

Steering Committee for the Retention and Graduation Council  
December 2, 2004  
UC 3171

Present: Chism, Evenbeck, Johnson, Jones, Porter, Souch, Williams

The meeting began with some discussion about the university-wide retention figures and the current state of financial aid. Evenbeck said that the anecdotal stuff about students with financial aid is devastating. One student was getting conflicting information from two offices. I'm told that people in the Bursar's office are not allowed to look at Financial Aid information, and vice-versa. I'm told it's policy—that central administration has issued a mandate, based on their interpretation of federal law.

Johnson suggested that it's a kind of learned helplessness among administrators. There's not a solution for the problem. Evenbeck commented that Dean Plater said his sense is that it's not going to be any better this time around.

**Enrollment Management:** Porter said the EM council has decided on what we're describing as a 3-pronged approach to guide our activities. One is the central initiative—these span the campus and are organized out of a central entity. One component (led by Susan Sutton) is to look at international students to look at what we can do in terms of recruiting them, since retention is not an issue. We have already looked at a new visa voucher program and undergrad incentive scholarships.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars is an important component for our campus. We've had a number of initiatives to bring them to our campus from around the state. The office is on our campus, which is a good link. Kim Stewart-Brinston is bringing together individuals to look at how we can have a better recruiting/retention there. Transfer students are important—Trudy has been involved in initiating the Accelerated Improvement Process (AIP). We will use this to look at the Ivy Tech transfer process. We will also look at Graduate Degrees, led by Sherri Kuhner.

A cluster on academic units will focus on the communication to deans and what they can do to help academic units contribute. We're looking at how to get units to help students register. Some units are proactive; others are not yet there. We want to help capture the energy and ideas some are working on.

Within EM, we're looking at activities for the monthly meetings—focus on concrete ideas, best practices, how they map to EM priorities, what we can do to assist them. We could try a “data nugget”—using Vic Borden to explain how best to use a specific bit of information, like demographics in your school.

The third prong is to look at existing EM-related groups. We have the Scholarship Strategic Coordinating Council who is responsible for academic unit scholarships, talking to Beth Barnette who is central scholarship, talking about how to use the money more efficiently. How do we use money to entice people to come? Then there's the Minority

Outreach Group because several units have a task related to that academic unit to enhance minority recruitment—we found there would be relatively small events with many staff—surely we could use our resources more efficiently. We have 20 groups; we want to create a community of practice, use best practices to share, then look at the overall EM initiative. The steering committee meets tomorrow; hope to have a calendar set up on what we're going to do for the rest of the year.

Evenbeck commented that he recognizes that Vic is besieged, but we've been trying to get data on transfer students, and will finally get it next week.

Porter said that the ambitious agenda she has for tomorrow is as follows: We've got the framework and have it laid out, and now we can be doing those other kinds of tasks. We need to look at, given that the information/knowledge is limited, how can we best use what is available?

Evenbeck suggested early Spring we could have a special meeting where both Steering Committees come. Vic does a brilliant job of laying out the data, and both committees could talk about what we need to know and what to do. Porter countered that Vic wants questions, rather than people asking him what data he has. Data by itself is not meaningful; it's your interpretation that creates meaning. Evenbeck asked if the AIP would help us address this set of problems.

Chism explained that Ann Zanzig came from University of Wisconsin and is a trainer in this process. "Accelerated" means that in 2 or 3 meetings you solve a problem. It involves things you're probably all familiar with, though she has a lot of tools for achieving consensus, identifying assumptions. You take time to frame the question, lead through the process to talk about it people/resources, etc. It makes people talk through a problem. It could even be that the initial question is not the real issue. The important thing is the unit identifies what it is that is a problem, so they are solvers as well. I think you can use pieces of it without going through the whole routine, and we could use it at our meetings. These are such complicated issues.

Porter said they chose to use it in looking at transfer-related issues because some of the barriers are just the process. It's very concrete—you can map it out. Until we get comfortable and better at all that, we thought having a defined process to get people to use the techniques would help.

Chism said she has found the most benefit in office practices. Retention and graduation is so large an issue you'd have to break it down to some mechanisms that are/aren't working, that result in attrition, etc. Maybe initial brainstorming to identify critical issues would make it workable.

Evenbeck asked Borden if some time in the next semester, the two steering committees could have a joint session where Borden would be a (not the prominent) player, and would talk about what data are there, and hear what questions we have, and then how

should we go about asking those questions, and what are our priorities in getting answers to those questions? To set a framework.

Borden said the EM council has done the framework process. Is this intended to revisit that? I'm not sure it fits in with what EM is trying to accomplish. That's what should lead—what we're trying to accomplish. Evenbeck explained that we want to have better understandings than people in the group think we have. Borden asked why care what the data are instead of the issues? Souch explained that we're formulating questions—different schools will have different questions, but I think there's a lot of us just trying to get our minds around the questions, the data, how to get them to make decisions. Borden clarified that the group is looking for common frames of reference/thinking toward the end of priority setting. Souch agreed, and said it would be so we can be more deliberate in terms of where we put our resources.

Borden commented that it seems that the data tends to lead you into the opposite direction of that goal. We need a systematic inquiry rather than looking at data. We need a set of questions to ask, and the data will be pivotal, but we need to hone in further and further into what appears to be a more coherent and common focus.

Porter offered a concrete example: Vic is going to report the information on the survey done related to students. We've collected some info; we're asking academic units to make phone calls to those students not registered in a timely fashion. We're not collecting results, so there's no way to consolidate that information. Nobody is going to follow up, so won't know if phone calls were effective. We're doing a lot of things, based on "we think these have good results."

Williams commented that she worries that we don't check to see if we look desperate, if it has a negative impact. Porter agreed and said that's the whole point of what we're trying to initiate: stop doing things based on our anecdotal impressions. With these larger councils we want to influence that.

Borden asked, is it that difficult for us to identify some large barriers we have to deal with? We're avoiding them. Financial aid has issues, scholarships are decentralized. This is a difficult place to get money from. That is a big issue for us. I'm sure we could find a handful of other such issues. We want to pay attention to the ones we have control over. We know we're taking students who are not prepared, we know there are still issues with students taking courses without the appropriate background. Can't we go through some process to find those, then look at the info we need to see if it really is an issue? It seems like we always go to look at data because we're avoiding the hard stuff.

Jones said we already have the priority areas draft. It may mean going back to look at that. Souch said that she is a social scientist, and knows that the critical thing is formulating the question. We probably have identified some of them. What are students saying about not enrolling?

Borden said he thought there was this other aspect to what you said in that deans and department chairs don't get key pieces of information and things to monitor in order to bring the thinking to another level. That involves bringing people together.

Souch explained that it's like DFW rates; dealing with Gateway courses has at least kept chairs accountable, but retention rates are reported at the school level. Some is just accountability and getting people's attention. There's evidence with the Gateway group that just reporting DFW rates has inspired accountability. Porter added that it's like academic unit "health measures." Do the assessment. It's not all the info, but it's like taking your temperature—it gives you an indicator, a profile.

Souch said that Bill Plater sent out a spreadsheet with the number of programs that had graduated fewer than ten students over the last few years. It got people's attention. It doesn't always have to be negative all the time, but that was definitely effective.

Borden said he has 6 data sets sitting on his server to analyze. DFW, NSSE, student participation, survey, phone results. Analyses are wanted within the next couple days. We're looking at these and thinking of other things to look at when we haven't looked at these yet. I'm nervous about the continued fishing.

Evenbeck explained that it's not so much fishing; we have red light/green light with diversity. That was a wonderful thing that we went through to decide how we would reflect as a campus on issues of diversity. Catherine said we had asked if we could lay out what the handful of things we really want to focus on would be, and hold ourselves accountable for the same way that publishing the DFW rates has made a big difference with the Gateway courses. It could be the number of African-American graduates in a department over a decade.

Borden said the one area we need to very quickly move toward is attracting and supporting a diverse, better-prepared student body. We don't have the group or focus yet to say what we will use for the accountability. It could be both steering committees. I was going to send you a list of what we thought we'd look at in the past to see what we need to do. We would need to do this in next week or so to make it into the performance report.

Evenbeck said he doesn't want this to be a panic thing. We're not going to settle once and for all, but it would be good to get these 2 groups together, sit down, and go through maybe the AIP and say here's what we're going to put out there.

Borden said the AIP isn't pertinent. It's for finding out how you could do better at what you already do—not for something that doesn't exist. There's the accountability, tip of the iceberg, few good measures, but I want it to emerge from the systematic, intentional efforts to develop a coherent approach. The actions and indicators are somewhat together, but you can't get one out of the other directly. Chism agreed, and added that it's recursive rather than linear. Borden added that as you're recursing, you need a focus to bring it together, and I don't see us knowing.

Chism suggested that we need a model, and we don't talk about that. How do we model retention? Nothing explicit exists. Even a concept map of what happens when a student fails to succeed, what factors are involved. We need to look at the constellation of factors involved, and maybe even prioritize those.

Jones commented that there is the Tinto model that focuses on student attributes, and the other on environmental things, the fact that students bring a lot of things with them to campus. The models are there. I'm going back to this issue. We've got a pretty decent question: What are the characteristics of people who graduate? There are probably students who graduate who have these issues, and we should be finding out how they did it. We should be asking, what did we do that helped, what did you do that helped? So we can replicate. What's leading students to not finish, but what contributes to student success? Borden agreed that there are many models—they're all "student hits environment, process happens, outcome." Chism added that the process is usually black-box.

Borden said if you focus on it you can get some useful info, but it might be more productive to think about an action model: What a student goes through at the identification of college stage, what are we doing at that part of it: the decision, transition, first-year experience stages. We could try to articulate the black box, and it would be more informative—it could also contribute substantially to the literature.

Chism commented that the answer is always to get different students. Porter said one of the issues we continually run up against is that IUPUI has so many different *kinds* of student. We're not a small liberal arts institution where most students fit into a general category. Sometimes we get bogged down. Maybe we should say this year we're going to focus on this type of student and look at the process, then next year another one.

Borden said Jim Black impacted on him when he talked about moving away from group-focused processing and talked about recruiting to an  $N$  of 1. Every individual crosses a bunch of groups. You can think about the process in a different way. Given that each individual is unique, you may look at how you offer services to the individual rather than generalities.

Williams said part of the problem is that we don't know who we are as an institution, and so it's hard for us to sell ourselves because of that. It's hard for us to articulate who we are, and the confusion probably has an effect on students. We're not DePauw. I don't know it can be fixed.

Johnson countered that we do know, but only in the individual units—there is not a good global self-concept. We are always struggling with decentralization vs. centralization—it's like a decision between a vaccine that will hit all students or a homeopathic approach. I'm with Vic—I'm all for efficiency and hunting for the vaccine.

Borden said he could see the CRG focusing on how students form the affiliation with the unit being a major focus—a UC-to-major focus. EM may take more the front end of that—looking at students coming into the big IUPUI; entering students don't come into a major or a department. That requires more a centralized perspective: Get them in, then into a major.

Porter said that even in that characterization it's UC-to-major or transfer-to-major. Those are different when you look at the processes involved, and those are differences we need to acknowledge. Students in UC have a different support system and process than those transferring in. Transfers haven't had the same kind of nurturing. It's an important population and I don't want us to lose that.

Chism noted that years ago a different institution was looking at black student retention, and they looked at having a positive identification with a faculty member. That overrode major obstacles the students faced. The intangible, the thing that gets beyond the barriers is that caring thing. If we could get that department to recognize the power of caring for the student, then we knew the student would succeed.

Williams said transfer students are treated differently depending on what school they're going to. We need to make that standardized. But some units do a much better job of catering to their transfer students. Maybe we should celebrate those units. Borden said we can bring attention to them by looking at a measure of transfer 1<sup>st</sup> year retention by program.

Johnson pointed out that among the faculty there's a degree of uncertainty about focusing on Ivy Tech transfers. Porter explained that politically we have no choice but to take them. We get a lot of mileage out of our connection with Ivy Tech. We need to determine how to make this work well. If there's a weak area, we have good enough working relationships to go back and address any issue. Chism said we recently had just such a conversation about preparing future faculty because some of the faculty at Ivy Tech are grad students. We talked about establishing relationships and mentoring to professionalize the teaching.

Williams asked if this means taking a two pronged approach. What if we looked at undergrads once they're in UC, and transfer students at IUPUI in general—those two experiential groups.

Borden suggested: 1. How students get through the first year. We have that information. (Gateway, Foundations, etc.) 2. Entry into the major. 3. Getting the degree. We've got lots of seniors who don't get out—particularly part-timers. We have a technical issue that seniors are not really seniors because of the distribution of their credits.

Chism added that we still need to get at the qualitative factors that are motivators. Borden replied that we have things in place to get at that. We haven't paid attention to transition to major, or senior-to-degree. Chism asked what about experience in the

major? Borden replied that we don't have an empirical sense of students declaring and entering a major. Porter said she would not be comfortable saying you'll look at that transition to major part without talking about what happens in the major. Johnson suggested maybe we should worry about getting them out, and EM works on getting them in.

Jones said that it seems that if we look, we have lots of data on the input. It sounds like we've got pretty good data on what goes on here in terms of support programs—powerful pedagogies, etc. Are those types of activities also going on after the first year? We still have a lot of information about what goes on. We don't have as much about the output. It's like reverse-engineering. What does an IUPUI graduate look like?

Borden said we have a lot of info on our alumni via the survey. We don't have it at the level of quality you're talking about; we don't have a handle on the people who don't complete. We don't know who we could have saved.

Johnson said she has 4 people in her capstone who have been here longer than 12 years. Capstone instructors have lots of these students—the capstone itself might be part of the problem. But this is a cohort that could be assessed. In liberal arts and science they have to take this, and it could give a lot of info. Souch mentioned the graduating senior survey; 230 intend to graduate, and nowhere near that number actually will.

Williams said we do have the first prong. Maybe we should focus on bringing it together and disseminate through the campus. I disagree that we have a handle on the transfer process. That middle prong is critical. We don't know who they are, how they're being served, or even what we mean. Evenbeck added that transition to the major is terrible, too. We're hemorrhaging with those pre-nurses.

Williams suggested the group focus on those latter two pieces that would be good, and then come back and pick up the first (which we already have a lot of information for).

Borden said we want to look at the first year-to-major experience, and include how they're supported when they're in. Johnson observed that advising is a core component. Evenbeck added that the full campus will be looking at advising next year.

Porter asked about the time frame: The end point is the end of their first twelve months. What's the beginning point? Borden said the middle is their first semester in the major. Knowing when they're majors is a process issue. You look at how they came to it, and how they progress in the temporal proximity. The 12 months before and after, for example. Porter restated that the before is looking at descriptive, input characteristics. Borden agreed: They have an intended major on their record. Johnson said it would be important to coordinate advising in the major with what happened before the major.

Williams said exploratory students are the largest major. How do they get funneled into the different schools? Which schools are recruiting?

Borden added that we also don't know *how* certain students are of their major plans based on the entering student survey. Williams said the overall school choices are changing; numbers for Business majors are dropping, and health-related majors are increasing. They're in the pipeline.

Jones said one of the questions is at the unit level. What is the enrollment capacity of these high demand majors? Borden said we ask if they didn't come because couldn't get in. Williams added that there is a health professions bottleneck. Evenbeck said that we are helping them pick Plan B. Porter explained that it's a given that there will not be more seats in the nursing program. There are constraints that are beyond the control—clinicals, for example. It helps to have dual career preparation from the beginning.

Jones said that at the University of Charleston, all Health Sciences students took a core course to weed out students who couldn't pass gateway exams. Because there were interdisciplinary courses, it was easier to shift from one health sciences major to another.

Chism said that Marty Reiser is looking at how students cope with being rejected.

Evenbeck suggested rolling the approach out to the full council next week. Borden agreed and said by then we'll have the transfer student stuff. He will bring the 2003 study on getting out of the major and the NSSE results.

Evenbeck distributed handouts and announced that the Foundations Teleconference is today. Pat Terenzini will come next month to lead the UC faculty retreat. All council members might want to come. Will get date out and confirm it.

Williams gave an update on the IPAS: She has 2 reports due January 15. She has sent it out to the chairs and course coordinators. One faculty member has contacted her. She asked the group to please help her help everybody understand that they've been asked.

Borden suggested a cover sheet with a few key points and the rest for background.

Williams explained that she's asking for specific retention initiatives for all students. When she started requesting again, philosophy said CI and TLC, but I don't think that's the most important thing—other things they're doing are having a bigger impact. I'll fight the good fight to get that info added that doesn't fit neatly into the boxes.

Johnson asked about program reviews. Evenbeck said Nancy has taken the Gateway Chairs a helpful template of things they could do. He wonders if we could raise that to things you could do in a gateway course so it's not just a programmatic thing.

Williams wondered if we ought to just do that and follow the little pattern. The fact that Nelms has been able to get this done is amazing in itself. Maybe we should just leave their packet alone and then write an IUPUI addition. Evenbeck said that this council needs to take that on in a serious way. Chism said it's about retention initiatives aimed at

the student, but we have a lot aimed at faculty. You can't even list those things on there. Borden suggested phrasing, "Addendum: Retention initiatives not covered by the..."

Williams said it's hard to explain urgency. The letter needs to come from Charlie himself. Evenbeck explained that the seeds are the trustees allocated tuition money to fund retention, and that includes faculty development. We're supposed to report on the impact that had. Why should we only talk about that? That's how it became broader. Borden commented that as long as retention was going up, it was good to talk from. The problem is we have stalled.

Chism asked if there is the possibility that the allocation would stop; Borden said in future decisions by trustees, if they don't get a more positive view of what IUPUI is doing, we're not going to go anywhere. We have to do whatever is needed to raise the level of visibility.

Williams said the two reports due in January are not so critical. The big report is due in May, so we have time to put this together. IPAS has agreed to look at the economic background of students and will also look at Passport.

Meeting adjourned.