

Oregon Institute of Technology

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

October 6, 2017

MINUTES

Provost Gary Kuleck called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Academic Council members present were: Sharon Beaudry, Todd Breedlove, Tiernan Fogarty, Brian Fox, Jeff Hayen, Jim Jones, Gary Kuleck, LeAnn Maupin, Debbie McCollam, Hallie Neupert, Mark Neupert, Jeff Pardy, Paula Russell, Matt Schnackenberg for Dan Peterson, Farooq Sultan, David Thaemert for Sean St.Clair, Ken Usher, Erika Veth, and Jack Walker. Jamie Kennel, Laura McKinney Dawn Taylor, and Claudia Torres-Garibay joined the meeting remotely. Seth Anthony, Dan Peterson and Sean St.Clair were absent.

PLAN FOR THE YEAR & GOALS

Provost Gary Kuleck stated that there are great opportunities for moving the University forward in positive ways. This year, the goal of the Academic Council will be to explore issues and policies that impact both faculty and students. Some issues will include:

- *Challenge of the Deficit and Drop in Enrollment* – Operational efficiency is essential at the unit level if we are to thrive.
- *Workload and Course Planning* – Work with the tools that will be unveiled this Fall.
- *Effective Planning* – Free up faculty time to allow more time with students, time to pursue initiatives to advance careers and to benefit the university. and time to seek out revenue opportunities.
- *Strategic Planning* – Empower faculty to become engaged in strategic planning.
- *Effective Spending* – Ensure money is being spent effectively.

WORLD CAFÉ OVERVIEW

Provost Gary Kuleck asked Jim Jones to give an overview of the World Café exercise conducted at the retreat. Jones stated that the exercise was broken into three rounds. Participants went to a new table each round and were asked a question. The question was the same each time except for a slight different ending – *In context of the strategic direction, challenges facing higher education, and the department workload philosophy, what should the departments start doing, stop doing, or continue doing?*

Discussions yielded flipchart notes full of concepts and ideas. Jones organized the ideas into categories, ranking them by priority levels assigned by participants. Jones presented the findings in a PowerPoint presentation, outlining the following top priorities and core themes: Top Priorities to Start, Top Priorities to Stop, and Top Priorities to Continue.

Jones stated that in the World Café series, the next step would be to see if these priorities are the right ones to align with the strategic direction and mission. Full discussion results are available should anyone wish to see them. Kuleck will be working to create an Academic Council share-point and asked that documents to be shared with the Council be sent to Valjean Newsome.

WORKLOAD/COURSE PLANNING

Background and Overview

Provost Gary Kuleck asked for input regarding utilizing the tool that was introduced at the retreat. Brian Fox provided a bit of background. Much the same as the World Café exercise, the reason for development was an effort to increase productivity and to reduce operational inefficiencies. Key reasons included reducing busy work and double data entry, to provide tools to make chairs' jobs easier, and to reduce efforts in completing workload. Fox stated that another large development component is to help with course planning. This will allow students to view courses offered for the entire year and will help faculty to view course offerings, enabling them to make decision for combining or cancelling sections.

Farooq Sultan stated that three chairs participated in a test pilot over the past month. Sultan presented a slideshow of the tool featuring a standardized template for all departments and went over several basic features.

Capstone Courses

Kuleck asked how capstone courses, which typically have lower enrollment, are handled and how it currently appears on the workload report.

Breedlove responded that capstone courses are very labor intensive to teach and will likely always show in the red. Department responses on how faculty and students are assigned to capstone courses varied greatly. Some responses were as follows:

- CIV – David Thaemert stated that 2-3 faculty are assigned to a single section of the class. Although the model varies annually, the number of faculty are determined by number of students enrolled. Projects vary widely but the department tries to have one faculty assigned to each course acting as a mentor to each team. It gets difficult when there are 4-5 teams per class.
- COM – Matt Schnackenberg said that individual faculty are assigned and they show up as several sections with one student enrolled per section.
- CSET – Todd Breedlove responded that individual faculty are assigned to teach one-on-one with students. Junior year is a three-term, team-based project currently with five teams of 4-5 students per team.
- NSC – Ken Usher stated that the department has tried several approaches – having all projects funneled through one faculty member and having a few students enrolled in each section (although sometimes it's not enough to receive workload). The inability to do it well and for faculty to be recognized has limited how willing they are to do it.

Effective Planning

Todd Breedlove suggested a procedural change of using week one enrollment numbers rather than week four. Breedlove added that chairs need to make decisions regarding adding/canceling class sections by the first week. Sultan responded that week four are official numbers that the University must go by but realizes that many decisions need to be made much earlier. Fox added that having the five-year enrollment history trends should help to make some of those decisions, enabling course changes to be made a few weeks in advance. Kuleck agreed that the multi-year planning approach can be very useful in long-term planning. LeAnn Maupin added that while some departments have been doing this on their own, this tool will offer a single touch-point model for all to do it uniformly.

Kuleck asked, capstone courses aside, as traditionally they need more attention and have lower enrollment, would planning enable departments to consolidate course offerings that don't have specific time requirements? Might sequences in curriculum maps be able to be restructured or modified?

Breedlove replied that the prerequisite structure dictates when courses are offered, and with a limited number of technical electives in the CSET curriculum, there isn't much flexibility. Mark Neupert stated it's fairly complex. Some general education courses are specified by programs, so the offerings are dependent upon the major and where the courses lie in the curriculum.

Sharon Beaudry shared that recently in trying to determine whether or not to run a class for the Management Department majors, the solution was very labor-intensive and required looking up each individual student to determine if they needed the class. Beaudry asked if there is an easier way to show need or to receive reports that can predict needs based on course maps. Beaudry also asked how the CPC process might be streamlined. CPC curriculum forms will be a direct result of curriculum map changes and Beaudry would like to look at ways to reduce the level of work required.

Kuleck asked, in looking at what Farooq has laid out, how can this tool help you effectively plan out the year and, at some point, help with multi-year planning?

Tiernan Fogarty replied that although the Math Department already plans a year in advance it may help to speed things up. Fogarty asked for clarity on the cutoff of 10 students or less being counted as low enrollment. Kuleck stated that economically it doesn't make sense to teach courses with less than 10 students enrolled. Fox added that in looking at every lecture and seminar course taught last year, the average enrollment was 13 students. With a break-even point of about 18 students, this is very problematic. Fox noted that while some departments may have much higher enrollment averages, the balance over the entire institution is important. When 30-40 percent of courses have 10 students or less, it's not economically feasible. Fox continued that while some low enrollment classes, such as capstone courses, may be necessary, finding a balance is important. This tool can help departments identify which courses are important to run and those that aren't.

Jamie Kennel stated that since he has fixed-cost faculty, the decision not to offer courses due to low enrollment actually costs money rather than saving money because he still needs to pay the faculty member. This creates a challenge of how to make that decision. Fox responded that this starts to show that we have capacity and suggested marketing those course to increase enrollment rather than adding faculty. Fox added that the purpose of this isn't financial but rather a management tool and that cost savings will ultimately be realized by reducing overload. Kennel agreed that this tool will be useful in identifying which courses to cancel.

Kennel stated that as departments look to cancel low enrollment sections, possibly due to overload, he doesn't have good visibility of what that might do to student persistence or to graduation rates, which could ultimately impact funding even more. Kennel added that he would like to have that information prior to making a decision. Breedlove stated that CSET uses retention as low enrollment justification as missing the course would put students an entire year out. Fox replied that departments will be able to view the prior year's enrollment to see if primarily freshmen, seniors, etc. are taking the class. This will offer at least a glance and, although not perfect, it might start laying the groundwork as a first step to addressing Beaudry's concern of how to systematically identify which courses to offer and when.

Farooq shared that departments might also use the tool to identify inefficiencies. For example, if a course is offered each term with low enrollment, the department may consider offering it fewer times per year or combining sections.

Kuleck asked if programs have an idea of their retention rates from year to year?

Breedlove said not currently but that he would love to have that information by class if possible to see D, F, and W rates.

Workload

Sultan commented that another helpful tool element is workload preparation. Previously, due to typos, etc., some information couldn't be tied back to Banner, some courses were missing, and enrollment numbers were often incorrect. Having a single data set and a uniform template will allow data to be upload easily and uniform data will be provided across departments.

Jeff Hayen asked if once this tool matures it will replace the current workload process. Hayen also asked if the data in the tool is resident in the file. Sultan responded yes to both questions. Sultan added that currently instructional workload is built into the tool and that he will be working to add non-instructional workload as well. In regards to workload units, Sultan commented that some courses, such as labs, have different ratios and that the tool will accept any value within reason.

Sultan added that once the blue sections of the spreadsheet are filled in, the data will automatically be uploaded into Banner. Fox stated that since enrollments can fluctuate due to course additions/cancellations, etc., periodically verifying information accuracy is recommended (maybe at the end of each term). Fox also recommended taking a final look at the end of the year. This will allow workload to be a work in progress with a forecast, rather than a large project at the end of the year.

Farooq will send the spreadsheet to chairs soon. The form consists of four terms; Summer 2017, Fall 2017, Winter 2018, and Spring 2018. Farooq asked that if you see courses in the history that are under-enrolled and not required (specifically for Winter 2018), you may want to cancel or combine them.

Identifying Valuable Tool Usage

From the discussion, Kuleck stated that some valuable outcomes for using this tool are identifying:

- Low-enrolled courses
- Courses required for graduation
- Key trailer courses
- Capstone projects necessary for student experiences
- Large courses that require several small lab sections
Some due to capacity – some student/faculty ratios mandated by accreditation

Course Add/Drop Process

Kuleck asked how much time chairs spend on students adding and dropping courses.

Beaudry commented that it's not just chairs, but faculty, advisors, and especially students who have to run around collecting signatures. Beaudry view the process as a huge time waster. Beaudry commented that she has seen extremely efficient models at other institutions where all signatures were done electronically. Beaudry added that moving to a similar system would save all involved a tremendous amount of time. Breedlove commented that he recently spoke to Jim Jones about adopting software such as DocuSign to address the issue. Apparently Jones used similar software at Gonzaga and is considering implementing it at Oregon Tech.

Portland-Metro Low-Enrollment Courses

Fogarty wanted to address low enrollment courses taught at Portland-Metro by full-time faculty. Fogarty recalls that when the Portland-Metro campus was new, low enrollment was attributed to start-up but that is no longer the case. Fogarty noted that typically, Portland-Metro offers much smaller courses that would likely be cancelled in Klamath Falls. Mark Neupert sees value in offering new classes taught by adjuncts. Enrollment will likely be low but the adjunct salary is less as well, allowing some experimentation with classes that may grow over time. Fox agreed that this tool will drive those kinds of conversations and allow the deans to approach these issues systematically.

OPEN FLOOR

New Position Requests

There were questions about the status of position requests. Beaudry shared that as a former HR director she knows that the hiring timing cycle is critical. To get the cream of the crop, positions should be approved in the spring and advertisements should go out in the summer. Beaudry believe not adhering to this timeline to be a top reason for failed searches. The Council agreed that each spring decisions should be made for the following academic year. Kuleck, Maupin, and Hallie Neupert will meet after to outline the process.

The next meeting will be held October 30, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Valjean Newsome