February 25, 2011

University Planning Council

Minutes for February 25, 2011

Present: Buffy Bagwell, Jane Fernandes, Eric Gant, Archer Gravely, Bill Haggard, Julie Heinitsh, Jim Kuhlman, Erica Abrams Locklear, Ted Meigs, Chris Miller, Patrice Mitchell, Kevin Moorhead, Gary Nallan, Linda Nelms, Dave Peifer, John Pierce, Anne Ponder, Christine Riley, Lorena Russell

Absent: Vic Foster, Courtney Galatioto, Gabriela Lemus

Guests: Mary Lynn Manns, Jessica Dunsmore, Bruce Larson, Amy Lanou, Rachel Whaley

UPC met on February 25 from 8:55 to 10:05.

1. Provost Fernandes provided UPC with an overview of UNC Asheville’s efforts to comply with SACS institutional effectiveness requirements. She reported that it was important for us to identify areas needing improvement, develop action plans, measure results, and use results to make improvements in programs. She stated that every academic and administrative unit has to have a biennial assessment plan for assessing student learning, measure results and use results to make improvements. We recently hired Dr. Jessica Dunsmore as Director of Institutional Effectiveness and she will be a valuable resource for improving our systematic approach to institutional effectiveness. In preparing for our SAC reaffirmation of accreditation, our strengths are the work done by academic departments to assess student learning outcomes. She also noted that administrative units don’t have a history of participating in institutional effectiveness reporting. For the 2009-11 cycle, we should have 100% participation in the institutional effectiveness unit planning.

2. Ms. Riley reviewed the Strategic Plan Dashboard with UPC: (http://www.unca.edu/sp). She reported that the Dashboard was reviewed at the December Board of Trustees meeting and the members were very pleased with the work. UPC discussed the definition of targets for a number of benchmarks and agreed that they should be formally reviewed by UPC each September.

3. Provost Fernandes provided UPC with an update to our SACS reaffirmation process and introduced Drs. Manns and Lanou as Director and Associate Director of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Dr. Larson, Chair of the Compliance Report, noted that the second draft of the compliance report is now being reviewed and the third draft will be completed in April. Senior Staff will review the compliance report during July-August and we will submit the final report to SACS on September 12. SACS will conduct an off-site review of our self-study document and we should get a response in November. The SACS on-site review will take place on March 27-29, 2012, and will focus on any areas found unsatisfactory in the off-site review. Dr. Larson stated that if we do a good job on the compliance report, the primary focus of the on-site review can be on the QEP project. Dr. Manns provided a summary of the QEP process. We have conducted three survey projects involving faculty, staff, students, and alumni to develop the QEP broad area. The second survey generated ideas for a specific topic within the broad area. The third survey provided
students, faculty, staff, and alumni with the opportunity to vote on the topic category. Based on these data combined with focus group sessions, the QEP Leadership Team has developed the context for our QEP project to be: Students as makers of knowledge through engaged learning experiences. This QEP experience has four components: (1) inquiry; (2) action; (3) impact; and (4) reflection. These experiences will focus on UNC Asheville’s Student Learning Outcome One which includes: (1) critical thinking; (2) effective communication; (3) open inquiry; and (4) creative expression. Dr. Manns stated that our only direct assessment of student learning has been through our participation in the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) in 2007-08 and 2010-11. The results of this nationally standardized test suggest that we should concentrate on creative thinking and effective communication through writing. Dr. Manns indicated that SACS advises institutions to start small and build QEP projects. More information about UNC Asheville’s QEP project is on the web: http://sacs.unca.edu/qep.

4. In response to the recent staff reductions in force made in response to the budget crisis, Ms. Nelms made the following statement to UPC:

“It is in times of crisis that an organization should fall back on its core values. The values that we celebrate as a school are founded in the liberal arts and those values are far more than the appreciation of great thinkers or artists. The liberal arts include critical thinking, which implies the free exchange of ideas and respect for the opinions of others. From the start of the budget crisis, the campus has been informed of both present and foreseeable challenges through the all-campus meeting. Since the 2009-2010 academic year, the University Planning Council has had direct input on priorities for preserving our central mission as the campus responded to external realities. In each case, there has been an opportunity for questions and answers. While an absolute consensus is unlikely to ever exist on a campus, there has been hard data to consider and a dialogue in which we could all participate. It is now as the hard steps are taken and the difficult decisions are made that we face our next challenge to living our teachings. In order for there to be a free and fruitful exchange of ideas, there must be access to information. Without information the exchange of ideas becomes an exchange of ignorance. Rumors are circulated as fact and necessary concern escalates into unnecessary stress. The State Personnel Act protects the privacy of individual and faculty and staff should not even begin to seek information about an individual’s performance of duties. However, it is not at all clear that the Personnel Act would restrict discussion relating to addition of positions, elimination of positions, or redefinitions of responsibilities. The administration of a university clearly has the authority to make those decisions and the responsibility to carry them out. As a member of the IDC freely admitted, most faculty would not want to take on that work and I suspect that staff and students would not want to either. However, a dialogue between those administering and those on whose behalf they administer is inappropriate only in limited instances. The concept of transparency should mean that Faculty Senate, CSAC, and Student Government have a protocol for accessing information that is not restricted by law or regulation. I am suggesting in this setting where all the concerns of the campus are represented that representatives of the faculty, staff and student body work with administration to establish protocols for accessing information useful in understanding the direction of the campus.”

Chancellor Ponder made the following statement:

“The role of the University Planning Council is to address those issues most crucial to the future success of the University. UPC plays a leadership role in the monitoring of campus progress toward the goals of the Strategic Plan. Because of the kind of campus we are, and because “social sustainability” is an issue we all care about deeply, it is important to acknowledge the pain that our community is experiencing in the wake of the recent personnel cuts which were made as a result of budget cuts. Our grief is individual, and it is collective. When UPC developed the University Strategy for Resource Allocation, both for 2009-11 and again for 2011-13, we spent many hours in deliberations to make sure we got it right. Because this document was intended to guide University administration in their current and future budget
decisions, we were careful to align closely with our mission and our strategic plan. What does it mean to “protect the academic core?” How best can we “protect the student educational experience?” In communications within our divisions, in the All Campus Meetings, and through e-mail/web site budget updates to the campus, we have consistently heard our guidance coming back to us, and seen it put into action. Although each of us might have made different individual decisions in determining the recent layoffs, and none of us ever wanted for our colleagues to lose their jobs, we can see in these painful cuts clear alignment with UPC’s advice. Examples:

1. The majority of the staff cuts – though not all – were made in areas furthest from the academic core. Three from the Facilities area, 2 from NCCCR, 1 from Student Affairs, and 1 from Academic Affairs.
2. In our recent revision of the Strategy document, ‘Generating Additional Resources’ was moved further up on the priority list, because so many of us saw this as a clear and urgent need. It is not a coincidence, then, that I am now investing more of my time and attention to our fundraising function, so that we might improve our campus financial health in the longer term.
3. Another example I would cite relates to the potential for outsourcing of Housekeeping and Grounds. UPC was invited to weigh in on this topic while it was being considered. I believe that our clear advice on this topic has helped the university turn away from that option to the betterment of our campus community.

It is human nature to want to go back and revisit these decisions – “Surely, there could have been a better solution than getting rid of my friend, so-and-so?!!” For those who may feel that budget decisions may not have been inclusive enough, it is good to remind ourselves of the multiple ways that campus input was sought [and continues to be sought]:

- Ideas have been solicited at every All Campus Meeting
- The Provost and I have had several consultations with faculty leadership
- UPC
  - I have consulted with CSAC and taken many of their suggestions
  - Divisional meetings have been held several times this year
  - Budget Update website – solicits suggestions/questions
  - Budget FAQs, which is expanding every day as new suggestions come in.

Although grief is an important component of respect and transition, prolonged grief is not a fruitful course of action for anyone – and that includes our campus. To this end, UPC can help this transition by engaging in continued and meaningful conversation that guides our university on matters central to our future. Our work on the Campus Master Plan, Institutional Effectiveness, Strategic Plan Dashboard, and SACS Re-affirmation will assure a stronger university in the years to come. In an effort to help us with this transition, I am collecting rumors, so that we might replace them with accurate information. If you have any that you’d like to share with us today, I’d be happy to dispel them; if you’d prefer to share them privately, please find a way to do so.”

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