Executive Committee Meeting with Administration
19 November 2008, 3:00 PM

Present: Chancellor Kristensen, SCV Murray, President Snider, Senators Benz, Dimock, Frickel, Miller, Summar.

1. What is the purpose of the hiatus for the First Year Experience, and what are future plans for the program?

   SVC Murray: The First Year Program had an APR in February. The APR team recommended a task force look at the 1st year program. The task force issued a white paper (attached), and the 1st year program was suspended for a year to deal with the issues raised. Deb Bridges is heading up the study team. Some of the issues include the idea that this is an opportunity to coordinate the 1st year program and the general studies program. Budget issues are not trivial; how should we expand the program to include all freshmen/women? Kristi Bryant will still head up the program.

2. What are the responsibilities of the Director of University events? Is this position different from the Community Relations Director? Was the search for that position cancelled or only postponed?

   Though VCUR Carlson was unable to attend the meeting, he did provide an answer to the question (attached). In general, the first position was too ambitious for the salary the university was able to provide. The second job posting is more restricted, and should be able to be filled soon.

3. In light of anticipated expansion of the 1+2+1 program, has it been assessed to determine its effectiveness academically and logistically? How might faculty contribute to improving the program?

   SVC Murray: We are approaching 18 months with students on campus for the 1-2-1 program. Therefore, so far there has not been a formal evaluation, but we are looking for any issues that may arise from the program because it is not unusual for there to be small issues that amount to ‘turbulence’ when a new program is starting up. There has been only one student failure; a student who could not pass the TOEFL. Assessment is something that we need to do, as soon as is practicable.

   VC Murray also mentioned that feedback from Chinese institutions is good. At least one institution wants to have students regularly admitted to the MBA or Biology Masters program. We will evaluate whether we need more faculty to undertake this.

4. How will summer courses be funded this year? Will this summer’s offerings be affected by the exploration of new models for summer school funding?

   When the budget was cut in 2003, summer school was cut. Now, we budget $1 million for summer school, but it costs $1.3 million. SVC Murray made up the difference. This is no longer possible; however we don’t want to compromise summer school offerings. VCBF Johnson will cover the current shortfall.

   Looking forward, VC Johnson will develop a model to both fund and grow the summer
school offerings. Pres. Snider asked what possible models are being investigated. Sen. Miller asked whether summer school was a ‘revenue generator,’ and if so, why are we limiting it? The Chancellor replied that we might be able to reallocate summer money. SVC Murray said that we are paid from central administration according to credit hours taught, and that therefore Fall, Spring, and Summer financial balances are not easy to separate from each other.

5. During the recent campus visit of a candidate for the senior vice chancellor position, there was a 30-minute open forum for faculty, staff, and students. Is it possible in future for faculty to have somewhat more time with candidates for this position?

   The Chancellor mentioned that the schedule for the next candidates is less time-constrained, and that, if questions are continuing, the session with faculty can continue beyond the allotted time. Sen. Miller mentioned that having only one time to meet with the candidate presents a hardship for those faculty members who might have a class scheduled at a particular time, and that having a schedule published in advance of the candidate’s visit may help to alleviate the problem somewhat.

6. Given the importance of advising for recruitment and retention, are there mechanisms in place to support faculty in their role as student advisors? Is the effectiveness of UNK’s advising functions being assessed on some level? Are there identified “best practices” that are being used somewhere on campus that could serve as a model for departments?

   The Chancellor indicated that this was an important question, and is tied in with recruiting and enrollment. Noel-Levitz has indicated that advising is a gap, and needs to be addressed. SVC Murray noted that Noel-Levitz had surveyed students on their opinions and understanding about advising, and will have recommendations.

7. Reports from Administration

   a. Chancellor

      There is a review on all four campuses concerning the effects of the Civil Rights Initiative. Each campus is examining practices, scholarships, and the like. The Chancellor said that over the last 4 to 5 years, the scholarship qualifications had been ‘scrubbed’ and are good to go. We are also squeaky clean in admissions.

      The Board of Regents has scheduled a campus visit on the UNK campus on February 13th. Like last time, we will highlight specific programs, faculty, and students.

   b. VCBF

      The Chancellor reported that re-treeing is in progress. VC Johnson, by combing through accounts, has found about $60,000 to pay for this.

      VC Johnson will be making an offer on November 22nd on the Saunder’s property.

      Budget reductions will be coming out soon for comment.

   c. SVC   No separate report
   d. VCUR   No separate report
   e. DoSL   No separate report
We conducted a full search for a Director of Community Relations earlier this summer and fall, and, after evaluating the experience of candidates who applied, we realized the scope of this position, reflected in the qualifications of the leading candidates who applied, was more encompassing than we could afford with the budgeted salary. Therefore, we failed the original search and re-advertised for a position that focused primarily on the university event planning part of the portfolio. The same search committee, led by Lucas Dart, is now working with us on screening applicants for this newly defined position. Applicant screening began about 10 days ago, and will result soon, we hope, in a short list of candidates to bring for interviews. As a reminder, this is NOT a newly funded position, but, as a result of some reorganization of duties within University Relations staff, we were able to take the funding previously applied to the Director of Marketing position and use part of it for the position we are now seeking to fill. Hope this answers the question posed by the Executive Committee.

Curt

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From: First Year Task Force

Debbie Bridges, Chair; Rick Larsen (Residential and Greek Life); Gail Zeller (Interim Dean of Student Life); Daryl Kelley (Sociology); Sylvia Asay (Family Studies); Daren Snider (Director of General Studies); Mary Daake (Academic Advising).

Re: Recommendations for First Year Program at UNK

The First Year Task Force was formed in the spring 2008 semester and charged with evaluating the feasibility of continuing the existing First Year Program at UNK, consider possible alternatives for providing the essential elements of a First Year Program to a greater number of students, and submit its recommendations to the SVCAA&SL by October, 2008.

To complete its charge, the First Year Task Force met regularly throughout the spring and into the fall 2008 semesters. To aid us in our task, members considered the following information and data:


- Faculty Senate Minutes, March 1, 2002. Discussion of the First Year Experience Committee’s report.

- FY Self-Study report for the APR conducted in February, 2008. Excerpts included Mission, Goals and Objectives, and Effectiveness.


- The UNK Experience: Proposal for First Year Courses – guidelines for developing course for inclusion in UNK’s First Year Program (2002).

- College Student Expectations and Experiences Questionnaires, 2002-04 Summary (available on UNK Academic Affairs web-page).

- EBI Residential Survey results (November 2007).

- Transition options offered by Academic Success.

- Data on freshmen enrollment in GS courses (fall 2007).

In addition to the above information, the First Year Task Force developed and administered a
survey to UNK faculty in spring 2008. The objectives of the survey were: 1) to gauge faculty’s understanding of the existing First Year Program; 2) identify what faculty perceived as important elements to include in First Year courses; 3) identify perceived problems with the existing First Year Program; and 4) identify potential solutions to the problems identified.

The Task Force met in early September, 2008 to review the survey results and to further refine its recommendations. Some of the important findings from the survey:

- some evidence that “one size fits all” criteria for FY isn’t acceptable to most, whether it is class size or inclusion of different objectives and topics

- identify issues faculty believe they should not be doing as part of academic classes

  However, this does re-open the idea of a variety of options for freshmen that are designed to increase student success and retention, and may very well be a foundation for setting some guidelines for any class designed to increase student success and retention.

- identify objectives and issues that faculty support outside the FY concept or think all students should be able to do, but are not excited about teaching (e.g., community building, socialization skills, etc.)

- general lack of awareness/knowledge of the program

- for those faculty that had an awareness of the First Year Program there seemed to be a general consensus that the current program has some problems, but few ideas of how to solve those problems

- existing program was not the result of a grassroots faculty initiative, but rather the result of a few dedicated individuals working to initiate an idea

After careful deliberation, the First Year Task Force makes the following recommendation:

Suspend the current First Year Program for one year (at least) and then bring the program back in a modified form that makes full use of available campus services and resources in providing the services to aid student transitioning into college.

An important component of the revised First Year Program is the implementation of a new fall convocation for students, geared towards new-incoming freshmen but open to all students. The convocation would provide a forum to explain to students what will be expected of them in college, what types of experiences (opportunities) they might have, and provide the first step in engaging students in campus life at UNK. Having the Chancellor speak with students, presenting teaching awards, or providing students with a UNK pin are possible activities. Implementing a convocation would be a way to develop rituals specific to UNK and foster a sense of community among incoming students.

The structure of the program envisioned by the Task Force is a hybrid approach, in which the program begins with fall orientation and convocation, continues on through the fall semester with regular meetings for the students (either through designated First
Year courses or 1 credit hour seminar courses offered through the colleges), with programming that provides a blending of faculty / student life or student success professional staff, and prepares students to enter a “portal” type course in the spring semester. Utilizing a common time for scheduling the 1 credit hour courses would allow opportunities to bring the entire freshmen class together periodically throughout the fall semester and help build the sense of community on campus.

Regardless of the final form the revised program takes, it is imperative that the program builds upon the elements of academic success and sense of community introduced in fall orientation 2008 and serves to reinforce those ideals. It is also important that any element included in the First Year Program be based on identified “best practices.” Deliberate cooperation and collaboration between the academic side and student life is also essential to the implementation of the first year program.

The hiatus would provide time to put all the necessary pieces in place, make any needed adjustments to curriculum offerings, inform the faculty and receive feedback, and work out the details of cooperation between academic affairs and student life. The hiatus also offers the opportunity for a review of resource requirements for funding the program. Recognizing that any program is going to require financial and administrative support, the hiatus also offers the opportunity to review and develop the needed support for a revised program. Input and support needs to be solicited from administration, faculty, professional staff and others who will be integral to the success of a new program. Additionally, a new program must coordinate with existing and developing programs to provide a seamless integration into University life for new students.

The following discussion provides an overview of the process the Task Force used in developing its recommendations.

Prior to having the survey results to consider, the Task Force identified three alternatives available to UNK, which are discussed below:

1) Continue current program with existing structure (designated First Year courses, faculty and Student Peer Leaders)

2) Coordination of existing components of first year type activities (e.g., FY courses, Education courses, Honors program and Student Life) and filling in the holes (after have been identified).

3) Develop a hybrid program utilizing a tiered approach in delivering experience: combination of select designated First Year Courses with faculty and Student Peer Leaders, use of University Foundations course, and use of existing GS courses and the utilization of RAs to provide some of the bridge activities between classroom and campus life.

Common theme in all alternatives is the recognition for coordination and cooperation between academic affairs and student life; faculty/staff development and training on providing a student friendly environment; and identifying what the real need of today’s students in terms of transitioning to college life.
Upon reviewing the survey results, the Task Force carefully considered the pros and cons associated with each of the above alternatives. This discussion, summarized below, allowed the Task Force to further refine its recommendations for the future.

1) **Continuation of current program with existing structure is fiscally infeasible.** The Task Force reviewed data on the diversity of courses designated as FY, number of sections, and enrollment for the 2002-2007 period. Under the current structure, enrollment in FY courses is capped at 25, Student Peer Leaders receive a $1,000 stipend, and faculty receive a $1,500 stipend. Given these parameters, the First Year Program would have had to have 40 sections in order to provide a First Year course experience for all incoming freshmen in fall 2007 (based on an enrollment of 996). It is evident that costs associated with continuing the existing structure become prohibitive, especially if the goal is to provide a first year experience for every incoming freshmen.

In addition to resource constraints, the Task Force expressed concern about the feasibility of recruiting enough faculty/courses to meet the needs of all incoming freshmen under the existing program structure. There were 11 First Year designated courses in fall 2007. Since 2002, the number of courses has fluctuated between 7 (in 2002) and 17 (in 2004 and 2005). These numbers suggest that even if the existing program is continued unchanged, it is unclear if enough sections would be recruited to provide the program to all incoming freshmen.

Another concern voiced by members of the Task Force relates to the diversity of course offerings with the existing program and the need for faculty stipends. Review of the course offerings suggests that there is a core group (e.g., ENG, SOC, PE) of courses designated as First Year every fall, but little evidence of increasing diversity. An observation was also made regarding the variation between courses in terms of the types of first year experiences being incorporated. The Task Force concluded that there did not seem to be a logical rationale for continuing the use of faculty stipends in the future.

2) **Coordination of existing components of first year type activities and filling in the holes.** While this approach has merit, it still is problematic in its implementation. The first step to be completed would be a complete census of available type activities. The second step would be to identify deficiencies and develop programming elements to fill the void. The final step would be to piece the program together in a manner that would fulfill program goals and facilitate the assessment of the program. However, the success of a program of this type would rely on the continuation and cooperation of all the individual pieces. The Task Force felt that such a piecemeal approach is less than desirable.

3) **Develop a hybrid program utilizing a tiered approach in delivering experience.** The Task Force recommends the pursuit of this type of structure. As visualized by the Task Force, the program would begin with the fall orientation (mandatory) as offered fall 2008. The program would then build upon this experience by providing / utilizing a combination of select designated First Year Courses with faculty and Student Peer Leaders, use of University Foundations course, and use of existing GS courses and the utilization of RAs to provide some of the bridge activities between classroom and campus life.