Academic Standards Committee

Minutes
Wednesday, September 24, 2008
4 p.m. 1320 Ullsvik Hall

Attending: Elizabeth Frieders, Philip Sealy, Nancy Turner, Irfan Ul-Haq, Mary Rose Williams, Kevin Haertzen, David Krugler, Roxanne Gunser, David VanBuren, Shane Drefcinski

Absent: Angela Udelhofen; Ray Spoto

Meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m.

Approval of the minutes: Minutes from September 10 were reviewed. A typo in one name was noted. Krugler moved to accept the minutes as amended. Haertzen seconded. Minutes approved.

Drefcinski reported on the general education taskforce. They plan to meet every other Friday from 3 – 4:30 p.m. in 2000 Ullsvik. At the last meeting, they compared other gen ed models in the UW system and found that ours is similar. The Process will be slow; progress will be difficult to achieve. The hope is that by the end of this academic year the committee will have developed some student outcomes to present to ASC. At this point, ASC isn’t charged with any action but we’re welcome to convey suggestions or concerns. Right now, the task force is focused on rebuilding momentum from last year.

Frieders raised the question of whether it was necessary for multiple committees to be reviewing general education. Drefcinski said the point is well taken. Such redundancy takes up our time as well as the time of the department representatives who have to keep making these reports to multiple committees. VanBuren noted that competency areas are a bit easier to discuss and manage by ASC, but general education areas that go beyond one area (Humanities, for instance) don’t have a systematic assessment process that we can evaluate. Frieders noted that the original mission of ASC was changed to review gen eds but that eventually went to the Assessment Oversight Committee, so now we seem to be repeating work.

This academic year we’re to review Math and English Composition. It was noted that Dennis Ciesielski is in the process of compiling a review but it likely won’t be ready until spring. David Boyles is the contact for the Math department. The chair will contact him to invite a representative to report to us.

Williams reviewed where we ended last spring with information we wanted from the IRO. Any request for data must go through John Krogman. We need to be specific and understand that data
may take some time to acquire. The questions posed were: what questions do we want to answer? And what data will get us those answers? The questions are tied to the charge of the Gen Ed Task Force (4/25/08). That charge was: To review admission standards, to investigate the problem of grade inflation, and to draft a policy that addresses both issues. Discussion ensued about the assumption that there is a problem with grade inflation. Krugler noted that there’s a trend of inflation nationally, so there’s reason to believe it’s here as well. If we do find that’s the case, is there anything we can do about it? One possible way to alleviate inflation is being considered by the Faculty Senate—to change grading scale to include plus and minus. Drefcinski said the faculty is concerned with bringing in more & more unqualified students. Evidence provided to ASC by the IRO last year indicated that while we didn’t seem to be lowering our standards for admission, we weren’t raising our standards, either. Further, despite the evidence that we’re not lowering standards, we seem to be increasing in numbers of students who need remedial math and English classes. VanBuren indicated that admission standards are set by system, so ASC has no power to influence them. Thus, ASC really has no power to address the charge by the Gen Ed Task Force to “review admission standards.”

Several members discussed the quality of incoming students’ and their lack of preparation for college course work. Most committee members were in agreement that there are systemic problems in high schools, and with the bridge between high school and university institutions.

Discussion returned to the type of information we need from IRO. We decided to ask:

How many incoming first year students placed in each level of math?
How many incoming first year students placed in each level of English?

Trace the progress of students who placed in remedial math and/or English to determine:
  Retention rate (compared to those who didn’t need remedial)
  Time to graduation (compared to those who didn’t need remedial)
  GPA at graduation (compared to those who didn’t need remedial)

Also, the chair requested that we receive a fall 2008 update of the Academic Preparation of New Freshmen.

Sealy also requested that IRO provide us with a comparison of ACT score numbers vs. actual placement levels. In essence, he wants to know whether students who score at higher levels on the ACTs are placing into remedial classes.

The chair will request the above data from IRO once committee members have reviewed and approved them via e-mail. Should members be unable to agree that the above are accurate, we will discuss them further at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Mary Rose Williams