November 18, 2011

University Planning Council

Minutes for November 18, 2011

Present: Buffy Bagwell, Jane Fernandes, Catherine Frank, Eric Gant, Archer Gravely, Julie Heinitsh, Gregg Kormanik, Erica Abrams Locklear, Ted Meigs, Patrice Mitchell, Kevin Moorhead, Gary Nallan, Dave Peifer, John Pierce, Anne Ponder, Christine Riley, Robert Straub

Absent: Keller Berry, Melissa Burchard, Katja Greeson, Bill Haggard

Guests: Mary Lynn Manns, Bruce Larson, Clayton Fogg

UPC met November 18 from 3:00 to 4:30 in Highsmith Union 222

1. Chancellor Ponder reported that we have created a new endowed chair in the Humanities with funding from a variety of sources: UNC Asheville Thomas Howerton endowment funds, Chancellor’s Excellence Fund, C.D. Spangler Foundation, and the NC State legislative matching fund. She indicated that we got special treatment in both the Spangler and legislative funding processes. After this year, legislative funding for endowed chairs will be discontinued. This new endowed chair will be configured as a term-limited appointment for continuing faculty with the possibility of reappointment.

As a second item, Chancellor Ponder informed UPC that we have been approached by a private donor and the Asheville Astronomy Club to build a small observatory above the Reuter Center and off the ridge line. The building will have a footprint about two-thirds the size of the HIG 222 conference room. The building would basically be a garage with a rolling roof. The observatory will be paid for entirely by the donor and the Asheville Astronomy Club. Consultation with faculty and others on campus is underway, to assure appropriate alignment with our mission and current priorities. If those consultations proceed successfully, the proposal will likely be presented to the Board of Trustees in December.

The University has been approached with an opportunity to acquire the MAHEC property on W.T. Weaver Blvd. This 22,000 sf facility is already set-up to serve as a family medical practice, and the first floor will serve as our student health and counseling center. The second floor will be used by Alumni & Events and Development offices. She noted further that the MAHEC property has 118 parking spaces. Public Safety is the most likely department to move into Weizenblatt when it becomes available. The first floor of the MAHEC facility will be paid for by the student debt service fee and the second floor with non-state funds. Mr. Pierce stated that the MAHEC property will cost $130 per sf which is an excellent value compared to the $200-300 cost per sf for new construction. Chancellor Ponder indicated that plans were being made to provide transportation services for students too ill to walk from residence halls to the new student health and counseling center on W.T. Weaver Blvd.

Provost Fernandes reported that our SACS off-site review of our Compliance Report, including 94 standards, was completed in early November. We were found to be non-compliant on only seven standards but three of these are very minor, leaving only four areas of concern. Two of these areas focused on support for on-line students, and we provide very little on-line instruction. Provost Fernandes
thanked the SACS team for all their hard work on behalf of this important effort for the university.

2. Dr. Manns provided UPC with a QEP Five-Year Budget plan that has been approved by Senior Staff. The Budget has a cumulative cost of $548,900 over five years. In response to UPC concerns about the source of the QEP funding, Provost Fernandes stated that much of it would come from unspent funds already allocated to institutional effectiveness and SACS re-accreditation. She also noted that our QEP project has one of the smallest budgets, as most institutions of our size spend double this amount. Dr. Manns reported that she is still working on the QEP time line and that we are developing plans for the internal marketing of our QEP project, as the SACS visiting team will expect folks to know about the project when they visit campus.

3. Dr. Dunsmore gave UPC an update on the University’s institutional effectiveness process, activities, and accomplishments to date. We now have all 95 academic and administrative units with IE plans and at least one year of assessment results entered into the University’s TRAC-DAT assessment software system. We have changed the administrative unit reporting cycle from a biennial to an annual process but the academic units will remain on a biennial reporting system. Dr. Dunsmore noted that our challenge is to improve our methods and develop ongoing, sustainable assessment processes. UNC Asheville was found to be in compliance with SACS institutional effectiveness requirements during the recent off-campus review.

4. UPC reviewed a proposal by Mr. Pierce to add a benchmark for the economic sustainability strategic plan goal. The proposed measure of economic sustainability would be the proportion of our operating expenditures that are funded by state appropriations. An additional benchmark is needed because the Strategic Plan’s goal of increasing state funding is not currently measured on the Dashboard. He noted that some of the factors that go into this measure are within our control and some are not. Mr. Fogg stated that an advantage of this measure is that it is defined by uniform standards, and the target value would be to simply increase the percentage each year. UPC will continue this discussion at a future meeting.

UPC reviewed a proposal by Provost Fernandes to change a benchmark for the undergraduate education strategic plan goal. Provost Fernandes proposed replacing one of the current benchmarks for undergraduate education to a new measure based on the Collegiate Level Assessment (CLA) test. The current benchmark is based on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) item that measures the extent to which seniors report their experience at UNC Asheville contributed to acquiring a broad, general education. A more objective measure of student learning is provided by the national Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test which provides nationally normed measures of writing and critical thinking. The CLA provides a measure of institutional value added by comparing freshmen and seniors while controlling for SAT scores. UNC Asheville participated in the CLA test in 2007-08 and 2010-11. Dr. Gravely will send UPC more information on the CLA test results and UPC will continue this discussion at a future meeting.

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