RAC Minutes

October 6, 2008

Attending: Gary Andersen, Deb Basarich, Laurel Carroll, Carla Claussen, William Dana, Tina Falkner, Tracy Fischer, Jennifer Franko, Teresa Fruen, Laurie Gardner, Carol Gross, Kevin Havard, Emily Holt, Barbara Jensen, Jennifer Koontz, Mary Koskan, Stephanie Lawson, Aileen Lively, Ann Minnick, Margo Mueller, Cynthia Murdoch, Kathy Nolan, Linda Norcross, Les Opatz, Cindy Pavlowski, Heather Peterson, Ann Rausch, Vickie Roberts, Jody Seiler-Peterson, Cindy Salyers, Mary Ellen Shaw, Pat Sherman, Clare Strand, Nathan Tesch, Nate Thompson, Danielle Tisinger, Kasi Williamson

Announcements:

Kasi Williamson announced an issue that Freshman Full Year Enrollment students will experience when they use Graduation Planner. Once a student registers for courses in a particular term, Graduation Planner looks at the registered-for courses, rather than the planned-for courses, to generate the What Do I Need list. Full Year Enrollment students, however, may be confused by this when it comes to spring 2009 semester. They have registered for a couple of courses already, and then they will add a couple of courses to their plan. Since they have already registered for spring 2009 semester, the additional courses they put in their plans for spring 2009 semester won't clear those requirements off of the What Do I Need list, or show up as planned-for in their Graduation Planner APAS.

Once a student registers for those additional spring 2009 courses, Graduation Planner will work fine. Until then, the student can move those courses over into summer 2009 to trick the What Do I Need list into working properly.

Sue Van Voorhis announced that she has met with PSTL 1086 class for student-athletes and talked with them about Graduation Planner and the new advising process; student-athletes should be meeting with their advisers about the grad plan they have created. Sue also met with advisers last week during the MAC open house to show them the new advising process. This week, ASR staff are meeting with continuing student-athletes to talk with them about the process.

Project update: Jody Seiler-Peterson

Jody Seiler-Peterson indicated that the project update at this meeting will be brief. If you hear about a project that you want to know more about, contact Jody, and she'll cover it at the next meeting.

Education Abroad project: The team has completed functional design on the PeopleSoft side and OIT has begun working on the technical design; Team continues to work on the function design on the web interface, as well as "3Cs" (comments, communications, and checklists) setup.

Entrance/exit interview project: The team is working on business requirements for the next phase.

Student account re-write: The team is working with OIT on business case for the project.

Early Notification System: The team is working on business requirements.

Liberal education update: Laurel Carroll and Kasi Williamson
Laurel Carroll reported that the Council on Liberal Education has been meeting and looking at course proposals. One course has been approved so far. Once more courses are approved, they will be posted on One Stop, building a list of fall 2010 LE-approved courses. (Courses will be posted from this page: http://onestop.umn.edu/degree_planning/lib_eds/index.html)

Laurel indicated that there is an effort to get the departments to start proposing their courses as soon as possible. The council will meet every two weeks, looking at a specific group of requirements each month. There is concern that people will wait until the last minute; if a large number of proposals are received at the last minute, they will not be approved in time for the fall 2010 class schedule. She is also already getting questions from students and advisers, looking for courses that they can plan for; this is positive, because it means students are planning ahead. If anyone has any questions related to this LE transition, give them Laurel's contact information (l-carr@umn.edu or 612-624-1320). The council is doing preliminary reviews and feedback of course syllabi and proposals, so these can be sent to Laurel in advance, and she can give departments feedback before the course is officially submitted. This should help the review go as smoothly as possible.

Laurie Gardner asked if Laurel wanted to know when a department knows it is not going to propose a course for re-certification. Laurel said yes, that information would be helpful. Laurie suggested that this list of courses could also be posted. Laurel said that might be possible.

Kasi Williamson showed a preview of three Web pages related to the liberal education transition. She asked that someone from each college, plus any other interested departments or units, send her feedback of these preview pages so that corrections and clarifications could be made before the pages go live. This request will also be sent to the RAC listserv by e-mail; feedback is most useful if it is received by October 14. One suggestion was made to break out the lists of LE courses by each requirement, e.g., to put Physical sciences and Biological sciences on separate lists. Laurel and Kasi agreed that this could be accomplished.

Kasi also asked for volunteers for a committee to help facilitate sending this transition information out to students. The purpose would be to develop consistent messages and to agree on the best timeline, so that all students are getting consistent information in a way that makes sense, and so that all advisers are aware of the communication content and timeline. Attendees agreed to send Kasi volunteers for the committee at will2026@umn.edu.

Student learning outcomes: Cynthia Murdoch

Cynthia Murdoch updated the group on the current efforts to implement the Student Learning Outcomes on the Twin Cities campus.

[An overview of the Student Learning Outcomes implementation process is included with the minutes.]

Student Learning Outcomes indicate those things that, as a campus, we believe students should be able to do or know when they graduate from the University of Minnesota. As an institution, we're somewhat unique for having formulated this unified list of outcomes across our campus.

Student Development Outcomes are being implemented by the Office of Student Affairs; they'll follow a parallel path that will connect with the learning outcomes at certain points. So the two initiatives will work together, but the Office of Student Affairs will coordinate the development outcomes implementation efforts.

Student Learning Outcomes grew out of a national movement; the federal government is looking for more accountability from higher education institutions. The learning outcomes grew out of a response to that national climate, but they are also a way to improve teaching and learning on our campus.

When the outcomes were developed, there was a lot of consultation with faculty, staff, and students. The outcomes were approved as policy by the University Senate in spring of 2007. Now Cynthia is working on implementation efforts across campus.

The first goal of the implementation effort is to improve teaching and learning; the implementation team thinks they can do that by making sure learning goals are explicit to students, and by helping the faculty members develop tools to assess the learning that took place. This gives more clarity to the student about what is in the class, and to the faculty member about whether his or her teaching is effective.

The re-accreditation process in 2015 is also important; the UMTC will be expected to show that it has learning outcomes in place and a way to assess them campus-wide.

For students, the goal is to provide them with a vocabulary so that they can talk about their experiences and what they've learned when they are finished with their University experience.

Currently, implementation involves working with 15 pilot departments across campus. The pilot departments have been working for about a year. First, they have looked at all of their courses and determined which outcomes each course addresses. Then they put the courses into a grid, and examined by major which of the outcomes are addressed by that major. Then, the department evaluates how everything fits together, and determines whether they want to make changes to fill in the gaps, or whether students should fill in those gaps through coursework in other departments.

In the second phase, the pilot departments will figure out a way to assess the learning that has taken place in their classes. That process will probably start after the winter break.

The implementation team is trying to recruit other departments to start the mapping work. The goal is that, by the time the accreditation happens, a majority of departments will have the mapping and assessment initiatives in place.

The Council for Liberal Education has asked that all of the departments who re-certify their courses show that the course will address at least one of the learning outcomes. This must be noted on the syllabus.

The ECAS modifications that were proposed to address the student learning outcomes went to OIT in the second quarter work request, and we believe that the changes could be in ECAS at the beginning of the year. With these changes, any course updated with an effective date of fall 2010 or later could include a checkbox that denotes which learning outcomes the course will address. This information would then appear in the course catalog for students.

The team is also investigating a way to include student learning outcomes information in the student rating of teaching forms.

Tina Falkner asked if individuals from the career network offices have started to work with the student learning outcomes information. Cynthia responded that most communication with students is a few months away.

iSTEP update: Tina Falkner

Andy Howe, Sue Van Voorhis, Laura Coffin Koch, and Tina Falkner met two weeks ago to talk about the indicators project, and whether there is a way to internally create this project in ASR. They are exploring that to see if there is a way to display the indicators that advisers have said would be useful to see a more comprehensive picture of the student's progress. IT development resources are tight, so ASR is trying to see if there's a way that it can still deliver this. Updates will be shared in future meetings. The list of indicators that they are looking at will be attached to the minutes.

Announcement regarding Vickie Roberts: Sue Van Voorhis

Vickie Roberts will retire as of October 24. We wish her the best. After working for and retiring from CCE, Vickie came to work for ASR on the PeopleSoft project. She then became the director of the academic records area. Sue said that Vickie's infectious laugh and calm demeanor have been important to us, and she's always been most interested in "what's in it for the student." Vickie has said that she'll be happy to come back and help with projects from time to time. She requested that we not organize a goodbye party. However, she would entertain the idea of a happy hour; the date will be sent out to the group when it is scheduled.

Policy discussion: Tina Falkner

Sue Van Voorhis noted that the input of RAC is very important to the effort to review policies. Vice Provost Bob McMaster was happy to hear that this group would be taking a look at the policies.

Tina Falkner noted that the first policy review forum was held two weeks ago. Two people provided comments on the policies.

You can learn what policies are under review by following the "policies under review" link in the left-hand column on www.policy.umn.edu

Tina reminded the group that they have already received a handout that notes all of the policies they need to take a look at. The group then discussed a number of the policies:

Academic calendars: The only feedback they have received so far is that the policy language could be clearer regarding the fact that the policy doesn't apply to certain professional schools that have a different calendar. Sue Van Voorhis also made a comment about procedures relating to this policy; it should be defined how many years the calendar will be set into the future, and a procedure should be established about how and when changes can be made. Currently, academic calendars are set four years, but they are often changed on short notice. Tina noted one error that will be corrected: Under summer term, the "c" should really be an item III, as it applies to all terms and not only summer term.

Academic unit authority over the curriculum and major and minor requirements: Tina Falkner raised the question, can a student declare a major without actually being accepted into the major? The consensus was that a student cannot; Tina concluded that the policy should be more explicit about that. Sue Van Voorhis brought attention to the last sentence under #2: "any such time limit must be clearly and regularly communicated to prospective and current students." This section of the policy pertains to applying "old" credits toward a degree. It used to be called "sunsetting" in

the previous policy. Essentially, the policy states that the departments have the right to determine when previously-earned credits are too "old" to be counted, and must clearly articulate this information to students.

Sue Van Voorhis also called attention to item #3 in this policy: When program requirements are changing, "Such new requirements will not normally be imposed on currently enrolled students…but may be offered to them as an option." Currently, programs can be changed through the end of a term; new students may already be enrolled in their first-semester courses. Those students may end up going an extra term, because requirements have changed during their enrollment. Sue would like to say that changes need to be made before the beginning of the term. So when is a student is admitted, they know what courses to take to stay on track.

Pat Sherman asked if the program could be changed during a term if the new program provided the students with more choices, and made it easier to complete the program on time. Sue replied that it may be difficult to say what is easier or not.

Margo Mueller asked if there could be clarification about the statement that changes to a program can be made until the end of the term. Does that mean that changes must be submitted by the end of the term, or approved by the end of the term? Tina Falkner will take this language clarification question back to the subcommittee.

A comment was made that if the changes will make things easier, then sometimes the college wants to backdate the program because approval takes so long. Sue replied that she would like to start the process earlier, so that approval could be completed before the beginning of a term. When she surveyed other schools, she could not find another other school in the country that changes their requirements during a term.

Kasi Williamson commented that students always have the option to elect to follow new requirements; so a student could elect to follow requirements that are approved during a term, but they wouldn't be obligated to do so.

In section 3 of the Academic Unit Authority over the Curriculum and Major and Minor Requirements policy, Tina Falkner indicated that the word "full-time" will be removed; this policy should also apply to part-time students.

Laurie Gardner raised a question about item #3. It says course changes that affect current students (as opposed to students just entering the program) need approval from the dean of the college, but PCAS sends these changes to the provost for approval. Tina indicated that the subcommittee will look at this and make sure the policy and practice are in-line.

Tina Falkner concurred that we should make sure that PCAS matches the senate policy when it comes to program approval.

Margo Mueller clarified an APAS procedure. She normally changes requirements in APAS for the term in which the program is approved. But if it's a situation where additional course options become available to all students, Margo contacts the department or college to ask whether it's okay for continuing students to have the new options available, as well. If it's just adding more course options, the change can benefit the student. She looks at it this way: is this a curriculum change, or is this just adding more course options? But Margo agrees with Sue: program approvals need to happen sooner. The biggest issue is always when changes come in after term starts.

Under #5, cancellation of low-enrollment courses, Sue would like to have the policy specify a date by which courses would be canceled. SCEP has talked about making the deadline the end of first week of the course. At that point, students could still find another course to add in the canceled course's place. In the third week, students need scholastic approval to get into courses. Someone commented that an even earlier deadline would sometimes be preferable. Another person commented that the end-of-first-week deadline could be a problem for 8xxx-level courses, because graduate students sometimes don't register until later. Sue said they will look into that.

Admissions: Tina Falkner shared that SCEP has suggested an addition to the conditional admission policy. In 3A, they would like to add some clarifying language to say that if a student doesn't meet the conditional admission requirements, their admission will be revoked. Example: You have to graduate from high school in order to be admitted.

The question was raised: should language be added about whether conditional admission requirements count for your degree requirements? Sue gave the example that if a student needs to add an English credit as a conditional admission requirement, and if that student then takes take a 0-level course, then it should be clear that the course doesn't meet the University's requirements for degree. Mary Ellen Shaw mentioned that a student could take an actual LE course instead; Tina agreed that this is recommended, but not always the case. The consensus was that it would be helpful to clarify this issue. Sue raised the question: would online degree requirements be affected by this policy?

Appropriate student use of class notes and course materials: Tina Falkner pointed out that this policy has been re-phrased after review from the copyright area of the Law School.

Campus-specific credit requirements for undergraduate degrees: This used to be called the "residency requirement." Sue Van Voorhis raised an issue about the first sentence, "All credit awarded by the campus, regardless of the campus or type of institution, shall count toward the credit requirements for the degree." This isn't quite accurate. Mary Ellen Shaw agreed that the issue of "excess electives" needs to be clarified. Courses may be transferred in as "degree-worthy," but they may not fulfill specific degree requirements This is confusing to students.

Tina Falkner proposed adding to the parenthetical phrase to say something like, "subject to the limitation on skills credits, AND meeting the stated degree requirements." Clare Strand commented that this exact language is in the 1972 policy on residency. In the past there was agreement about no longer bracketing courses on the transcript when students change colleges that may have related to this policy. She wonders if making reference to the transcript may get at what we're trying to; it could be said that courses appear on the University of Minnesota transcript, but may or may not apply toward the degree.

Several comments were made in discussing this policy. Kasi Williamson asked if changing "shall" to "can" in the first sentence might make it clearer. William Dana asked about how the sunsetting policy discussed earlier applied to this issue. Cindy Salyers clarified that two issues, the number of credits you need to graduate and the courses you need to take to meet the degree requirements; courses may count toward the 120, but may not count toward the degree requirements. Clare stated that old courses that no longer count for the degree are still on the transcript. Mary Ellen Shaw stated that this is really about the 120 credits. Any credit from any campus that's not 0-level can count toward the 120 credits, but may not count toward the degree. What counts for degree requirements is in a separate section of the policy; it may be better to combine the sections of the policy. Then what would be excluded from counting toward the degree are the skills credits and the excess electives. Clare Strand noted that many of Crookston's credits are not from liberal education programs, and there are restrictions on how those courses will count at Morris; this means that there may be some conflicts between the policies. Sue Van Voorhis stated that everything the student takes at the University of Minnesota counts toward the 120; what is required for the degree may be different. Clare Strand clarified that in order to have a degree from a specific campus, the student needs to have 30 credits from that campus. Mary Ellen Shaw noted that the intention of this policy is to honor coursework as credit-worthy from other campuses. There needs to be a statement that clarifies the two aspects of this policy and where the credits count.

Tina Falkner asked the group to address items 1-4 of this policy. As it stands, colleges and campuses cannot waive 1, but they can waive 2, 3, and 4. The intent of this policy is related to students taking all but a couple of courses from a different institution.

Sue Van Voorhis noted that mention has been made that this may be in conflict with the digital campus initiative, where students are taking courses at various institutions to finish their degree.

William Dana asked for a definition of "extraordinary," as it exists in the policy. Tina Falkner clarified that what is "extraordinary" is up to who is making the determination. Frank Blalark noted that a problem related to the digital campus and this policy is that, if students are taking courses from numerous institutions, then how is it our degree unless they've taken 30 credits on our campus?

Mary Ellen Shaw raised a concern about #2 (15 of last 30 credits required to be taken on that campus). The concern is that it causes problems for students who have taken a lot of courses in their major early on. The policy can constrain seniors on what they're able to do.

Les Opatz stated that he thought #2 (15 of last thirty credits must be taken from the degree-granting campus) was going to be replaced in some way by #3 (half of upper-division credits must be taken from the degree-granting campus). Tina did not have any knowledge of this occurring.

Tina reiterated that work of the policy subgroup is to clarify policies, but not to change them. Vickie Roberts asked if #4 was a more recent addition to the policy; Tina confirms that it was. It was added after a student wanted to transfer in all of the courses for a minor (this took place four or five years ago). Sue Van Voorhis asked whether this policy needs more work. Tina Falkner concurred that the policy committee and SCEP should take a new look at it. Many questions are being raised. The policy would have to go through the whole proposal and approval process again, but it seems necessary, as there are many substantive issues with it. Several people agreed that the policy needs more work.

Sue Van Voorhis raised an additional issue with this policy, which may be a procedure. She would like to clarify the procedure of what should happen when a student is getting a minor from one campus and a major from another.

Vickie Roberts asked whether it would be helpful to indicate a percentage of the credits should be taken at the degree-granting campus, whether than a specific number of credits.

Sue Van Voorhis said that there are currently two different views related to this policy. There is the idea of the digital campus, which is based on sharing learning and earning a degree. Then there are those who say that the integrity of the degree depends on the number of credits at a particular institution. Tina will take this policy back to SCEP.

Classroom expectations: Frank Blalark raised an issue about 1C, the responsibility to provide students with feedback. Is part of this policy mandating that a grade be given at the end of the course? Tina Falkner said it was alluded to in the previous policy, with the statement that grades are due three business days after the final exam. For ease of understanding, the committee took the grades due date out of this policy, since it is already in the Uniform Grading and Transcript policy. Frank asked if it could be added back to this policy. Tina said that it may be possible to add it back.

Tina Falkner clarified that part of the work on this policy is separating the policy language from things that are more like "guidelines." Policies imply enforcement; guidelines are less absolute.

Sue Van Voorhis raised a procedure-related item; she would like to tie in the use of the Course Guide. Colleges indicated that they would use that system, but usage has not been high.

Under D, the campus-specific office names (e.g., Office of Measurement Services) need to be made more general. Tina indicated that there is an effort to do this for all system-wide policies.

Sue Van Voorhis noted that under #2, student responsibilities, the policy should mention that students need to register for the class. Frank Blalark suggested that under #8, regarding guests in classes, it should be clarified that guests who do attend classes and submit work will NOT be graded and are NOT students in the class.

In the same policy, under Academic Unit responsibilities, #31A: Sue Van Voorhis suggested adding to the four-year graduation plan policy to add reference to keeping PCAS up to date.

A comment was made about the policy regarding standard class periods; it is difficult to enforce that policy. Sue Van Voorhis clarified that, with several buildings going offline, we may need to stick to that policy better. Departments are still allowed to propose non-standard times in PeopleSoft, but they don't have priority in scheduling. Someone commented that students reading the policy may be confused by it. Tina Falkner stated that they will be separating policy and non-policy language. This may be a policy, or it may be more of a guideline. It will be looked at.

Mary Ellen Shaw asked if this policy included the syllabus policy. Tina clarified that the syllabus policy is separate.

As it was time to conclude, Sue Van Voorhis stated that the policy conversation will continue at the next meeting. Please come prepared to discuss policy-related matters.