'll be a better doctor (or lawyer, etc.)." This is more than students who do well in one class after another, but don't necessarily have any idea how the learning connects.

Kulsrud said he questions the value of the information. Evenbeck said the big part will be the power of students' reflection. The reflection on service that students do in service learning goes a long way to it being a powerful pedagogy. Students shouldn't see this as getting a ticket punched. Hamilton said the intellectual process that has been built into the infrastructure will enhance learning. Even if it were not assessed, the process itself is a worthwhile investment.

Fisher said if we're not structuring that kind of growth within our curricula, that's our fault. Kulsrud said that's the point of integration, capstone courses, etc. But if everybody does it, it becomes check-the-box.

Evenbeck said the agendas won't usually be as full of presentations, but these were important. He distributed data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Foundations Project, as well as a Gates Foundation-sponsored book on doubling the number of minority students by 2020. Evenbeck thought it would be a useful book for everyone to have. Vic Borden and Michele Hansen will come back and talk about the data next month. We'll probably move the meeting out of classes next week.

Meeting adjourned.