Minutes
University Senate Academic Policies Committee
Volume 48, No. 9       November 22, 2011
Schofield 202


Guests: Jeff Vahlbusch, David Jones, Ivy Bohnlein, Sarah Tweedale, Mike Wick, Jill Pruschiek, Bob Knight, Margaret Cassidy

No decisions were made at this meeting, but much information was provided, and more information is needed.

1. Chair Pratt called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.
2. Minutes from November 15, 2011 were approved as distributed.
3. Honors Program and APC: Director Vahlbusch
   Vahlbusch tasked with providing vision for the University Honors Program (UHP). Vahlbusch gave an overview of the history, administration and staffing, and size of the UHP. Vahlbusch shared a handout “The University Honors Program at a Glance” (See attached). Since 1983, the UHP has been structured as a GE replacement program. Since assuming his role in July 2009, Vahlbusch has identified the following challenges:
   - Visibility
   - PEEQ Results. Re-create Honors as a signature program that draws on UWEC’s strengths (like faculty-student collaborative research, service learning, study abroad, high-impact practices) or cut it.
   - Growth of major and program and university requirements make it hard for students to complete the UHP.
   - Growth in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate completes among Honors students has been undermining the “GE replacement” focus of the program.
   - Honors found to be less diverse than the rest of campus according to Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity: Equity Scorecard Draft Report on Excellence (2009).

The new mission (draft): The University Honors Program recruits, retains, develops, rewards and graduates high-performing, highly motivated, high potential students from all four colleges and from every major on campus. In addition to crafting the new
mission and program goals, Jeff Vahlbusch, David Jones, and now Ivy Bohnlein are reinvigorating the program by:

- increasing the number and diversity of Honors students
- increasing the number and variety of Honors courses
- improving retention and graduation rates
- bringing co-curricular and extra-curricular life into the program
- improving image and diversity.

Re-designing the program and curriculum to align with best practices after an invited external evaluation was conducted last April.

“By Fall 2014, we aim, with [APC] guidance, to transform our Honors GE replacement program into an integrated, scaffolded, developmental 4-year program in which students start in Honors liberal education and Honors major prerequisite courses, continue with powerful sophomore and junior-year interdisciplinary Honors colloquia and conclude with a substantial Honors thesis, project, or research experience in their majors.”

Initiatives:

Honors Holistic Admissions Project has allowed them to target students otherwise missed by traditional criteria and procedures.

Initiatives to open up the UHP to non-traditional, transfer, second-semester and international student.

Bluegold Commitment Funding allowed for the new position of Honors Assistant Director for Advising and Student Programs to provide community outreach, career advising, coordinate immersion experiences and high-impact practices.

New Honors Living-Learning Community (opened Fall 2011)

Provost’s Honors Symposium for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity supports Honors-level work across campus.

Honors is returning to its role as incubator for curricular and pedagogical innovation.

Attempts to overcome obstacles:

New Early Registration Policy, Honors Contracts (turning non-Honors courses into Honors courses), give Honors credit for “academically rigorous co-curricular experiences.”
Since taking over the UHP, Vahlbusch noted that Computer Science, History, Chemistry and Accounting and Finance have redesigned or revivified their programs; Spanish had its first Honors graduate in years this spring; Philosophy and Religious Studies, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Geology, and Mathematics have recently created new programs; and Psychology is exploring the creation of a departmental Honors program.

David Jones distributed a handout (attached) and reported on What the Faculty Fellow for the University Honors Program works on:

- Creating innovative academic experiences with Honors
- Aligning Honors initiatives with liberal education learning goals
- Faculty Development
- Program Assessment
- Closing the achievement gap and High-Impact Practices with Honors
- Grant writing and other creative strategies for program development with Honors, both internally and externally
- Intercultural communication in diverse US and Wisconsin populations
- Holistic admissions

Ivy Bohnlein introduced herself and stressed her role of creating and strengthening ties and providing activities and opportunities for students to develop as scholars.

Honors student Sarah Tweedale talked about how the UHP benefitted her.

P. Kleine stated that many of the important issues were already mentioned earlier. “When a university has a solid Honors program, all boats rise.” Provost Klein stressed that we need to keep an elevated profile. P. Kleine said that she was very proud of the Honors Program. Honors is a way to keep UWEC a distinctive university.

Chair Pratt asked the Honors Program to direct the APC as to how the APC can support the Honors program. Vahlbusch indicated he would like to come back to the APC in the future.
4. Wellness Graduation Requirement (into to issue)

Scott Lowe said it costs $300,000 to teach the wellness requirement and asked if this is part of the core mission of the university. Do we want a Wellness requirement? Provost Kleine mentioned the 41 FTE given to the Wellness requirement (39 from Student Affairs). There was some discussion of ULEC and the composition of ULEC. It was suggested that this conversation could start at the Associate Deans Meeting. It was suggested that the issue be framed as whether the requirement is meeting outcome objectives or whether it is central to the mission. “Health,” “wellness,” and “activity” being used interchangeably, but that activity and wellness are two separate requirements, it was noted. The associate deans are addressing other graduation requirements not included in the ULEC proposed framework.

B. Knight already performed a UW System Scan—some campuses have nothing while LaCrosse has three credits.

- Chair Pratt asked Nowlan, Lowe and Knight to form a sub-committee to look at the history and to look at what others are doing and then to report back to the APC, so more background and facts can be provided.

5. Academic Planning Issues: Provost Klein

   a. Provost Kleine suggested that a good place to start discussing the proposed Liberal Education Framework that is coming to APC would be to gain a clear understanding of “integrated learning”—a central component. Chair Pratt will try to solicit university experts on integrated learning to present at our next meeting.

6. Report from Program Review Orientation: B. Nowlan and D. Jansen. They reported that the 2010 version had been distributed and that they now have that version in hand. They said that not everything was clear including the criteria used to evaluate the program.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted by

Stephanie H. Wical, Secretary for the Meeting