

Council on Retention and Graduation
December 7, 2004
UL 1116

Present: Renee Akins, David Bivin, Vic Borden, Linda Brothers, Mary Fisher, Sharon Hamilton, Susan Marie Harrington, Amanda Helman (Zimmerman), Sara Hook, Stephen Hundley, Pamela Jeffries, Kathy Johnson, Steve Jones, Susan Kahn, Andrew Klein, Claudette Lands, Stephen Leapman, Bradly Robert Lighty, David Martin, Ted Mullen, Becky Porter, Fred Rees, Kenneth Rennels, Bret Shambaugh, Catherine Souch, Elizabeth Spears, Regina Turner, Mark Urtel, Michelle Verduzco, Jeff Watt, Gayle Williams, Robert W. Yost

Regrets: Melissa Biddinger, Nancy Chism, Garland Elmore, Erin Colleen Kilbride, Bill Kulsrud, Nancy Lamm, Anastasia Morrone, Ingrid M. Ritchie, Richard E Ward, Karen Whitney, Kathryn J. Wilson

Minutes for the November 11 meeting were accepted and approved.

Vic Borden has been leading the effort to interpret the telephone survey. Evenbeck distributed the telephone survey summary results. Borden explained that these are preliminary results from the second survey—we haven't done test/retest matches of first to second survey. When you do the non-returning student survey, you usually hear that students have problems with work, family, etc., but this time we have comparisons with those who *did* enroll. The Public Opinion Lab did the survey. We found that students were confused about their official enrollment status. They define it differently ("I'm enrolled but I'm just not taking classes this semester.") 2/3 of people who are enrolled think they're not.

Students did cite problems with the OneStart system: There were higher rates of reported problems with those who withdrew. About 1/5 said yes, because of the system I'm registering late.

Another issue of definition is among students who went to IUB—our students consider it a transfer even though we don't; they still get tracked as retained.

It isn't clear yet the impact schools made in the spring: Fewer than half said they remembered being contacted. Calling may not have a huge impact, but it does keep the relationship open for people with the schools. You see students cite issues like student life, majors that are not available at IUPUI, and then things like, "I couldn't get in to nursing" (or elsewhere might be less competitive)—in truth all nursing programs are at capacity. The one difference was it seems there were more comments about costs than we've seen in the past. Several said point-blank that it's a lot cheaper to go to Ivy Tech.

When asked if work circumstances more difficult, students in both groups (returners and non-returners) said yes—work issues are still the highest. Financial aid, getting access to financial aid—it's the people who enrolled who have the most problems with it (which makes sense because they need it most). There were more comments about specific courses than about general programs. Uncertainty about career goals is a big one for non-returning freshmen: a third of them stated it as an issue. Watt asked if the times sections are offered is an issue; Borden said no.

Urtel asked about the cost: Was it the immediate semester-end cost, or the long-term? Borden said it's the immediate cost as it seems—but it's hard to tell because of the way the question was asked.

Borden said the bottom line is that students have some dissatisfaction with the system, but it's not causing people to leave. Financial aid is a bit more of an issue; that may be influencing behavior more. An open-ended question (“Anything else you'd like to tell us?”) yielded overall positive comments. We asked them what problems they had with the system, and they told us. We're a little concerned that it shows that the system is bad, but when one asks what's wrong with something, people tell you.

Johnson said some of her students who didn't get enough money weren't able to purchase their books until late, which caused them to fall behind. Borden said we should alert Mark Grove so that he can look at that. Johnson said she put books in the library so people wouldn't fall behind academically; maybe we should look at that in the future. Borden added that we have to think of the issues with financial aid in the context of students also having issues with work and family. Porter said that given the amount of money that IUPUI extended in short-term loans, some of the students' comments about not being able to purchase books reflect the students' decisions on where to spend the money. In some cases students were saying they couldn't purchase books when we had given them funds to do so.

Borden said it will be helpful to look at this pre/post. We talked to students in the spring, so we want to see changes. There are also issues with schools contacting students—if we could find out what schools used what type of contact; then we could see if phone works better than e-mail, etc. Not sure if this is possible, or if schools were consistent. If a school kept record of who it contacted in what way, I could analyze the results. It's confidential but we can link to student IDs and look at student records.

Williams asked if students who left for Ivy Tech intend to return. Borden said it looks that way, but only very indirectly. Only if their contact encouraged them to return. Watt said Engineering & Technology sends their weak students to Ivy Tech. Watt would be interested to know which courses inspire this decision. Then we have the issue that they're coming back; we have articulation agreements. The numbers are small, but we want to be sure they have a smooth transition. Most of the students I've talked to say it's easier to get an A in X course at Ivy Tech—it's tougher here. I'd be interested to know what type of coursework they did here before they left for Ivy Tech.

Helman wondered what the general GPAs of these students might be, and if there is a correlation. General Studies' stop-outs are overwhelmingly out as soon as we put them on probation. She wonders if she has more people on probation now than 7 years ago, or are they performing more poorly as costs go up and they work more? Borden will look at cumulative GPAs prior to this.

Jones noted the student comments about difficulty with courses; it could be that the courses are too hard, or that students are not taking advantage of support services—we don't know if they knew about them. There are a lot of structural things in here, so how do we know if there are academic problems? Borden said in the last survey we asked if they had specific problems with a course. Positive comments outnumbered the negative 5 to 1.

Evenbeck asked if we would look at Learning Community participation. Borden agreed that this is pertinent to first-time, full-time freshmen, but we won't have many non-LC participants in the group. Williams shared that anecdotally we sense students admitted late may be disproportionately represented in here.

Jones asked if demographics are an issue. Borden said the African-American group is one that may be large enough to get something here. With gender you get interactions with programs (i.e., nursing).

Porter gave an update on the Enrollment Management Council (EM). EM has decided to take what we're talking about as a three pronged approach. One is to look at what we're calling the central initiatives. These cover questions such as what can we do in terms of coordination across many different areas? We'll be looking at international areas (recruitment); enhancing the number of 21st Century Scholars we can recruit and retain; and coordinating activities such as minority outreach.

In relationship to the academic units, we're looking at information we can give the deans and initiatives/information that can help the academic units. In our meetings we want to focus on best practices; what data is out there that the units can use and apply. For example, we'll be looking at what kind of contact is most effective? We're also looking at how to help the various committees that interact with students—such as parking appeals and how they're handled. We've established the agenda for the rest of our meetings this year, and will be contacting the other groups.

We'll also be looking at targeted information that might be helpful for the deans. We're trying to come up with “nuggets” of info to be presented to them.

Evenbeck distributed a handout outlining the key areas for the council and reported that the Council on Retention & Graduation (CRG) steering committee met last week. Our work is daunting; as you know, we first had the doubling task force. We've begun to look at where we could focus on retention issues. We thought we should get more

focused and see where we should turn our attention. The areas on the handout were suggested by the steering committee.

One is clearly what we do with entering students; what happens in the first part of the first semester sets the tone for a student's experience. Tinto says the first three weeks of a student's first semester are by far the most important, so our continued attention to how we help students make the transition to the university is critical. The steering committee recommends this as an important area.

The second one is the transition to the major; how do students move into majors—particularly, how do transfer students move into their majors? For example, what is done for those wanting into capped programs? How do we help those who don't get in? It's a tough issue.

The third area is how we have a lot of students who are seniors, and a disproportionately small number who graduate.

Evenbeck suggested having subcommittees to look at this.

Porter added that EM will also be looking at transfer students, which will dovetail with what this retention group will look at. Transfer students are of many varieties. EM will start with Ivy Tech. We'll be using the Accelerated Improvement Process to look at the process components. This group is then looking at the process they go through once we get them to IUPUI.

Johnson said they're doing an external review in her department. Psychology's cohort looks like an inverted pyramid. The number of courses our students have to achieve to get to the capstone holds them back. The capstone could also be a scheduling issue. Sometimes students are waiting to get in. I'm not sure how generalizable these observations are, but it's worth looking at.

Jones suggested continuing to look for ways to integrate students' work experience into the curriculum. In terms of creating a strategy, this group needs to work with whoever is articulating ways of getting credit for work. This could work with the e-portfolio. Evenbeck said there are a couple Commitment to Excellence projects working on that. This group might want to hear from HRA and the Career Center to have faculty input in this context. Helman suggested including the Prior Learning Assessment committee.

Borden commented that there's a lot going on in the first-year experience. We should keep endorsing what we're already doing, but we're probably dedicating a good level of resources. The last one, the senior thing, is probably the most diffuse local issue requiring attention—we can't have direct control, but we can channel information. The middle one may be where we have the best chance of bringing council attention to. That could be the most hands-on element of the focus.

Fisher said that Nursing, for 10-12 years, has had a portfolio process for RNs, and we do all sorts of transition activities. Traditional students could portfolio out of clinical courses.

Helman commented that we've found with the Prior Learning Assessment committee—we use that a lot in General Studies. The Council on Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) follows their guidelines. A lot of faculty haven't been exposed to this, and the CAEL has an online tutorial for faculty. It may be worthwhile to look at that instead of reinventing the wheel. Evenbeck agreed; CAEL does very good work. Porter said she just got an invitation to an online conference they'll have in January inviting a team to be put together. Maybe this information could be shared with this group.

Williams reiterated Borden's point that #2 (transition to major/transfers) will be most important. Evenbeck distributed the transfer report. Harrington commented that trying to achieve results in the transition to the major will probably be as challenging and rewarding. Johnson agreed that it would likely yield the biggest bang for the buck. That's where we'll start shifting numbers. I'd go for #3.

Evenbeck asked if it would make sense to have Harrington and Johnson, joined by the other group, begin to help shape what do. Souch volunteered—she said it was a clear issue for Liberal Arts and Science. Watt commented that some departments handle this very well; some students get lost in the process, and it's easy for some seniors to drop out if they don't get a personal touch.

Evenbeck commented that Students in Transition developed models for seniors just as they had done for freshmen.

Johnson recalled that Myles Brand once offered a kickback to those who graduated on time. That is no longer being done.

Evenbeck commented that in many states the issue is students not being able to get into classes; it doesn't seem like that's the big issue here, but I don't know if that's true or not. Porter responded that we did explore that, and it was using indirect evidence to see if we could identify bottlenecked courses. In some cases there were still open seats, just not at the prime time. Indirect evidence indicates it's not the availability of courses.

Watt commented that the School of Science was looking at when physics, etc. is being offered. It is amazing how many students had to take a combination of 3 of 6 required courses. When it becomes late registration, the sections available are offered at the same time for four required courses. Porter said that EM is not looking at those data, because academic units would have to define what courses you're concerned about. Helman asked if they are looking at what courses close first, and if they are including off-campus/distance sections.

Jones remembered working in a department that had 900 majors, and he was the advisor who had to deliver bad news to students who thought they'd graduate but weren't ready.

Usually it was a failure to take a required course, so the bottleneck was in terms of finding alternatives. The last thing a freshman wants is to be in a political science class with lots of senior political science majors. There is likely to be an overlap between transfer students and senior bottleneck, and there is probably an advising issue there.

Borden said transfer students are becoming much more traditional in terms of going full-time. 75% of transfers enter as lower-division students, which is very different than students in other universities. 60% of our transfers are entering UC, whereas 40% are admitted directly to their school. Transfers tend to be more male, relative to the overall population. Their age depends where they're coming in. There are more minorities among transfers, particularly African-Americans. We had 19% minority transfers this year. Overall, IUPUI has 15% minority. Their retention is as bad as it is for our overall group. When you control for full-time/part-time differences it gives a slightly different picture on retention. The overall retention rate on page 8 includes Ivy Tech. When you adjust for differences, you see that Ivy Tech transfers do well retention-wise, as do Purdue transfers. We're trying to get a sense of who our transfers are. Williams pointed out that we're going to have to look at internal transfers. Borden said we could separately look at that group, but they're complicated.

Rennels asked if we are tracking these by those on probation. Borden replied that he is not sure how we track that. Evenbeck said if they would've been on probation here, then when they come they're automatically on probation for a year, and if they do okay we take them off. We follow the same rules with incoming students that we do with our own. Rennels said Engineering and Technology gets a lot of dismissed students after they have sat out for a year. Or after sitting out with the Purdue system for a year.

Evenbeck said we had data years ago that compared Vincennes data that created concern that those students are not well prepared. Porter replied that one problem we have is that there's not a single type of transfer student; if we decide we're going to address different categories, then we get overwhelmed; we might want to take a systematic approach and go group-by-group. For example, EM is only going to look at Ivy Tech transfers first.

Fisher commented that a lot is trying to be done at the campus level. What about working with faculty in individual schools on targeted problems? That's where a lot of these issues reside. I think we have to raise awareness levels, and go school by school. Has that been tried? Borden said the Gateway Group might be a model where this has been tried. Evenbeck added that the Gateway Group has served the campus really well. Key partners are the Office for Professional Development and the Center for Teaching and Learning. They're represented on the council. Opening a conversation with them would be good.

Borden said the "bottleneck seniors" might be a thrust of this group that could be done at the school level. Survey results suggest there could be central attention to the process for transfers.

Evenbeck recommended having a subcommittee for each issue. One spring meeting selected by the group, the whole meeting would be dedicated to sort through that issue and determine what steps we should take. We're just wrapping up the Foundations Project. There was a very good 3-hour teleconference last week, and it turned out to be a good use of time, and we have data from faculty and student surveys. The Foundations group has its meeting where we're going to grade ourselves before the holiday; I've shared the report card with you. For the first strand, let's look at that report card and decide what we ought to do with what comes out of that report card. The Foundations Task Force goes out of existence and then their portfolio comes to us. We could easily have that be our January meeting and take an intense look at the Foundations data and the report card.

The other one (transition to major/transfers) is the big one where we ought to focus most of our attention. There is some complementarity with what EM is doing. We should also devote a full meeting to that. Think we need some sort of organized process to dig into those issues as a full council and then go forward.

Harrington expressed concern that part of this group's attention to the first-year experience will be duplicating some of the Gateway Group's work. I'm also thinking that transition to the major, if 60% of transfers are coming to UC, that means the area is more complicated than we thought; maybe we should look at those coming into UC. It might be easier to coordinate other groups rather than reinvent the wheel. Evenbeck agreed; we do have some overlap. Porter and I make sure we don't overlap with the EM Council.

Johnson added that the steering committee agreed the CRG would serve as the recursive loop-closure mechanism. While lots is being done, we still need to make sure people are getting rid of what's wrong.

Williams informed the council that she will be contacting the different departments and programs that reported what they're doing for retention. The January 15 report is an update of what we turned in last January. There were 47 groups that reported in last year. I've sent several requests asking those to give me anything new.

The next report will be due in May. A particular form will be used; I will send it along as soon as I have it. Based on comments from Liberal Arts, we want to draw from that perspective. A tremendous amount of work in the schools is being done that doesn't fit the mold of this report. I'll need your help to include that—right now I'm planning to do an addendum.

Evenbeck discussed the spring schedule; after some discussion, the committee agreed to try 8:30 to 10:30 Friday mornings.

Meeting adjourned.