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Academic Planning Council Minutes of March 17, 2008

Northern Illinois University

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APPROVED

ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of March 17, 2008
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – Room 505

Present: Anderson, Bond (for Bose), Cassidy, Fox, Freedman, Ghrayeb (for Marcellus), Gorman, Jeris, Molnar, Prawitz, Singh, Stravers

Guests: Donna Askins, Research Associate, Office of the Provost; Carolinda Douglass, Director, Assessment Services

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of December 3, 2007, with revisions, and the motion passed unanimously.

The Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) and the Master of Science in Teaching (M.S.T.) are two new degree programs being proposed. One of the responsibilities of the Academic Planning Council is to endorse new degree requests, and this is the final step taken before the proposals are taken to the Board of Trustees and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). The M.A.T. and M.S.T. are both teacher preparation programs. The M.A.T. will serve students seeking initial teacher certification, and the M.S.T. will serve teachers seeking endorsement to expand their expertise. Because of the potential for new offerings, it was decided that an umbrella degree to house different specializations would be the way to set up these degrees. Initially the M.A.T. will have one specialization: elementary education, but other specializations for the degree program are currently under discussion. The M.S.T. will have two specializations: engineering education and middle school mathematics education. There has also been other inquiries about developing new specializations.

The degree oversight will be provided by the Office of the Provost; this set up is similar to the Bachelor of General Studies program. There is no one good place in a college or department for these degrees to reside. Degrees are awarded by the university, but administered by the Office of the Provost. The faculty of the specialization will admit and advise students, and the department offering the specialization should receive credit for teaching these students. The new student information system will have some additional capabilities within it that would allow the students to be identified.

These students would not have a departmental home the same way that other students would. Housing the degree programs outside a college could be problematic. Students in these types of programs don't feel like they have a home, especially when they graduate. At this time, the M.S.T. is part of two colleges and two departments, and more colleges/departments could be involved in the future. The students who graduate with the Master's of Business Administration (M.B.A.) do not have a departmental home, but the Executive M.B.A. program is offered using the cohort model. These students attend class and other events together. The concern about not housing the programs in a college/department is that students don't have a sense of connectedness to NIU.

A question was asked about where this program would appear in the online catalog. The response was that it would have to be set up in a way that if someone searched for “elementary education” all the references for elementary education would be found, and one of the things that would come up should be this specialization. This information could also be included in the department section of the catalog. Right now NIU has a specialization in art education within the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, which is similar to how these programs will be set up.

Who would be hiring the faculty to teach these courses? The faculty are hired by the department that created the specialization. The specialization is taught by faculty in a department, but the degree program is not housed in a department.

When a degree is not housed in a department, how is the department-level responsibility suppose to function? For example, when working with assessment data, at some point someone has to make some judgment on the data (e.g., is our curriculum meeting the goals of our program, etc). With this type of umbrella program, this would be difficult to do. The engineering education specialization was proposed by the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology, and the associate dean will be responsible for the departmental kinds of things that need to be completed (recruitment, hirings, etc.). It was explained that this is unique to the specialization in engineering education because it is a college specialization. Mathematics faculty involved in the specialization in middle school mathematics education will be working directly with their students.

The university does have a University Office of Teacher Certification (UOTC). Currently four colleges at the university offer teacher certification programs. The UOTC has to report on a core set of competencies regardless of where the programs are, and these specializations would become part of that process.

We don’t have all the answers to all the questions, but there will be more discussion like this as we move to interdisciplinary programs. These types of conversations will be ongoing.

The university has an interdisciplinary program in early childhood studies. The Departments of Teaching and Learning and Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences contribute to this program. One way that the faculty work together is in an advisory committee. The art education program is also interdisciplinary. These types of programs provide great opportunities for our students. There are some universities that only teach courses in one area, instead of having a multidisciplinary program. From an administrative position, these types of program are complicated. It just takes some time for some of these things to be worked out. The Graduate School might have to expedient things.

For the specialization in elementary education students are already seeking an M.S.Ed. degree so the same faculty would teach these students. Also, there is some grant funding associated with both of these degree programs. The M.A.T. will use a cohort model and rotate sites so different audiences can be served, but not at the same time. Both specializations within the M.S.T. have grant funding from the Illinois Mathematics and Science Partnerships Program. These courses are already being taught, and more students can be accommodated in the courses. The M.S.T. will be a part-time program with a small number of courses taught each semester. The Office of the Provost has been informed that there will be resources to continue these specializations even after the grant funding has ended.

The university needs to wait until these programs have been approved by the IBHE before we move forward in offering the programs and creating new specializations. The approval process is: after receiving all curricular approvals the request is taken to the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Personnel Committee of the Board of Trustees; then it is forwarded to the full Board of Trustees; after that the request is submitted to the IBHE. If the university is requesting a new doctoral degree, the IBHE has three consultants review the program. This process takes almost three years. Once these programs are approved by the IBHE, the university can move more quickly in approving new specializations. The Board of Trustees is the final approval for new specializations. The university cannot develop more specializations until the degree programs are approved.

Multidisciplinary programs are being created based on job market needs, but graduates sometimes can experience difficulty obtaining jobs when degrees are not attached to departments. Any proposal would have to have a statement about demand and a needs assessment. We want to be tactile in terms of the kinds of new programs we bring forward. The M.S.T.'s proposed start date is fall 2008 because it has some grant funding, and the grant requirements say that the program should start in fall 2008. Someone from ISBE is working with the IBHE to expedite this approval.

On page 7 of the M.A.T. proposal "course performance" is listed as an assessment method. This sounds like using grades to assess the program. It would be better if this was an embedded course assessment method. It was clarified that in the narrative the program discusses course embedded assessment, and a rubrics will be developed to assess this. Is there a reason why the comprehensive examination was not one of the assessment methods? The reason this was not included as an assessment tool is that all the specializations may not require a comprehensive examination. We were trying not to mandate a curriculum for other specializations.

A motion was made to endorse the M.A.T. and M.S.T. proposals, and the motion pass unanimously.

Strategic planning is ongoing. Some of the deadlines have been moved back, but we are still moving forward. There are some conversation groups who have been called together as a result of the concept papers submitted last fall. The provost came to talk to the task forces, and the task forces have been reenergized. There are two task forces: student success and curricular innovations. The task forces are now meeting on a weekly basis. All of the concept papers thematic conversations were held in January/February. Since then the task forces have identified some overarching and individual goals. Now the task forces are having conversations about what concept papers should be included. The initial deadline to complete this work was April 15; now the deadline has been moved to April 25.

The strategic planning template needs to be completed, and more discussions and input regarding the general education curriculum and goals need to be held. A team of individuals from the General Education Committee will be attending a conference to help generate ideas on how to approach changes in the general education program. The task force may take these findings and move them forward.

It was noted that in keeping the energy high we still come back to the issue of money. We are hoping for some assessment of the costs of the February 14 tragedy. Since the tragedy, what are the notions in people's minds in regards to strategic planning? Are questions getting asked about what this means and how do we move forward? There are some grant programs that might be available to NIU to help cover some of the costs of the February 14 tragedy. The university was advised early

on to keep track of all the expenses. We don't know what types of things will be covered, but we are keeping track of everything. Later this week a team of individuals will be on campus from Virginia Tech and the Department of Education. One thing that the provost has said is that we may have to pull back on strategic planning a little bit. Originally maybe we would focus on five things, now we may focus on three or four things. All five things should be developed now, so when we are ready, we can move forward. It was suggested that someone should be tracking the volunteer time too. In the College of Business the total number of alums who came to help out has been recorded, and these individuals were here all day. An estimate would probably be easy to come up with.

The Climate Survey was launched on February 11 and suspended on February 15. Discussions are taking place with Noel-Levitz about the information that was collected. Approximately 2,000 individuals responded from the three groups surveyed. Currently preliminary discussions are taking place about reinstating the survey. No decision has been made at this time about when this will happen.

All faculty should have received a notice about the Board of Trustees Professorships. This professorship came out of the strategic planning process. There is information online regarding this professorship. The first group of Board of Trustees Professorships will be awarded this semester. Next year the call will go out in the fall. This year the process was compressed because the president and the board wanted to move forward on making these awards.

The APC needs to elect a representative to the University Assessment Panel (UAP). The UAP has had discussions about the timing of appointments and elections for its membership. In the past, at the first meetings of the Graduate Council, APC, and Undergraduate Coordinating Council elections were held; then the provost made the appointments because we wanted a representative range of constituencies. Because of this process the UAP could not start meeting until sometime in October. Now the elections will take place in the spring for the following year. This also lines up with the timing of notices that are sent out by the University Council regarding committee assignments for the following year. Aimee Prawitz was elected in the past and would be willing to serve next year. Aimee Prawitz was elected by affirmation to represent the APC on the UAP. The appointment will be made in the fall.

A set of budget priorities has been prepared for the IBHE. At the next meeting we will bring you summaries of these proposals. The House hearings are scheduled for April, and the meeting with the Senate will be take place shortly after that. There are mixed feelings about what is going to happen with the budget next year. There is some optimism about new money, but given the state of the state, there has been some talk (but not specific information) that there might be a flat budget.

In the past, the performance report consisted of three parts: program review summaries, a set of effective practices that were identified as they related to the policy areas of the *Illinois Commitment*, and a set of indicators that included items that were common to public universities as well as indicators for each institution. For 2007 the performance report was suspended because the IBHE is in the process of a strategic planning initiative. The *Illinois Commitment* is now gone, and the IBHE is working on a new strategic planning document. The only items that were submitted last year were our program review findings and some indicators on licensure and certification. The IBHE has informed us that the requirements for 2008 will be the same as 2007.

Information on A Public Agenda for College and Career Success was distributed. The IBHE has hired National Center for Higher Education Management System to help them engage in master planning, and there is more information regarding this initiative on the IBHE website. The university has already been asked for information about our comparison groups. Cassidy will be attending a public hearing in Chicago on Thursday to receive more information.

Other states are considering setting standards in higher education like they have for K-12 institutions. Are we moving closer to that? It is hard to say if we are moving towards this. The IBHE consultants were asked if they would come in and assign a new mission to the institutions. NIU was informed that this is not the purpose of the consultants. Information from the Spellings Commission has referred to setting standards for higher education. Some centralized systems (i.e., Wisconsin) have moved toward this more than the regulatory bodies. There is clearly a strong desire for accountability. In some cases when standards are discussed, tenure is also discussed. This could be one of the reasons why NASLGCU and ASCU have moved toward voluntary reporting. The Spellings Commission has also tried to involve accrediting agencies in setting standards and monitoring them.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn A. Craddock

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