ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of February 17, 2000
320 Brigham Hall, 4:00 pm

Attending: Max Anderson, Stephanie Branson, Ken Buttry (chair), Tamer Ceylan, Chuck Collins (ex-officio), Mark Evenson, Steve Kleisath, Mittie Nitnocks, Sam Owusu-Ababio, Barbara Parsons, Mark Shelstrom, Ray Spoto, Jason Styles, Kathleen Tigennan, Judy Wurtzler

Announcements: Mark Shelstrom apologized for being late, explaining that he teaches a lab until 3:52 and often needs to talk with students after class.

Minutes: Corrections to the minutes of February 3, 2000 included Evenson reporting that distance-learning language courses are not respected by students or experts, Tigennan requesting her first name be given as Kathleen, and Spoto adding that German generates tuition monies and state dollars. Branson moved to approve the minutes with these corrections; Evenson seconded. The minutes were approved.

Review of Civil and Environmental Engineering Programs: Shelstrom reported that he was impressed with the self-study done of this program. Max Anderson, Dean of Civil and Environmental Engineering, discussed the forty-page document presented to the APC, which compiled data from an internal self-study, employer questionnaire, and replies to a survey from student graduates. Anderson stated that for some of the questions, it didn't work to separate civil and environmental programs, so they have been grouped together. The self-study shows that the principle strengths of the programs are that student graduates can put into practice what they have learned; the quality of the students is high; faculty show excellent ability to work together; there is strong alumni support and strong support of professional development; and the reputation of the department in the region is excellent. The limits of the program are that students are unwilling to participate in co-ops (which is not mandatory); technical support for computers, i.e., new computers and lab space dedicated to materials testing; and faculty salary compression. The changes this self-study point to are: improved lab space, modernizing labs, and improving student writing and oral communication skills. In the questionnaire sent to former students and employers, the response from alumni was 15%, and from employers, even less. Anderson pointed to the comparison of UVVT students with the national average, which showed UWP students rank above average (page 17 of the self-study). He also said that those students who did participate in co-ops excelled in team-working skills, and in working knowledge of their field.

Owusu-Ababio, Program Coordinator of Environment Engineering, continued the presentation, stating that alumni were very pleased with their schooling. Their department has been preparing for accreditation with ABET [Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology], so this self-study for the APC is compatible. He presented pages 5, 6,
9, 10, 12, and 27 of the self-study as overheads. He stated that there is a relatively small enrollment in environmental engineering because it is a new program. There has been 100% placement of graduates; there are not enough to meet the demand.

Spoto expressed concern with writing skills, which the alumni survey shows as the weakest area identified by alumni (page 12, pie chart g), and expressed the strong support among the writing faculty to work with engineering faculty in a Writing Across the Curriculum awareness. Anderson said that in 1989 the engineering faculty backed away from a required course in technical writing. This was at a time when Gen Ed requirements went from 18 to 21. Engineering students have no free electives; to include a writing course, some other course would have to be dropped. Branson recommended that the engineering classes require more writing emphasis. Owusu-Ababio said 75% of classes require some writing, and that the study has given renewed emphasis on the grade being partially contingent on the quality of the writing. The senior design project of thirty to forty pages is another way to work on writing skills. Parsons asked if all faculty grade on the writing, and was told that this is a newly instituted emphasis.

Parsons asked about Table 1, departmental objectives and ABET goals: what is meant by contemporary issues? Branson asked if Gen Ed courses could cover some of these issues, or if these topics have to be covered by CEE courses" Anderson answered that these issues don't have to be covered in CEE courses, but that ABET requires that they collect information from their classes about these issues. They will be collecting student work for ABET. Spoto said that the WAR [Writing Across the Curriculum] faculty will be collecting exams to assess writing skills.

Ninirocks asked about Table 1, item 4, the development of teamwork skills: Is teambuilding theory addressed in CEE courses? Not in theory, but in practice, yes. Nimocks pointed out that two courses in Speech do address this issue. Parsons commented that the pie charts are difficult to interpret because of similarity in shading.

Mark Evenson asked about graduate school when there are big money offers for undergraduates. Is ABET slanted towards getting people into a job right after their BS degree? Is there a path for students who want to do graduate work in engineering. Owusu-Ababio said there is no formal plan, only informal conversations with students. Shelstrom commented that across the country, many engineering students get an MBA and go into management. Buttry said the low numbers bother him too, but thinks that students don't immediately go to graduate school; rather, they wait till later. Anderson said that ABET asked for goals from each program, and that they don't have a one-size-fits-all mentality; at UWP, we are practice-oriented. Spoto defended our campus against the elitism of the Madison campus, pointing out that our graduating engineering seniors do better on exit exams than Madison seniors.

Ceylon said the goals and assessment analysis is first class and that CEE should be proud of
their work. When will total number of environmental engineering students reach a stable number? Owusu-Ababio said that when they began this major, they projected 75 majors within five years. After three years of the program, they now have 59. They are anticipating no problem meeting their goal. Kleisath asked why, on page 31 of the self-study, the number of preparations has gone up? Because the classes had gotten too big and had to be cut down. Ceylon asked which of the five areas are most popular?

Anderson replied that it fluctuates. Do students get a certificate stating their emphasis? The area of emphasis is not given. Ceylon congratulated the CEE faculty for their good work and presenting a well-done study. Ceylon moved to accept the document. Shelstrom seconded. The motion was passed.

Parsons moved to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Tigerman