

11-26-2007

Academic Planning Council Minutes of November 26, 2007

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ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of November 26, 2007
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – Room 505

- Present: Alden, Anderson, Bose, Cassidy, Freedman, Gay, Gorman, Gough, House, Jeris, Marcellus, Marsh, Molnar, Reynolds, Seaver, Singh, Stravers
- Guests: Donna Askins, Research Associate, Office of the Provost; Cindy Ditzler, Acting Director, Regional History Center; Carolinda Douglass, Director, Assessment Services; and Catherine Raymond, Director, Center for Burma Studies

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. The discussion of the B.G.S. program will take place next week, and the minutes of November 19 will be distributed prior to the December 3, 2007, meeting.

Catherine Raymond, Director of the Center for Burma Studies; Rathindra Bose, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School; Cindy Ditzler, Acting Director of the Regional History Center; and Byron Anderson, Interim Dean of the University Libraries were introduced. The subcommittee chair for the centers reviews is Laurel Jeris.

The Graduate School is really proud of the way the Center for Burma Studies integrates research and academics with graduates and undergraduates in an interdisciplinary manner. The center has one post-doctoral fellow and several visiting scholars. In 2004, the center held an international conference on Burma studies and over 100 people from all over the world attended and visited the Center for Burma Studies. The center also sponsored the first international conference in Laos that over 400 people attended from all over the world. Having the center at NIU helps to show that NIU is a comprehensive university.

Jeris thanked her subcommittee for their input, and then turned to the center's strengths. The center is unique and draws people to NIU from all over the world. There are over 900 students enrolled in courses that have 25 percent or more of the content on Burma studies. The courses are reaching a large number of students, and this creates synergies. The center is involved in important conferences, and the director is the general editor of the *Journal of Burma Studies* and the distribution manager for the *Bulletin of the Burma Studies Groups*. Scholarship, teaching, and service are well integrated into the focus of the field. Every other year a Burma Studies Conference is held either at NIU or another location outside the United States that has strong links with Burma. The report is well written, very descriptive, and communicates the impact of the center.

Under the strengths section in the subcommittee report the Southeast Asian collection in the libraries should be mentioned. This is the fifth largest collection in the country, and part of this is the Burma collection. The Burma collection is one of the largest in this country.

The discussion points include the need for a permanent storage facility for the collection that protects it in terms of physical preservation and security. This needs to be a goal for infrastructure improvement, and could attract more donations. There are more than 11,000 items in the collection, and 10 percent of the Burma art collection is in temporary storage. The collection is not on display, and we would like to have this on display at a permanent location. If the collection is not permanently displayed, it is difficult to build a clientele. Efforts have been made to try and find a permanent home for the collection, but this has been very difficult. The Burma group has been challenged to seek donations/funding for a

permanent location in the School of Art, and the Graduate School will contribute \$50,000 to support this initiative. It will probably take \$250,000 to make this happen, and this could be a temporary solution for five to six years if at a later date a main facility could be built on campus for the museum and collection. There have been discussions with Dean Kafer, and we are trying to come up with a plan to integrate this collection. There is so much unused space in the library, can't we use this space to expand the Law Library and display the collection? This is a possibility that could be looked at in the long run. NIU has an excellent architectural staff that could help look into this issue, but the libraries do not have space everywhere. There are also issues with security for the collection. There is a need for very special care and security for the collection, and this would probably require a little more than the space in the library. The center is hopeful that it can find donations for this initiative. The center has put together a concept paper that addressed some of these issues as part of the Strategic Planning initiative, and the subcommittee wanted to know if this should be attached to the report. The full report certainly did a good job of making the case for storage and display space, and these are really two different issues. The concept paper should not be attached to the review; it will be handled through the processes set up for the review of the concept papers. The discussions with the School of Art also need to continue. Will there be space in the Stevens Building once it is renovated? No space will be available in Stevens; the School of Art proposal would be very good for the school. There is also another gallery in the school that displays non-traditional art work, and the center works collaboratively with the Art Museum. The interest in the collection needs to be maintained, but this is difficult to do if the collection is not displayed.

Another discussion point is that the center is very dependent on student help. The center representatives want to reconfigure some of the graduate assistantship money to fund an SPS position. The Graduate School feels that having graduate assistants working with the collection and on the website is really good, and the center is better served with graduate assistants.

The last discussion point is that some individuals wanted to combine the center with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, which would violate the "Declaration of Trust Agreement" between NIU and the Burma Studies Foundation. About four years there was a conversation about this to save some money, and there are issues that would be problematic if the two centers were combined. Having two separate centers that work together provides some strengths when applying for grant funding, and shows that this a comprehensive commitment by the university. Last year there was a grant evaluator who made a recommendation to integrate these two centers, and he put this in his report. He also suggested bringing individuals from Burma to NIU. Having Burmese students would be wonderful, but the center doesn't need to change its goals to do this. The Graduate School responded to the report saying that it was not a financial burden to the university to have two centers. It is more advantageous to have two separate centers that work together. Also, the director of the Center for Burma Studies salary is split 50/50 between the Graduate School and the college; if the director position was eliminated, no cost savings would occur because she would assume a full-time teaching position.

The university archives were established in 1964, and is part of the University Libraries. The center director reports to the dean of the libraries. The Regional History Center (RHC) has a unique collection of materials from the DeKalb county community, it is attractive to local school teachers, and works with regional history information from 18 counties in the northern Illinois region (except Cook county). The Regional History Center has three types of collections: university archives, local government records from county courthouses that are administered by the IRAD, and private manuscript collections. The local government records are only accepted if they are 75 or more years old. This information is used by researchers tracing family histories and students. The private manuscript collection includes items like the dairy of an individual who served in the Civil War and records from the DeKalb Ag Company. The center wants people to know that this information is available for research purposes. The center is also involved in three grants.

The report is well written and helped the subcommittee get focused on the issues. The strengths are the comprehensive collections, highly experienced staff, and the new physical facilities in Founders Memorial Library. These strengths also present potential weaknesses. The needs include space, technology, and staff.

The center wants to add another full-time person who is knowledgeable about digital archiving. The center now receives many email documents for archiving. Even if the collection is digitized, the paper copies need to be kept. This adds to the space issue. Digitizing the information will require continual upgrading of equipment, and this is not a feasible solution for the center right now. The center's area of the basement of the libraries consists of 8,400 linear feet of shelf space, and only 1,400 of that is unused. If the center wants to continue to grow, it will need additional space. Could the actual documents be stored off-campus? The management group is actually talking about this possibility. This will probably not be an issue for another 10-15 years from now. Other archival facilities do have off-campus storage, and some of these places only pull information once or twice a day. Does the center receive support from the state for the regional archive information? The state supplies the center with graduate assistants who work with those records, but the state does not pay the center rent. Is there support for these records to be moved to a central location that all seven centers could use? Having everything located in one center would defeat the purpose of having seven regional centers. The personnel need for a digital archivist is complicated because of the search for a new dean. Once the new dean comes on-board, the priorities might shift. The new dean will be hired first, and then the RHC will decide what needs to be done. Increasing electronic access is a continuing challenge that could be helped by hiring additional personnel.

The research statistics table is confusing, and suggests a 50 percent drop in written requests for materials since 2002. In 2002, the statewide marriage index became available online and there was also another database that became available online. The center was inundated with requests about these two databases. If a new collection is opened up to the public, it can be extensively sought after if there is something going on with that collection. For example, the center has the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company records, and there have been several requests for information because the zinc company is in litigation. EPA officials and law firm employees have come in to look at the collection. There were also a number of classes taught that year where students were required to come in to use the manuscripts in the center. During the first 10 months of this year the center has processed 2,364 research requests, which has passed the previous five years. The center is providing these services with one less staff person due to the retirement of the previous director. The other change was that the center's website became available during this time.

The recommendations for the future include the allocation of additional funding to hire a digital archivist and purchase and continuously upgrade electronic hardware and software to keep pace with the changing nature of the collections. The technology advances are challenging and will all eventually become obsolete.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn A. Craddock