

Council on Retention and Graduation Steering Committee
March 29, 2007—UC 3171
Presiding: Scott Evenbeck

Present: Cathy Buyarski, Scott Evenbeck, Michele Hansen, Steve Jones, Gary Pike, Rebecca Porter, Karen Whitney, Gayle Williams

Regrets: Sharon Hamilton, Kathy Johnson, Stacy Morrone, David Sabol, Marianne Wokeck

Guest: James Johnson

1. Evenbeck opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and making introductions.
2. James Johnson distributed a handout, "Second-Start Late Semester Courses at IUPUI." He reviewed the handout, including a 12-week format. If we could use alternative formats for students who drop classes, such as dropping a class means you must add a class, then we would not be behind the eight ball with financial aid, etc. Sukhatme asked Johnson to start the process for retention strategy. Sukhatme would like students to get through school faster so they can graduate. Johnson wants to update the CRG Steering Committee on the retention strategy process. He asked if this strategy would be a possibility. After reviewing the list on the handout, Evenbeck said that the three big Gateway courses are math, writing, and psychology. Johnson explained that his focus, even this late in the semester, is the list of courses (first page of handout). If we could offer these courses in a format that would allow students to drop and add or do a late start, then this might help students.

Johnson reviewed the remainder of his handout. The question that arises is students taking courses beyond their capability and getting into trouble. After reviewing the first chart on page two, Buyarski asked if the data range is important because students make decisions at different points in time. For example, students may drop a course before spring break and then add a course after break is over. Johnson mentioned compression courses at IUB.

Porter stated that she has a number of issues with dropping and adding. If dropping and adding is not done just right, students will end up with a major financial impact. If a student drops a course at one point and does not enroll in another course until later and a critical financial aid deadline passes, the student will not receive the full financial aid award. Financial aid is distributed by semester. It is possible that a student could receive financial aid and then have to owe the university money. Another issue is financial aid regulations. How will these changes impact those regulations? What happens if a student is enrolled but not attending classes? Buyarski asked what happens now in that situation. Porter explained that the process now involves a lot of manual processing. The more the system expands, the more people will have to watch, which increases the likelihood of making an error. It can become very complicated. Porter wants to be careful what commitments we make as an institution. Johnson said that he is not talking about a large population of students yet. He wants to minimize any interruptions to financial aid.

Evenbeck made copies of a handout that Porter distributed in a previous meeting (“Course Exchange”). In reference to this handout, Porter said that in order for us to understand, she needs to know what happens in all of those parameters. What will it cost in terms of refund period and transaction cost? Another thing we need to think about is multiple start and stop dates. We have agreed that students who are enrolled in Ivy Tech and IUPUI can aggregate their hours toward a course load for financial aid. If there is a student identified early in the semester as not doing well, then this would allow the student to go to Ivy Tech to take a course and maintain their credits. It might allow a larger array than what we want to do on this campus.

Williams believes this is ultimately a retention issue. The simple solution is to have a one-student approach similar to what IUB does with a flat fee. We could also provide the Just in Time course to beef up skills for when the student returns the following semester. Will the student be prepared? Porter explained that the flat fee is calculated at 15–16 credit hours. Therefore, all of the student population taking 12–15 credit hours will have to pay more. Porter does not want to implement something where students are paying for more than they are actually taking. Williams mentioned that we are raising a lot of fees. How many students are only taking 12 credit hours because of the cost? If these students were paying a flat fee, this could be an incentive and they could take up to 17 credit hours. Evenbeck said students on Pell grants or Twenty-First Century Scholars will not be paying more money because the State covers the cost.

Whitney said she does not have a great interest in doing what IUB does. We need to do what is right for our students. What if we innovate something here so students can move throughout the entire IU-Ivy Tech system? This is a very conceptual thing that we are throwing out. We could also look at our system as being Ivy Tech. We know some of our students, before they completely fail, not only are we going to move them to Ivy Tech, but they have already paid for it. Williams said she agrees with Whitney. IUB has a Just in Time program. We have never been able to do that because of our fee structure. All students think they are going to be successful. This is where we come in and say we can add another credit hour to a student’s math class. We could tell the student s/he needs more time in math and it will not cost a thing or affect their financial aid. Williams has felt for a long time that this is a simple solution. Just in Time is a non-credit-baring program and does not count toward a degree.

Porter wants us to do assessments before the students enter. Evenbeck replied that we are already doing that. Porter wants to know how good the assessment tests are. Whitney said that we can predict the success of students only to a certain point. There is a point where you stop. She has seen national merit scholars fail. She believes we have seen our predictions improve. Williams pointed out that just because a test says a student is ready to begin calculus does not mean the student should actually be in the course.

Jones said he does not know the answer. When he teaches, he knows who is going to fail based on something very simple: attendance. After four weeks, Jones can say which students will not pass the course based on who has not been attending or turning in assignments. He believes there is a correlation. Hansen agrees with this. Porter asked if it is wise to pull

failing students out of one course and put them into another. Jones believes that at the end of the day we need to let students know that if they do not make an effort they will fail and lose their financial aid. Sending a message there is no consequence for not making an effort in class is a bad message to send. Porter pointed out that we cannot withhold financial aid if students are entitled to it.

Williams explained that she attended the AD&D Conference (Association of Deans and Directors of University Colleges and Undergraduate Studies). She discovered that East Carolina University allows students to make four drops while pursuing a degree. Initially, they expected what we all expected, but they were surprised to find out that students saved their drops for the senior year and often ended up not using their drops at all. There are always reasons for students to drop, but they need to reinvest themselves.

Jones explained that he was at a university where students kept the fee structure that they paid for when they first arrived, unless they took too long to graduate. This way, fees do not go up; it is a quad fee structure. For students taking more than 12 credit hours, the tuition increases per credit hour.

Whitney would like to defer to the research of Hansen and Buyarski. This is a case where results matter. We have to ask if this is serving the desired result, which is graduation. What system could we create ideally? We have been flat and frustrated for a while. Whitney would like time to look at new evidence. The feedback she is receiving from students is that they want things they can count on. About 200 African American students told her that IUPUI does not deliver what is promised in our marketing materials. This is not to say that all students feel the same way.

Johnson asked what everyone thought of the idea of a late start semester course. Is it too late to try? Evenbeck replied that this issue is complicated. We want students to accumulate more hours, not have fewer hours. The good thing is that students can accumulate courses, even if only one to two credits. A Bridge program in the fall would be a good thing. Math is the big issue. If we can do in the fall for students (who will start in the spring) what we do for students in the summer that would be great. The point is that rather than coming in and dealing with parking hassles and other problems the Bridge program allows students to get their minds focused on the university and ease into college life. The typical 18-year-old thinks school starts in the fall; for returning students, school is a new year's resolution. Sometimes students have more difficulty with math because of the amount of time that has lapsed. Evenbeck is not sure if one size fits all of these purposes. If we could do a fall Bridge program, that would be consistent with Johnson's plan. There is no reason not to open the door and do that with Ivy Tech, even if it is noncredit bearing. Porter said that Ivy Tech is initiating a prep for their students before they enter. They have the same premise as us, but a little different strategy. Evenbeck asked Johnson if he would be willing to put that on his plate. Johnson replied that he would. Evenbeck said that Sukhatme is behind this effort. We clearly have his strong sanction to do something. Porter said that we do not want to do something trying to help students and then put them in a catch-22 situation. About the math problem, we can send students to Ivy Tech to get extra help. We need to invest time in deciding how to help students who are not successful.

Johnson said they want four centers around I-465. We have a center in Carmel. They are working with Ivy Tech on finding a replacement for that center. Right now, they are in negotiations with Greenwood. This will be a different approach with Greenwood. The goal is to have a center in the airport by 2010. One thing they are trying in all centers is to have an alternative format, such as the 12-week mode. A readiness assessment would be helpful to find out if students are ready for a 12-week class. Whitney said this is similar to the quarter system. Indiana Wesleyan has 5-week modes. There are employees in Whitney's area who attend Indiana Wesleyan because of the 5-week format. She asked Johnson if he was leaving the door open to other modes. Johnson replied that he was. However, he felt that an 8-week mode would not be approved by the faculty. Whitney said that there is a huge market for the 5-week mode. It is a format that really fits the lives of busy adults. Porter urged everyone to think about the market we are going after. IUPUI used to serve the adult market for a while, then that changed. A 5-week format has different services. Students can call at any time to register, textbooks are automatically sent out. There is a reason why this format is more costly. It is not just a matter of packaging courses.

Jones said we need to balance what is convenient for the student with what we know is a good pedagogical practice. Our community partners have a hard time dealing with the 15-week semester. With an internship, our partners get students for about ten weeks. The partners are willing to work with college calendars, but only so far. Will the new modes and formats deprive students of decent pedagogical practices?

Johnson would like to put something on the table that is different. His proposal is a mode. A 12-week model is not that much of a change from a 16-week semester. The goal is to get an incremental model. There is a possibility that Ivy Tech will move their automotive programs. We need to think about how we do our business. Johnson believes this is a very good model. We need to do a pilot first. Porter believes students will do some mixing and matching of courses.

Whitney observed that she is hearing different statements from the committee. One moment we say that we will be flexible, and then we say students should not have flexibility. In the pilot program, we need to be crystal clear who the intended population is. If we go forward, we need to use a profile so that students will be successful.

Johnson replied that there is not a lot of literature on this. When Hansen asked if Johnson has looked at the characteristics of students who have dropped and added courses, he replied that he has not. Hansen understands this is the beginning of the project.

Buyarski said that if we run into issues with this project, then we will have to look at other options. Things like financial aid and health insurance often drive these decisions for students. Sukhatme has said that we need to prepare students so they can take courses again. Williams suggested that we not allow students to drop courses. Instead, have students take a course to help them get through the course they want to drop. Eight out of ten students do not pick up the equivalent of what they dropped to meet academic requirements; they pick up

“fillers.” Buyarski agreed that students choose a lot of fillers. Williams said that we do the same thing with students who need to carry 12 credit hours; we pad their schedules.

Buyarski believes we need to decide what courses we are going to add to this nonstandard format. Williams reminded everyone that University College is the only unit where students have to talk to an advisor before students can drop courses. Porter said the academic unit makes that decision. She said the reality is, if we insist that students have a signature before they drop classes, unit secretaries end up signing off on the drop slips. Williams said this system is not designed to serve students. Johnson said that we are enabling students to drop courses. Evenbeck believes students need an intervention.

Johnson said there are 300-level courses being offered in this new format. Evenbeck believes this will be a significant enhancer to retention. He told Johnson that University College will help in this effort. Johnson said that he is interested in results.

Buyarski wanted to know if a student drops a class that he or she has not been attending, we may want to think about the pedagogy. Perhaps there should be guidelines for departments who set up these courses, such as mandatory attendance. Porter believes there will be more withdrawals if we facilitate this. Williams wants to cut the drops. Evenbeck said that we tried this back in the 1980s, but it did not stick.

Evenbeck asked that Johnson keep us updated. The next step will be to see what the math department says about the noncredit preparatory course for a fall Bridge program. This is the perfect place to do something creative with Ivy Tech. Porter said that instead of us offering a noncredit course, we could send students to Ivy Tech. Evenbeck said that we had a seamless environment with Ivy Tech with math, but then it disintegrated. It seems to be improving now. Williams said that it is difficult to figure out what is going on with Ivy Tech. Johnson believes there is a different climate at Ivy Tech now.

3. Michele Hansen distributed three handouts: “University College First-Year Seminars: Fall 2005 End-Of-Course Evaluation Questionnaire, A Qualitative Investigation,” “IUPUI First Year Seminar Evaluation Questionnaire Results,” and “IUPUI Academic Support Programs and Academic Success: Highlights.”

In light of Borden’s and Pike’s work, Hansen decided to discuss what works with promoting student success and how students perceive those interventions. Hansen said her handouts focus on how students are perceiving seminars. She explained that whenever she uses the term “adjusted” or “controlled,” she is controlling for that characteristic to understand the impact.

Hansen reviewed the handout “IUPUI Academic Support Programs and Academic Success: Highlights.” Under the second bullet (“First-Year Seminars”), Hansen noted that there was a 10 percent difference in retention rates for participants. Porter asked what determines participation. Buyarski asked about latecomers. Porter said an alternative is not a learning community as much as being better prepared. Hansen replied that all of this has been controlled for in her results. Porter wondered about those students who register early and get

in place. Hansen said that she tries to control for everything that she can; she is trying to understand traits of students who do not participate. Williams noted that the learning communities are a mix of students. For example, the School of Education does not put a lot of their students in learning communities, but the Kelley School of Business does. Hansen said that when she looked at the students who are not participating, they tend to be older with higher SAT scores. Porter said that the only reason she brings this up is because we look at interventions and see significant effects, but the overall retention rate stays flat. Evenbeck believes we will find the answers. Pike stated that the entering ability of students is driving the retention rate. Porter believes our retention rate will not change until we address the entering ability of students. Pike agreed. Evenbeck said another issue is solving money problems. Pike said this will have less than a 10-point difference in success. Williams said another issue is students mishandling their money.

Hansen continued reviewing her handout. For the Summer Academy Bridge Program, there is a positive outcome, particularly for African American students. Porter pointed out that in 2005 the program was self-select, but that changed in 2006. Hansen said she is still trying to work that out for the 2006 statistics. She looked at first-generation students in the Bridge program and noted that there were positive effects. Students in critical inquiry courses, who are primarily conditional admits, were not retained. Williams said that many students do not think they need critical inquiry. It is also a financial issue because students have to pay for the course. Porter believes we could do an assessment of how students are doing, and then have them add a one-credit course if needed. Williams replied that students think they can be successful in their courses. If we told students that they cannot drop courses, they will make changes in their work schedules and personal lives to be successful. We need tough love. We could do this if we had a flat fee. We could say, "here is a lifeline, take it."

Hansen continued reviewing her handout. In the themed learning communities, the conditional admits did not do well. Hansen does not understand why. When she reviewed data for fall 2005 and fall 2006, she did find that students who participated were retained at a significantly higher level. She noted that everyone in a themed learning community is also in a first-year seminar. African Americans in themed learning communities are not significantly different.

Hansen reviewed the handout "University College First-Year Seminars: Fall 2005 End-of-Course Evaluation Questionnaire, A Qualitative Investigation." This information is based on anonymous end-of-course evaluations in an attempt to figure out what is going on. Hansen noted that social connections and meeting friends ranked higher consistently. She is trying to look at various constructs. She is also trying to sit down with faculty members and find out where they would like to be. The information in this report came from University College students only. Among this group, the response rate was about 63 percent. Hansen is also trying to understand in-depth perceptions. Students want more activities and Hansen is not sure what that means. Porter believes students do not want to sit and listen to lectures. Hansen agrees.

Hansen reviewed the final handout "IUPUI First-Year Seminar Evaluation Questionnaire Results." Williams announced that we are changing the online seminars. We are going to do

things a little differently to see what the impact is. One of the reasons students leave IUPUI is a lack of college life. Hansen believes there are a low number of students leaving for that reason. Williams believes there may be a problem in how we market IUPUI to students. Porter said students told her that they saw IUPUI marketing materials with photographs of Greek organizations. We have to decide what kind of school we want to be. Evenbeck believes the campus center will change things.

4. Williams gave an update on the Summer Academy Bridge Program. She tried to be brief in view of the time. Bridge has grown to 18 sections. We will give 200–250 scholarships to students in the program this year. We have an additional 1,500 scholarships for Twenty-First Century Scholars. The early news is that these students are very interested. There will be a SAAB section with space available for 25 students. Evenbeck said that SAAB will do the programming for that section. Williams noted that campus housing may make decisions that affect students in Bridge; we may need to tighten that.
5. Evenbeck reminded everyone about the full council meeting on Thursday, April 19, at 10:00 a.m., in BS 2000. Pike passed around a handout to preview the information that he and Victor Borden will be presenting at that meeting. One thing that Pike will discuss is the idea of using advising groups on this campus. Pike reviewed his handout. He said that one thing that worries him is financial aid because it can have a negative effect on retention. Williams said the more students work, the less the government will give them, so students take out more loans. Pike said the financial aid issue has a difference in retention of 8 points, but a GPA of 2.0 or less has an effect of 40 points. This raises the question of where we put our money. Williams believes we are facing a moral dilemma. We may be putting students in jeopardy for borrowing money; sometimes students borrow money and buy cars and houses, and then default on these loans. Evenbeck noted that there is another piece that we have not discussed—doing what we know works academically. We are spending nothing on what happens in the classroom for entering students.
6. Evenbeck distributed several handouts: “Official Undergraduate Retention Report” (by IU University Reporting and Research, Vol. 16, No. 2); “Fall 2006 Registration Calls Results” (by University College Bepko Learning Center); “The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College” (by Clifford Adelman); and “The ‘Big Picture’: Key Causes of Student Attrition and Key Components of a Comprehensive Student Retention Plan” (by Joe Cuseo).
7. Adjourned.

Submitted by:
Anita Snyder
University College