Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education (UE)

10/22/2013


Visiting: Barbara Brinkman, Supervisor of Academic Records in the Registrar’s Office, and Anne Taylor, John A. Dutton e-Institute in the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences

Absent: Christian Brady, Yvonne Gaudelius, Charles Hughes, John Moore, Jeffrey Schiano

Committee called to order by chair H. Durell Johnson at 8:30.

1. Karen Pollack, Penn State World Campus Director of Academic Affairs for Undergraduate Programs, and Anne Taylor, Director of the John A. Dutton e-Education Institute were introduced. K. Pollack and A. Taylor spoke about coordinating policy revisions between world campus and resident instruction needs. K. Pollack will be serving as a committee Resource Member, and A. Taylor agreed to assist the committee when examining policy revision application to online instruction. Barbara Brinkman, Supervisor in Academic Records in the Registrar’s Office, was introduced as Karen Duncan’s replacement effective January 2014 as K. Duncan will be leading Project LionPATH responsible for a LionPATH Functional Team managing registration, enrollment, and advising, which will replace ISIS. B. Brinkman will be attending the December committee meeting and assume the roles of Assistant Registrar in Academic Records and UE committee Resource Member role in January.

2. The minutes of the September 13, 2013 were discussed. No changes were suggested, and the minutes were adopted unanimously.

3. Chair D. Johnson updated the committee from the Officers and Chairs Meeting of October 21, 201, including (1) employee benefits – many issues still on the table, including hours versus credits taught for benefit eligibility, (2) provisional student policies and insuring we are in compliance with Federal law regarding loan eligibility, and (3) whether an additional tuition charge should be assessed for credits over 19. Discussion followed about how many credits are too many, with examples of students attempting as many as 27 credits, and a world campus student registering for as many as 60 credits in one semester, with multiple drops and adds.

4. General Education Task Force. Robert Shannon spoke about the Task Forces presentation planned for the afternoon meeting of the full Senate. Dr. Shannon indicated that he anticipated questions but not controversy. The task force’s report has implications for the agenda of our Committee on Undergraduate Education.
5. There will be a delay in a proposal to coordinate class meeting times so they are the same at UP and all campuses. This would allow courses to be taught via technology at multiple campuses without concern for time conflicts. Discussion indicated that times between classes at the Commonwealth Campuses are generally shorter than at UP. Commonwealth Campus faculty were generally not supportive, based on (1) smaller campuses needing less time to change classes, and (2) more time between each class period leading to fewer class periods being available to schedule classes.

6. E. Smithwick presented and explained the Child Care Motion that is before the Senate; to make child care a Core Mission of the University. The motion follows from the University's decision to outsource child care at Hort Woods, and subsequent lost benefits for child care providers. Extensive discussion followed regarding (1) cost and whether the facilities break even, (2) liability, (3) better benefits for child care workers leading to lower turnover, (4) the role the centers play in child care research, (5) the educational role the centers play for students in Early Childhood Education, (6) who has access to child care at the centers, (7) the need for after school care in addition to day care, and (8) more.

7. The committee discussed Penn State’s current course drop and course add policies, including a comparison to other Big Ten schools. It was pointed out that students’ ability to change schedules online, without advising or faculty input, can create problems. A straw poll indicated support for shortening the add period (currently 10 calendar days plus 8 hours) to five calendar days (the first week of classes). Rationale included (1) students being at a disadvantage when they add after 10% of the class is already completed (especially in lab classes), (2) difficulty for faculty to get courses started when rosters are constantly changing and students are not yet fully committed. It is understood that faculty can always allow a student to add after the online add period is over. There was also debate about lengthening the drop period, with discussion about eligibility for student aid if students drop below 12 credits. Following a discussion of concerns about the perception of “syllabus day,” it was suggested that we as faculty need to address not just policy changes but culture changes as well. Chair Johnson will generate a formal proposal for further discussion. Comparison of Penn State’s Course Add policy with other Big 10 Universities resulted in a consideration of adding an instructor signature requirement for courses added in the second week of the regular add period. Chair Johnson proposed to draft a revised policy for discussion at the December meeting.

8. Chair Johnson provided an update on the drafting of the UE’s Engaged Scholarship Informational Report. The Chair Johnson anticipates a draft of the report to be available in mid-November with a full committee discussion in December. Chair Johnson stated he was to meet with the UE Engaged Scholarship sub-committee at the conclusion of the full committee meeting.

9. As time was running short, chair Johnson suspended additional agenda items until our next meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am.

Bart Bartlett