Council on Retention and Graduation Steering Committee Meeting
May 14, 2015
UL 1116
Presiding: Kathy Johnson


Regrets: Zebulun Davenport, Margaret Ferguson, Steve Graunke, Michele Hansen, Julie Hatcher, Melissa Lavitt, Nasser Paydar, and Rebecca Porter

Guest: Chris Foley (IU Office of Online Education)

1. Johnson opened the meeting and welcomed committee members. This is the last meeting for the academic year.

2. Foley distributed two handouts (one on his dissertation abstract and one on his dissertation research) and used a PowerPoint presentation to share research from his dissertation, which was about the effects of engagement in high school and expectations for college engagement and the impact it has on earning a college degree. The following points were made:
   - Emphasis has been placed on engagement at the college level, but no one has been able to demonstrate a connection between overall levels of engagement and graduation rates. It would seem logical that with increased engagement that graduation rates would spike. Are colleges helping students to engage or are colleges simply selecting students who are predisposed to being engaged?
   - After Foley reviewed Astin’s I-E-O model, he explained his research questions and his methodology. He had data from 179 institutions for 8,621 students.
   - Results from Foley’s research indicate the following:
     - What happens in the first year is related to what the student brings to college rather than what the college brings to the student. This is in line with work that Gary Pike did earlier. High school engagement is one of the most reliable and powerful indicators of success. If students are involved in high school, then they will be involved in college.
     - Of all college-level characteristics looked at, only one proved significant: being a private institution. Foley reviewed the admission processes of private institutions. It appears that private institutions in the study had integrated high school engagement in the selection process.
     - Any existing relationship between the type of institution benefiting from a particular type of student proved inconclusive.
   - Foley shared a few of the implications for practice based on his research:
     - There is value in developing and refining instruments to assess engagement in high school and expected college engagement.
     - Studies of engagement should span both high school and college environments using multilevel modeling.
     - Studies of persistence and graduation should incorporate measures of high school engagement and expected college engagement.
High schools should place a greater emphasis on fostering an engaged experience for all students.

Colleges should incorporate levels of high school engagement and expected college engagement in their enrollment planning and student support programming.

Policy makers should incorporate high school engagement as outcomes of high school and as prerequisites for college success.

When asked for questions or feedback, the following points were made:

Buyarski told about an initiative to invest scholarship money in students with GPAs ranging from approximately 3.0 to 3.3. These are good students who would be a great asset to this campus. They are not being targeted as an enrollment strategy.

When asked about the role of income and engagement, Foley explained that high school engagement is facilitated by having a higher income. Engagement data are self-reported. There are two ways to look at it. A student could have a job and look at it solely as a means of income, or the student could look at the job as a way to be engaged. Students who have family members who are highly educated are trained to be interactive, perhaps even aggressive in their interactions with faculty and others.

Buyarski told about the Campus Advising Council (CAC) summit that took place a year ago when they looked at things to improve the graduation rates that would not require faculty approval. As a follow-up to the summit, the CAC has been working on the following:

- The CAC discussed recommending a new policy where incoming students are required to enroll in a math course in the first semester. Students must continually enroll in math courses until their math requirement is completed. This initiative has proven to be very complicated, so the CAC will continue to study it another year and will make recommendations on the policy later.

- The CAC is developing protocols for mandatory advising. This would be a recommendation because the schools determine how often their students must see an advisor. The intent is to try to have schools adopt the CAC recommendations and implement in fall 2015.

- The CAC is recommending a centralized graduation application. The Degree Completion Office has been contacting students with 120 credit hours, but who have not graduated. There were people in that group who were unaware that they had enough credits to graduate. The CAC is recommending a campuswide process that will be administered by the registrar’s office. The CAC is checking first with the registrar’s office to see if they can absorb the extra work. Currently, the graduation application process varies from school to school, and it can be confusing to students. The CAC would like to see one application and one deadline. If the registrar’s office approves of the centralized application, then the CAC will take its recommendation to the APPC. Gibau asked that the common deadline be synced with other events like commencement. Buyarski said they are working on this.

- Rust, who will be chair of the CAC next year, added that the CAC is also recommending a policy to change class standing to 30 (sophomore), 60 (junior), and 90 (senior).

Buyarski gave an update on the Foundations of Excellence (FoE) Task Force. The following points were discussed:

- All nine dimension task forces have completed their work.

- The FoE task force has received feedback from the Gardiner Institute.

- The FoE task force is sorting through 140 recommendations. They are working on categorizing and prioritizing the recommendations. Currently, they have 50 high-priority recommendations. Buyarski and Gibau are working to see if some of those can be combined.
• In June, Buyarski and Matt Wade will attend a summit to learn how to take the recommendations and move toward action.
• Buyarski and Johnson thanked everyone who worked on the FoE project.

5. Thorton Springer used a PowerPoint presentation to give an update on RISE. The following points were discussed:
• Thorton Springer has collaborated with IU Communications and Eric Sickels (Division of Undergraduate Education) to develop a communication plan, which was launched in the spring.
• One of the goals of the communication plan was to generate awareness about RISE. Another goal has been to create materials that will help everyone know that RISE can be transformative and enhance learning.
• RISE is one of 10 vital goals in the campus strategic plan.
• Thorton Springer showed some of the RISE materials for students that have been developed. The OTEAM has access to these materials, which explain the key features of RISE. The OTEAM will be able to communicate the benefits of RISE to new students and their families.
• The inaugural RISE Day will be on November 6, 2015, in the Lilly Auditorium of the library. This event will be for students as well as faculty who are involved in high-impact practices. Thorton Springer said she will start this event on a small scale, but she hopes to expand it in the future. She is looking for a keynote speaker. There will also be concurrent sessions. When Thorton Springer asked for feedback about the event, the following suggestions were offered:
  o Kahn suggested inviting alumni to present.
  o Varma-Nelson suggested interviewing the alumni who come back for RISE Day. Ask them how they use RISE in their careers, medical school, etc. This could be very powerful.
  o Engler explained how her department helps mentors unpack transformational learning experiences.
  o Rust said if the goal is to increase participation in RISE, it would help if RISE Day took place before priority registration. Thorton Springer said she wants to do that, but there were conflicts with other events. Gibau and Varma-Nelson suggested planning the event a year ahead of time to prevent conflicts.
  o Buyarski said that at Major and Career Exploration Day they have four areas for RISE. Students could practice for RISE Day.
• Johnson explained that when RISE was first created an international experience was defined as study abroad. However, other opportunities are now available, including opportunities on campus. When she asked committee members for feedback, the following suggestions were given:
  o Ward believes focus on the acronym limits certain categories. RISE is all about helping students to unpack and to articulate the PULs. There are many ways the letters can be used. There are different ways students can have cultural experiences. Short experiences are worthwhile, but a semester-long experience abroad is invaluable. Are there ways to think of outcomes with the goal not being getting a RISE notation on the transcript, but other outcomes?
  o Varma-Nelson said RISE needs to be defined. She told about a visiting director. The visitor’s program was very structured and had clear outcomes. They could evaluate their
program. What is the standard to get a RISE transcript notation? Without clear standards and definitions, it will be difficult to move RISE forward.

- Thorington Springer reviewed next steps for RISE. She is planning a half-day retreat in the summer to review the RISE action plan and to determine what the RISE experience should look like. She also wants to discuss structure and rubrics.
- Johnson told about a faculty fellowship that will allow faculty to look into prior learning assessment. This is a good approach because faculty can provide guidance in how structure should be created.
- Buyarski pointed out that returning adults cannot go on study abroad programs because they have jobs. Perhaps they can have international experiences in other ways?
- Gibau asked if this can be related to capstone courses. Can these types of experiences be integrated? How do we capture other types of experiences that do not fit the traditional experience?
- Turner cautioned that we have to think about low-income students with RISE. Are we leaving out the bottom half? Many students cannot study abroad because they work or simply cannot afford it.
- Rust said there is a gap in participation in the international (I) and experiential (E) areas of RISE. The research (R) and service learning (S) areas are doing well.
- Thorington Springer told about a faculty survey she is working on to get feedback on RISE course design, student learning outcomes, and faculty gains. Committee members can contact her if they have any additional feedback.

6. Johnson asked about future priorities for the fall. She gave brief updates on work that Talbert-Hatch has been doing with sophomores and the work that Powell, Thedwall, and Minglin are doing on student success. The following suggestions were given:
   - Kahn said the e-portfolio initiative will be issuing a RFP in the near future. Small one-year renewable grants will be offered to begin a new e-portfolio project or to expand an existing one.
   - Turner suggested that commuting students would be a good issue for discussion in the fall.
   - Ward would like to see a continued emphasis on need-based aid and research opportunities for low-income and underrepresented students.

7. Johnson recognized Ward, who has served on the CRG since it was formed. He also served as the interim chair a few years ago. She thanked Ward for his many contributions and wished him a happy retirement. The committee showed their appreciation for Ward with a long round of applause.

8. The meeting was adjourned.