Deans’ Group Minutes 04/23/03

In Attendance: Roy Bahl, David Blumenfeld, Laura Burtle, Mary Jane Casto, Ron Colarusso, Bill Fritz, Janice Griffith, Sid Harris, Charlene Hurt, Charles Louis, and Mike Moore. Chaired by Ron Henry.

I. Minutes of 04/16 will be approved at the next meeting.

II. Budget Update
No new information is available concerning the budget from the state legislature. The Regents may detail fee and tuition increases during their May 20-21 meeting to allow students time to become informed of the changes. Charles Louis noted he believed ETACT funds would be awarded as planned for the year. FACP will meet today to discuss recommendations regarding the Student Technology fee.

III. Enrollment Update
Bill Fritz discussed a proposed increase in the undergraduate and graduate application fees to accommodate staff needs due to increased workload especially with reference to Banner applications. He proposes the increased fee revenues would be allocated to the general fund, individual colleges/schools, and central campus processing areas. This proposal would be discussed today at FACP.

He presented the results of a survey of the application fee structure at other schools. Most of the institutions charge $50 for their UG application fees or plan to raise it to this level soon. In addition, most institutions charge an additional fee for international students. Susan Kelley noted the nursing school has a second application process that should be considered in the allocation of these funds. Janice Griffith noted the number of applications is greater for fall than that used in this allocation plan. Ron Henry stated that these figures would probably increase proportionally for all units.

Roy Bahl clarified that these funds would be received to replace those funds no longer available for Banner backflow and that these funds will maintain current positions. Ron Henry asked when these fees would go into effect. Bill Fritz indicated these fees could go into effect as early as Spring 2004. Sid Harris asked if further differential application fees could be considered. Janice Griffith noted she would support such fees.

IV. Guskin and Marcy Paper Discussion
Ron Henry asked if the group agreed with the premise that higher education has a long-term structural problem concerning funding, not a short-term budgetary problem. Charlene Hurt indicated she felt that for the libraries are structural, not cyclical problems. Roy Bahl stated that even with good budgets, if institutions continue with current goals, their problems would also continue. Roy Bahl agreed there are structural problems in budgeting higher education. He noted in the priority of state budgets, higher education is not at the top. In addition, he said the costs of higher education are continuing to increase. He emphasized the need to consider the quality of education. Bill Fritz gave the problems with HOPE as evidence of these types of long-term structural problems.

Sid Harris argued the need to sustain a budget supportive of innovation through difficult budget times. Sid Harris indicated continued emphasis on merely cutting budgets would tend to make the community cynical. Charlene Hurt noted urban institutions are in a position to utilize technology best in combination with face-to-face learning. She suggested GSU exploit these technologies. Ron Colarusso stressed the development of innovative teaching and learning strategies as solutions to these structural problems. Mary Jane Casto noted the large rise in WebCT usage.

Ron Henry suggested the current goals in higher education are focused on providing courses. He agrees with Guskin and Marcy, who say learning outcomes should be defined, and the methods for evaluating these, and recognizing
multiple paths through which knowledge can be attained, should be recognized. Janice Griffith asked how money would be saved with this focus. Ron Henry suggested that librarians, instructional technologists, and student professionals could provide some paths to student learning outcomes that, in turn, might lead to fewer courses to be taught. Ron Henry noted that as budgets continue to dwindle, hard choices must be made regarding few available resources.

Mike Moore noted the relationship between the resources and desired learning outcomes is not very well known across campus. Charles Louis indicated research has a cost, requires an infrastructure, and suggested strategic focus on areas which could combine their areas of expertise to get larger amounts of external funding. Emphasized the role of research as a partner to the educational process.

Charlene Hurt argued there is a difference between providing information and providing learning. Sid Harris noted the issue of capacity is a way of orienting the priority decision-making process. Roy Bahl asked what is holding the institution back from achieving excellence goals. He asked Ron Henry for his opinion.

Ron Henry noted the lack of recognition of the long-term structural problems in higher education. He admits he did not recognize the problem until about a year ago. Ron Henry was of the opinion that significant funding would flow to the institution following the rapid increase in enrollment. Now, he is convinced that higher education is on a long-term path of diminished resources in terms of constant dollars. He feels the faculty members are good but are being stressed and stretched. He noted GSU’s earlier commitment to conversion of faculty from PTI to NTT eventually to the tenure track. A major quality issue today is the small number of tenure-track faculty members relative to the large numbers of students. It appears this structural problem may not be corrected quickly due to financial limitations. We need to examine our current programs for sustainability at high quality levels, while exploring alternative delivery methods. In particular, overall measurement of learning outcome attainment could focus on correction of some long-term structural problems.

David Blumenfeld asked what the home institution of authors of this paper has achieved. Ron Henry noted the evidence in the field to indicate such structural problems can be corrected. He also suggested one criterion for evaluating a service might be to ask how important that service is in terms of supporting learning goals. Bill Fritz noted the need to increase the revenue stream to support the increased cost of providing education.

Ron Colarusso stressed the need to examine innovative classroom techniques. He emphasized the benefits of learning outcomes. He noted students are trained to be dependent learners. He described feedback he has received concerning the increased amount of time need to innovative technologies such as WebCT. Mary Jane Casto noted the need for working in cooperative units for such areas of technology to better use individual areas of expertise.

Sid Harris noted the cost of learning increases with the goal of increasing quality. Ron Henry agreed but said ideas of using faculty more efficiently (emphasizing the use of graduate students, peer learners etc), may free up faculty and resources.

Charlene Hurt stressed the innovations found at the Virginia Tech Math Emporium, and recommended the group investigate this program. Janice Griffith agreed that faculty members don’t understand the state funding problem. She recommended inter-unit strategic planning for partnering with the community for resources. She also noted radical restructuring should consider not just reassessing courses but also other units such as the department and college administrations.

Roy Bahl suggested the university should first establish the factors indicating quality programming. Ron Colarusso suggested expanding learning communities to extend through the undergraduate experience. Susan Kelley believes GSU should expand experiential learning especially considering the urban location of GSU. She also noted that problem students have with the lack of expertise in composition/writing.
Bill Fritz noted nontraditional ways should be considered for other units such as student services. Sid Harris indicated he felt a key structural solution was to convert NTT to tenure track, although it appears difficult finan to continue this conversion. If this is not possible, then he felt that course offerings might require reconsideration. Ron Henry noted many NTT faculty may be very interested in teaching and applying the idea of learning outcomes. Sid Harris noted there is more to learning than teaching. Ron Henry stressed the use of graduate students with appropriate training in courses and stressing UG research.

Charles Louis suggested examining models at other institutions. Charlene Hurt stressed making “smarter” use of resources, she asks her staff/faculty what things they are solely capable of doing and what things they doing that they don’t need to be doing. Roy Bahl suggested senior faculty should give advice in this regard. Ron Henry stressed the need to discuss this further.

Next meeting: Wednesday, May 14, 9:30 to 11:30 am, Room 200, Student Center.

Minutes submitted by Lisa Beck 04/23.