Steering Committee for the Council on Retention and Graduation
March 10, 2005
UC 3171
10:00

Present: Borden, Chism, Evenbeck, Fisher, Johnson, Jones, Souch, Verduzco, Whitney, Williams

Evenbeck thought the last meeting of the full council was terrific because the steering committee set the groundwork so well. The minutes will be on the web site to have an ongoing archive. Jones had a correction to the last page of minutes: Terry Boyte is coming and it's the Lilly Colloquium.

Souch has contacted the subcommittee members to divvy up the issues identified by the senior-to-degree subcommittee.
1. Data issues: Souch will follow up with Borden—the kind of report like was done for transfer students. Our data on students is from an analysis done 8 years ago.
2. Advising issue: Johnson has insights on this. Faculty vs. professional advisors is an issue coming up in numerous areas. Evenbeck chatted with Buyarski about professional development for faculty to work with advising. We should bring Buyarski and Morrone on board with that. Souch added that the mechanisms for tracking students is part of that issue—how do we keep track of them. Communication studies has a great system, but it's resource-intensive. There should be something in the infrastructure. Vic had said PeopleSoft could do that, but Fisher countered that faculty need to know whether they've talked to students. Verduzco said at her previous school faculty used a bingo-type sheet for advising students. There is a problem with the PS degree audit capability. Students should be able to see this information, too. Students can drop their courses at any time, and it would be nice for faculty to be aware when it happens. Buyarski should be involved to be thinking about how to do this. Admissions bought something called the Matrix System, which scans in high school transcripts. We're trying to do an electronic advising system. Buyarski and Byrer have found a vendor and are looking at licenses and resources. There are also policy issues involved— we've made it as easy as possible for students to drop, because some faculty do not want to be bothered. We have done away with policies to stop students from hanging themselves. They are in control and have no clue what they're doing. For student athletes, Bret Shambaugh gets regular reports—it is possible to get feedback. Whitney said with policy situations that are faculty driven, as are several of these issues, one would hope that data would influence faculty decisions. If we can all see the same data and the problems ahead, and how far we've come with the freshman population, there might be more faculty support. Faculty could be informed. Also, the greatest number of drops occur during the freshman & sophomore years. There's also the issue of accountability. There is also variance among schools on how late a student is able to drop courses. This is

a downside to the federation of schools and silo autonomy that happens on our campus. Most students who get to the senior year have not dropped too many courses—it's why they've gotten that far. Jones said he is currently teaching and he doesn't know who the advisors of his students are. There is no mechanism for him to alert an advisor that a student is in trouble. He also doesn't know what incentives faculty would have to think about retention and graduation issues, other than intrinsic. It depends on how one frames the issues—in terms of tuition dollars, and the need to talk about the number of graduates rather than just majors. Part of this involves IMIR—we could look at average duration within the major, and chairs could be held accountable. These are the students that they need to identify with.

3. Financial issues: Financial aid, scholarships, potential internships, work-study, career counseling. Beth Barnette and Becky would be good to have a conversation with. There's a Career Center/HRA Committee already extant. Maggie Stimming and Traci Hughes will be good to get engaged with that. Jones said we have more requests than internships. Many of our students work and can't sacrifice short-term for unpaid internship. There's also the issue of for-credit internships, because students must pay tuition and seniors are likely to be maxed out on electives. Jones suggested bringing Ed Sullivan to talk about the Solution Center. There is also anecdotal evidence that students run out of financial aid, but in fact they only run out of subsidized (interest-deferred) eligibility. There are also advising issues when a faculty member says to do something after you graduate and there's no more financial aid.

4. Curricular issues: Where are the wait lists? Are there any courses students are simply not completing? We could do something like IMIR did with Gateway courses. People hear about backlogs. It might not be seats so much as taking the prereqs to get into it. That goes back to advising and identifying where those are. Evenbeck is on an accreditation team that is thinking about implementing and enforcing thresholds that courses need to be complete. Johnson said that will be a challenge with transfers.

5. Beyond IUPUI: Ideas of good practice elsewhere, trying to figure out if we should bring someone to campus, or have a town hall to raise the conversation.

6. Co-curricular/student life dimension: Housing was brought up at the last meeting. We do a lot of programming for first-year students, but what about bridging students out of college?

There are some areas we don't have people to work on. It might make sense to fold that subcommittee back into the full council and have them form subcommittees and find people. Whitney encouraged Souch to step back and look to stay efficient. She sees this group as strategizing.

Chism asked about the purpose of the steering committee versus the full committee. Evenbeck said this group would frame the issues and report out to the big group—there will be some redundancy and we need to move forward, so we should figure out how to work on the issues. There's also tension in that we have academic anarchy at IUPUI.

We have very few common policies and procedures. A lot of it is going to be data-driven to help schools make better decisions.

Evenbeck sees this as ongoing framing. Borden asked if we are working from a framework of campus-wide issues, with central thinking, central supporting like we do for first-year. He wonders if an alternative model like a graduate school model, in which departments are the nexus of the activity, and can then think of what kinds of resources departments need. UT Arlington had a graduate school that seemed to have its act together in terms of department-based activities. They have one recruiter who gives departments information on how they can recruit. Souch said some of the senior-to-degree issues are departmental, some are campus-wide. We don't know yet where the problems will be more pronounced. Seniors are focused in their majors at that point, but financial aid might be a factor. Maybe certain cohorts of students are running into problems. Borden said with UCOL there are departmental issues and you bring in course coordinators. It still seems like it's coming from central issues. Evenbeck is trying to figure out what central services would help departments. Whitney said it's data-driven; the DFW report was instrumental on so many policies and interventions. We need that type of clarity. Borden said the senior report from two years ago raised more questions than answers. Departments had different interpretations, and there was no momentum to keep them working on what they thought was the problem. How does one sustain attention? Souch is looking at what happens to seniors while they're here. Borden said we don't know what the measures are. Evenbeck suggested looking at the percentage of seniors who graduate, and hold it up to all the departments. Jones said it seemed to be school-specific looking for solutions. On the other hand, there was the report mentioned about the African-American students who had a 6-year graduation rate of 0. Borden said yes you need data, but without a process you are just fishing. We need AIP (Accelerated Improvement Process)—this group of people will look at this, see what needs to happen, and report recommendations. Souch thinks this is where we are. Faculty do not take this as a serious issue, and we need to get it on their radar. Jones sees the relationship between the Steering Committee and the full council as shifting. We have a more focused way of looking at things. I'd like to see full council subdivided into subgroups for each of the 3 issues: freshman, transfer, and seniors. In some places there will be overlap, but we could have people from each of those do what Souch has done. Williams said we could leave first-year students out of that for now. We don't want to focus 1/3 of our group on that. Evenbeck said the transfer group that Plater had mandated could be redirected, and we could have whoever wants to work on transfers become that group. He likes Vic's suggestion of using AIP to look at Souch's list. Vic said there isn't an existing process, but we need to be structured in our approach. The data will inform the other issues. Fisher said curricular issues wind up being school issues—what are we doing to accomplish that? We can provide data. It's an issue of raising awareness. Schools would do intervention but might not even know of the problem.

Borden said we need to decide whose awareness is the target audience. With the DFW report there was a lot of publicity, but also Plater started asking people why their departments were doing so poorly. Whitney said this would be a communication & awareness process. We can all rattle off info on first-year students but not this group.

Then we could do advising and financial aid, and pick the other three up next year. Jones said if you asked me to take a bigger advising role (as a faculty member), and curricular issues are involved, I would need to know what I need to know in order to avoid problems—I might not know there are bottlenecks or waitlists. Borden said there may be a few good issues that would get people's attention—let's do a red/green report for seniors that would do that. Who would be good to look at potential measures? Have a pre-meeting of those folks, then decide how to distribute the data, come up with some follow-up strategies, and then you begin the work. "Advising" is too broad—what about it specifically? It may take a bit to unpack that one. Is it about the strategic use of scholarships to keep students in later years? Johnson had told Evenbeck there aren't very good supports for faculty advisors, and how can we make things work better for students—get faculty and academic advisors work closely together? Johnson thinks seniors benefit from the same sort of contact with faculty, but they have issues faculty don't know about, like working outside academia. Drop forms signed by faculty are hard conversations for faculty to have with students, and they only hear the students' stories. There is a misconception that faculty are the pinnacle of advising. Borden suggested pulling together a variety of faculty from different departments, then pull them to this group and see what kinds of issues they think are key, then decide how to implement. He's not sure that any focus groups have been done. Johnson sees it as a resource issue to get faculty to reach students and take the time to be intrusive in their advising.

Williams said we're making an assumption that seniors are affected by financial aid—we need to know what aspect of it before we can fix. Vic asked what data would be needed: To what degree is X an issue? It might be good to talk to some seniors in this case. Have a convenient sample to get ideas. Think of what key contacts we have with seniors—Capstones.

1. Red/Green report: Data Issues—for the full council meeting? Borden suggested involving chairs and key faculty for this. Associate deans and chairs and program directors, maybe even professionals like Kim Nguyen. Souch will try to pull that group together. Whitney wants to know the point, the direction, and that would inform who would be the team. What does success look like? We want to increase people's awareness of information that will get their attention and hold accountable. Need data by school and program. Include in the team the people you want to affect. For example, Nursing students graduate. SLA, Science, SPEA, and Engineering would be targets. Borden said IMIR is taking data orders for late April. The group will know measures by the end of the term. There will be an open meeting—figure out who the key members are—others can come if they want to.

Advising: Johnson will handle the faculty/professional advisors aspect; Buyarski will deal with tracking students. Johnson worries about the size of the job. Having Stacy Morrone and Cathy Buyarski involved makes sense. Chism asked what the issues are. Borden suggested an inquiry—what are issues we can approach here, focusing within the domain of faculty development and resource provision. Jones said AIP would work better here to see what the advising processes are. Fisher suggested a best practices approach. How to spread around the campus? Whitney asked if we know there are

problems with advising and seniors; Borden said we have 10 years of data on what students have said about advising in their majors. Where does it differ between seniors who do/don't graduate and their experiences? Whitney said if we know we have a problem, we fix the most obvious things. See what we can improve for next fall. When you get good wins, people start paying attention. Borden suggested looking where satisfaction has gone up the most. Education has been looking at how they do advising; those whose programs are straddling schools have the biggest advising issue. In terms of what is working, Psychology has been working on advising for years. Evenbeck said the electronic tools will be a long-term thing. Souch sees those as separate—schools need to decide how they buy into these systems after Johnson talks about faculty advising. We need a better infrastructure for communication because departments don't know about the upcoming Matrix. Evenbeck will work with Buyarski on that, and Johnson will work with Souch on faculty advising.

Financial aid: We don't *know* that it's an issue, and it could be different by school. Need a conversation with Porter to see what she's confronting. One big IUPUI problem is that schools have a lot of control over individual students' aid. It's also very decentralized. Most universities have a centralized filter. Not sure how she wants to approach this. Do you really run out of aid? Borden said Kathy Burton has done the most work with financial aid, so she will know what the issues are. Whitney asked what incentives we have for people to complete—we probably have structural *dis*incentives. Other factors could include the bad financial times, tough job market, etc. Do we have an ethos to complete? There's probably also a cutline between the professional environment and the general undergrad environment in terms of graduating. Yurtseven is doing incentives like matching tuition. Whitney said I want to know our deficits, but also who should be interviewed by that team. We make our committees way too big. Borden suggested working on an appreciative inquiry. Financial aid may be the one area where positive cases would be easier and more refreshing. Same with advising. It would involve taking examples of where the completions are happening and what incentives are like and how it's helping.

Whitney will help wherever the financial aid team needs. The team will include Kathy Burton, Becky Porter, Beth Barnette, Traci Hughes. Question—who should chair—the content expert or just a good facilitator? Borden has spoken with those involved with appreciative inquiry, and it was told it's very hard to move along with it, unless you're an expert.

The group will have a plan for advising by the end of May.

By the end of Summer I for financial aid? Whitney will talk to Porter first to get grounding. They will have something by the start of the fall semester.

Johnson pointed out that these issues also overlap with the transfer group. It would be good to have them involved as well. Borden suggested involving Katie Morrow on advising. What about moving to cocurricular? Fisher asked what would be the bigger bang? We don't know. Chism said by the end of may we'll figure out how big an issue

financial aid is. Johnson said it would also be worth getting focus group info from students this semester to help frame the issue.

The way Evenbeck has been seeing the transfer group, it's very focused on the transition. There is a distinction, like how do we deal with Inter-Campus Transfers vs. external transfers. Eventually there's overlap with this. Johnson said transfer students often think they know what they're doing, just like seniors. Evenbeck said for the time being we'll focus on these three (Financial aid, faculty vs. professional advising; the red/green report). Whitney wants to get a better understanding on the financial aid issue before going on to anything else. She will have 3 or 4 meetings and make improvement recommendations. Cathie Carrigan and Evenbeck will look through web sites for best practices. An Oregon institution had done a study on seniors.

Evenbeck handed out an update of the Foundations project. We asked UC faculty to look at three of the dimensions: Transitions, Faculty, and Diversity. We have existing UC committees who are now looking at these. The full council agenda will be to tell what we're up to with these (and take volunteers) and report on moving forward with the Foundations project. Borden wonders if the council could provide input; we should bring extant committee folks to the full council meeting to get input.

Evenbeck commented that this is uncharted territory. Borden said we're ahead of other universities by doing this. We have other obstacles—we're still dealing with the Indiana culture about higher ed.

Evenbeck said we have this terrible retention/graduation rate, but we have the Nina Mason Pulliam scholarship through the Pulliam Trust, and by the end of this year the first cohort will be 80%. Borden qualified that it is of 5 students, but added that Nina scholars generally are already doing better than average retention in all institutions that have the scholarship, in spite of their difficult circumstances.

Regarding the transfer issue, Evenbeck said we will invite people to sign on for the three tasks we identified, then those groups will report back to the full council. Subsequent meetings will be the three reports. This steering committee will manage the process. The Transfer Task force is meeting in April. We will redefine it as a subgroup of this group. The transfer group had planned to do that from the beginning. We can ask the full council if they'd like to join it. Future meetings of the big group will be a series of reports. We also have a lot to go over with the foundations project. Borden asked what value will we add to the process? Evenbeck explained that the Foundations Task Force is no longer an entity—their work is done, and there are UC groups where the action will take place on the three dimensions that were picked up by UC faculty.

Chism said all of these dimensions involve rethinking how we engage first-year students. Maybe the Gateway group becomes that subcommittee that coordinates work among all those people. Maybe you have the big group together to get the big picture, then they take that framework and work on subgroups.

We can meet less frequently and meetings would be less redundant. We could suspend the larger group. When the reports are done, the full council could meet in the fall, and once a semester thereafter. The steering committee will continue to meet monthly, to monitor how they're doing their work. Take foundations to the Gateway Group. The Steering Committee becomes umbrella.

The March 31 meeting will involve assignments to the subcommittees, but we don't need the entire council assigned for subgroups.

Meeting adjourned.