UCUI

Minutes

February 11, 2013

Lake Huron Room, Oakland Center

Members present: Julie Borkin, Seong Cho, Scott Crabill, Julie Dermidoff, Susan Evans, Claudia Grobbel, Cindy Hermsen, Jeff Insko, Bob Jarski, Amanda Nichols Hess, Carolyn O’Mahony, Steve Shablin, Kana Taku, Steve Wright

Guests: Walli Andersen, Nancy Schmitz

1. Call to order – 2:02 pm
2. Reviewed January 28, 2013 meeting minutes. Motion to approve (Julie Borkin), seconded (Claudia Grobbel); approved unanimously.
3. Mid-Semester Evaluations/Early Alert

Walli Anderson (Writing and Rhetoric) and Nancy Schmitz (Student Affairs) discussed a proposal to combine mid-semester evaluations and early alerts into one notification system. Under the mid-semester evaluation policy, instructors of 100/200 level courses are required by contract to issue students a “U” in Banner by week 7/8 of the term if their performance in the course is deemed unsatisfactory. In contrast, the early alert system is optional, but encouraged; instructors of 100/200 level courses notify the Early Alert Coordinator of unsatisfactory student performance by week 5 of the term, either by filling out a form or (in the case of large classes) submitting a spreadsheet of student data. The Early Alert Coordinator, who is a 19-hour casual employee paid for by one-time funding, takes the information provided and distributes it to advising entities across campus (First Year Advising Center, Athletic Advising, etc.) that can then address student academic performance issues. The Early Alert Coordinator also works with many students personally (specifically, those not addressed by other advising centers or groups on campus). All of the early alert data is entered and dealt with manually, not in Banner or through another automated system.

Walli and Nancy asked the committee to consider supporting a proposed merging of these two systems into one “early progress report” system automated in Banner. The proposed report would be issued in week 5 of the term. Walli and Nancy believe combining the services would help the program’s sustainability, allow for more active outreach in different ways, and give advising centers/programs around campus more access to information on students whose performance is inadequate.

The committee raised several questions regarding how such a merger would affect students, instructors, and administrative workload. Whether such a program is based in data was a central concern; furthermore, the committee wondered if the 47.5% of students who received a “U” mid-semester evaluation and did not receive a passing grade would be effectively reached by an earlier alert. The committee also commented that the accelerated timeline may make it difficult for instructors to give students accurate feedback on their performance, whereas a notification in Week 7 or 8 of a term may be more in line with students’ in-course performance. The committee was also more broadly concerned with faculty engagement in students’ performance, and whether instructors are reaching out to students when they are struggling with content.

Walli and Nancy responded by noting that many instructors may take such action, but by combining the two systems, a safety net is put in place: the First Year Advising Center can handle the majority of these early progress report cases through existing resources, and the remaining cases can be handled by the Sophomore Transition, Athletic Advising, the Center for Multicultural Studies, and other advising bodies on campus. This combination of tasks removes the manual nature of the Early Alert system, puts less strain on the Early Alert Coordinator, and allows other campus entities access to this information (i.e., Office of Financial Aid). Walli and Nancy noted that this proposal is more about the administrative function of merging the two notification systems and bringing the Early Alert system into Banner, and not necessarily meant to solve all of the academic problems encountered by students.

The committee also inquired about the feasibility of issuing quarterly performance notifications to students; Walli indicated this would not be acceptable to instructors and would place an undue administrative burden on them, rather than fix an issue. The committee asked what role students should be required to play to affect their own academic success; Walli and Nancy asserted that merging the two systems would allow students to move more quickly to academic advisors and take greater ownership of their learning experiences. However, the concern was raised that the increase in students referred to advising would create a backlog for advisors, thereby creating administrative terror for students. The committee wondered if there were best practices from instructors, advisors, or even online learning communities that could be leveraged to address students’ academic success more broadly. Furthermore, the committee felt there were other issues at play here that merit discussion – e.g. the policy of only issuing U grades and not grades to all students, the ethicality of encouraging students to withdraw, etc. – but that are not specifically related to the proposal brought by Walli and Nancy.

Walli and Nancy asked for UCUI support of merging the two systems, and hope to take proposal to the March 2013 Senate meeting. Broadly, the committee felt merging the mid-semester evaluations and early alert systems, fundamentally, is a good idea and a better use of resources; however, there were significant concerns about alert timing and the administrative burden placed on instructors. The committee asked if the Academic Standing and Honors Committee should be involved in the approval process, based on the committee’s charge and their historical connection to both existing interventions. Walli and Nancy noted that that connection had previously existed because of Charles Clark’s relationships with that group, not necessarily because Academic Standing and Honors was the appropriate group from which to seek approval. However, based on the committee’s suggestion, Walli and Nancy will consult with their Academic Standing and Honors Committee and provide their thoughts and feedback to Scott. UCUI will continue to discuss this proposal; once Scott receives an update from Walli on other units’ and committees’ thoughts on the proposal, UCUI will make some sort of decision regarding the merging of the two systems.

1. Program Modifications

HS NH Rubric Elimination: Through Bob Jarski, Patricia Wren provided meeting minutes from the HS COI December 2012 meeting at which the rubric elimination was approved unanimously (note: Bob Jarski absent from the meeting; teaching at the time). There was a point of information that UCUI has to approve this change, but the change does not go to the larger Assembly for a vote (only as an information item). Motion to approve (Seong Cho), second (Julie Borkin); motion carries with one abstention (Bob Jarski).

1. OSH Final Review

The final report of OSH’s self-study needs to get to the Dean of the School of Health Services; Julie and/or Jeff will pass it along. In follow-up to a concern raised at the January 28, 2013 committee meeting, it was confirmed that Aaron Bird is leaving the OSH program. However, the committee felt that, because this position would be filled through a traditional faculty search process, this departure does not change UCUI’s report and stance on the program’s self-study.

1. Review Theatre

Amanda and Claudia briefly discussed the Theatre program review, specifically issues with the currency of the data presented (5+ years old); per the recommendation of Jackie Wiggins, a meeting is being arranged with Kerro Knox 3 to discuss the current state of the program. Carolyn commented that, in light of the Dance department’s review that the Music, Theatre, and Dance department needs to be restructured, it may be helpful to consider the three individual self-studies and program reviews at one time. Such a suggestion was welcomed by the committee, and it was determined that evaluations of the Theatre, Dance, and Music self-studies would be discussed by the committee at the February 25 meeting. Representatives from these programs will be invited to attend the March 11, 2013 meeting for further discussion (Jackie Wiggins, Kerro Knox 3, and Greg Patterson).

1. Self-Studies Received

The committee agreed that Music, Theatre, and Dance self-studies would be discussed on February 11, 2013 with program coordinators visiting the March 11, 2013 meeting. Modern Languages and Literature’s self-study is scheduled to be discussed at the March 25, 2013 meeting. The final self-study received, Wellness Health Promotion and Injury Prevention, will be discussed at the April 1, 2013 meeting.

1. Good and Welfare

The committee continued to discuss concerns and questions about the combining of Early Alert/Mid-Semester Evaluation programs. Rather than considering administrative solutions to academic problems, the committee discussed evaluating what *is* working to help students succeed. However, the committee recognized that Walli and Nancy are considering streamlining and making institutional policies more effective rather than solving the larger problem of academic performance and student retention. There are continued concerns that moving up the mid-semester evaluation date will cause more issues for students; an assessment in week 5 of a term may be less indicative of student performance than an assessment in week 7/8. Furthermore, the committee feels this decision needs to be more data-driven; the committee feels it can support merging the systems, but not much else. Scott will revisit this issue with Walli.

Meeting adjourned at 3:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Amanda Nichols Hess, February 12, 2013.