

RAC Minutes May, 2010

Attending: Frank Blalark, Sheryl Bolstad, Carla Claussen, Pam Cook, Molly Diethelm, Tracy Fischer, Teresa Fruen, Marci Freunds Schuh, Laurie Gardner, Kit Gordon, Stacey Grimes, Amanda Grimm, Kevin Havard, Andy Hill, Kim Hindbjorgen, Emily Holt, Nancy Killian, Pam Klopfleisch, Jennifer Koontz, Stephanie Lawson, Linda Lindholm, Anya Norton, Ingrid Nuttall, Cindy Pavlowski, Heather Peterson, Lonna Riedinger, Genny Rosing, Cindy Salyers, Jody Seiler-Peterson, Clare Dingley, Nathan Tesch, Danielle Tisinger, Donna Weispfenning, Kasi Williamson, Peter Woxland

Announcements:

Tina Falkner announced the possibility of canceling RAC meetings in June and July. The group decided not to meet in June or July.

Tina Falkner also announced that Vice Provost Robert McMaster had convened two committees. The first committee will look at probation/suspension policies and procedures; Linda Ellinger will lead that group. The second committee will review the issue of whether the University should “automatically” graduate those students who have fulfilled all of their degree requirements but haven’t applied to graduate. The chair of the second committee has not yet been named; it will focus on the Twin Cities campus, only.

Frank Blalark announced that maroon transcript and certification paper is in circulation. The remaining supplies of blue transcript paper are being shredded.

Kim Hindbjorgen announced that the Learning Abroad Center is testing a new liberal education database. After the meeting, Kim forwarded these additional details:

- The Learning Abroad Center has developed a new study abroad liberal education database in accordance with the University’s new liberal education requirements that go into effect fall 2010. This new database lists only the courses that have been recently evaluated to meet the new liberal education requirements. Students studying abroad fall 2010 or later, including those following the old liberal education requirements must use the new database for liberal education evaluation.
- Courses previously submitted and evaluated are still accessible on the Learning Abroad Center website for courses completed before fall 2010. For more information, please go to <http://umabroad.umn.edu/academic/libEd.html>. Please contact the Learning Abroad Center if you have further questions.

Mary Koskan announced that the fall registration queue went well. The busiest day was Tuesday, April 13. There were more than 26,000 transactions; of these, 90% were completed in 5 seconds or less. Kasi Williamson added that APAS and Graduation Planner also performed well. Response times were good, and they never reached the point where the contingency plans had to be put into action. There was one system outage that affected all Pillar applications, but the cause was not related to APAS or Graduation Planner.

Mary Koskan announced that the East Bank One Stop location will be moving on Friday, July 30. More announcements will go out over the course of the summer. Mary reminded everyone to update any

references to the One Stop location after July 30.

The new address is:

333 Science Teaching & Student Services Building
222 Pleasant St. S.E. 55455-0239

The new email address is:

onestop@umn.edu

(The email address has already changed, but helpingu@umn.edu is still being answered.)

One Stop on the East Bank campus will be closed on Friday, July 30, and Monday, August 2, for the move. Student Account Assistance will be closed Monday morning, as well (Student Account Assistance is the new name for Student Financial Collections; that name change is also effective August 2). An open house will be scheduled in the new building (TBA).

The One Stop locations on St. Paul and West Bank will be open on July 30. Contact Mary Koskan (m-kosk@umn.edu) with questions.

Mary Koskan also reminded the group that the August RAC meeting will take place on August 9 (one week later than usual), from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Location TBA.

Corrections to the April minutes

Ingrid Nuttall corrected one item in the April minutes. The middle income scholarship will continue to be funded after next year.

Project update, Jody Seiler-Peterson

- Summer tuition is being calculated for all campuses but Crookston; Crookston will be calculated later in May.
- Student account enhancements: The student finance area is working on two ongoing projects, one to make the old paper bill look more like the eBill, and the second to have payments show in the online student account in real time.
- Pillar upgrade: Business analysts are testing all of the web applications for the pillar upgrade. The target to implement these is mid-summer.
- Constituent Relationship Management (CRM): The CRM project team is continuing conversations with vendors to better understand the potential costs and functionality. The next step will be to do an RFP and/or to request demonstrations from particular vendors.
- Institute of Technology name change: The Institute of Technology's name change to the College of Science and Engineering will appear in PeopleSoft and the student web applications in early June, in time for orientation.
- Emergency contact information: This project is a high priority. ASR-IT is currently working with the developer on technical designs.

Graduation Planner and undecided students, Kasi Williamson and Carole Anne Broad

Kasi Williamson summarized feedback from student-athletes who have learned to use Graduation Planner in the PSTL 1086 course (this feedback was a part of a survey administered by the graduate assistants in that course). Students have indicated that they want to learn how to use Graduation Planner either in a class or with their adviser. Students have also indicated that they want more major exploration.

Carole Anne Broad stated that CAPE has no data yet on students' experience, but she has been using Graduation Planner as a part of her work with students in the Center for Academic Planning and Exploration (CAPE). She shared the handout she uses to help students explore Graduation Planner as one part of their CAPE action plans. Graduation Planner can help students to explore majors and to learn to communicate with advisers. Students do need one-on-one help using the tool, as different majors work differently in the tool. Carole Anne reminded the group that Graduation Planner is only as good as the data it pulls in from other systems.

CAPE and ASR will work this summer to create a Graduation Planner workshop for staff and students.

Tina Falkner reminded the group to let ASR know about any new functionality they might like to have. Clare Dingley stated that she would like the ability to experiment with the tool and to make sample plans for students within Graduation Planner.

It was also stated that it would be helpful to have tips on how to use Graduation Planner to have conversations with undecided students. What questions might an adviser ask students who are "hopelessly" undecided? What conversations should advisers have with students who are considering changing their majors? Frank Blalark commented that certain course equivalencies are not always the same between various majors, and this can set students back.

Carole Anne stated that there is always "fine tuning" that must happen in a one-on-one appointment, based on the student's circumstances. CAPE also does various kinds of inventories and assessments. They talk to new students for at least 45 minutes before working on a graduation plan or some other exercise.

The group asked for various materials, in addition to the workshop, that can help them introduce Graduation Planner to undecided students. Kasi Williamson will update and send out the list of courses that was used to help student-athletes; this course lists includes many courses that fulfill LE requirements and are also introductory-level requirements in many majors. Kasi will also update a generic power point and the "adviser resources" wiki, and send both of these out.

Prerequisites and mandatory placement tests, Tina Falkner

Tina Falkner began by describing the background for the discussion. A group has been meeting the first and third Friday of every month to discuss particular undergraduate policies. They spent the previous couple of months discussing barriers that might be put in place to keep students from getting themselves into some predictable situations that can impede their academic progress. One of these predictable situations involves placement in math courses. Only IT currently requires a math placement test. Students outside of IT can easily overestimate their ability in Calculus; they place themselves in Calculus II and do not pass. They then not only have to repeat Calculus II, but back up and start again with the prerequisite course. This scenario could be prevented with more widespread math placement testing.

Tina surveyed the CIC (the Big 10 plus the University of Chicago) to find out their practices for math placement testing. The University of Iowa is requiring math placement tests for all freshmen beginning this fall. At Northwestern, only the engineering school requires math placement tests. Other institutions have various practices. Ohio State makes everyone take the math placement test, except those who earn a certain score on the AP test. Purdue currently requires testing for some students and recommends it for others; they are moving toward requiring it for all. At Wisconsin, all students take

placement tests in English, math, and a foreign language. In discussions related to requiring math placement tests for all students, the committee has mentioned several drawbacks related to the current testing process. Tina invited additional perspectives from RAC.

Danielle Tisinger raised an issue related to AP scores that fulfill math prerequisites. She proposed that the AP calculus score that will be accepted for credit be changed from a 4 to a 5. This would be more in line with the IB score threshold. Tina replied that this would be an Admissions decision; it would probably have to go through Admissions, and then to SCEP.

Someone commented that it appears that students do better in Calculus II if they take Calculus I here. Students do not seem to have the necessary skills from their high school-level coursework to do well in Calculus II.

The question was asked about whether the placement test is proctored. The exam is not proctored; it is offered online. The purpose and the consequences of the test are limited. There is an online practice test for the placement test, so students can get some indication of how they will do.

Someone mentioned that, since placement test scores are only good for one year and not all freshmen take a math class in their first year, it might be better to give students the opportunity to wait to take the test. Lonna Riedinger from CLA responded that she would prefer all freshmen were required to take it, because many do not think they will need to take it, then it holds up their registration.

Jennifer Koontz commented that it would also be good to have the placement tests available for non-degree students, who may also take and re-take courses that they weren't prepared for.

Danielle Tisinger commented that requiring all IT freshmen to take the math placement test has caused some problems for PSEO students who did take Calculus I on campus, but who still have to take the placement test to get into Calculus II.

CFANS requires math and chemistry placement tests. CEHD gives students the option for several majors. In some majors, the math placement test is highly recommended. Students have to retake it if a year or more passes before they take their first math class. The test is also waived in some cases. Students are often confused about whether or not they need to take it. The Math Department is requiring students who want to take certain high-demand courses to take a placement test and receive a permission number to register for or stay in the class; it would therefore be an advantage for students to take the test up front.

On the issue of prerequisites, Tina stated that students can currently register for courses which, according to the stated prerequisites, they should not be allowed to register for. Should the institution explore the enforcing of prerequisites? It is possible to set up courses in PeopleSoft so that students would be prevented from registering for them if they have not fulfilled the prerequisite requirements. In the past, issues with this have involved transfer courses that fulfill the prerequisite requirements, but which are not recognized by PeopleSoft.

Ingrid Nuttall asked whether some prerequisites are really not firm requirements, but recommendations made by the department. Tina replied that the group had discussed that question. If it is truly a prerequisite (and not just a guideline), that would mean that the content of the course directly builds on the previous course; that previous course is therefore necessary for success. If prerequisites were

enforced, that would mean that departments would need to remove those “prerequisite” requirements that are really only guidelines.

Danielle Tisinger remarked that the “or instructor consent” prerequisite can be ambiguous. She worked with a PSEO student who took Psych 1001 and wanted to then take Psych 5251, which has a stated prerequisite of “Psych 3050 or instructor consent.” At what point should instructor consent trump the stated prerequisites?

Clare Dingley agreed that it would be necessary to have faculty think about what should be required vs. recommended prerequisites. At Morris, there was one English course prerequisite that made it difficult for transfer students to get into upper-division English courses. Clare created a student group that substituted for the course, and this allowed transfer students to register. Using a student group in this way is one option for handling common transfer courses that fulfill prerequisite requirements. Linda Lindholm stated that the Journalism department enforces requisites for all of their courses. This has been a great asset for them. Prerequisites are also checked when students attempt to sign up for the online waitlists. One confusing thing for Journalism students is that they think other departments’ prerequisites are enforced in the same way, when they really aren’t, or maybe shouldn’t be for students who aren’t in that particular major.

Clare Dingley commented that the faculty on the Morris campus were happy about enforced prerequisites, because they didn’t have to adjust their course content for underprepared students. The faculty appreciate having “instructor consent” as a prerequisite, because it gives them the ability to talk to the student and assess their preparation.

Frank Blalark commented that course equivalencies can affect how enforced prerequisites would work. An adviser from CBS who works with transfer students commented that CBS does have enforced prerequisites, and this can become a lot of work when the student is fulfilling a prerequisite requirement with a course that does not transfer directly in as a University of Minnesota course. It can also be confusing for students.

Tina Falkner confirmed that the group was willing to explore the issue of enforcing prerequisites further, with all of the caveats considered in future discussions. Sheryl Bolstad emphasized that the issue with transfer credits would need to be addressed, because that would be a significant barrier to implementation. Ideally, PeopleSoft would be able to recognize when a transfer course has been approved as equivalent to a University of Minnesota course and therefore satisfies a prerequisite. Otherwise, the many students who complete prerequisites elsewhere will be denied access to the course.

Special examination policy, Ingrid Nuttall

Ingrid Nuttall reviewed several proposed changes to the Special Examination policy.

The first proposed change would be to separate the special examination policy from the policy related to Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate credits (those items are currently combined in a single policy). This discussion focused only on the special examination policy.

In the April meeting, it was mentioned that the draft procedures Ingrid presented were different from the procedures listed on the special examination form. The procedure should indicate that students must go to their home college first to determine whether credit they might earn from a special

examination would apply to their degree program.

Other concerns from the group related to the charging of fees. The draft policy states that departments could elect to waive the fee; in reality, CLA requires departments to charge. The policy also does not state who receives the money once the fee is charged. The previous version of the policy states that the fee will not be charged in the student's first year; this will no longer be the case.

CCE often receives questions from non-degree students about taking special examinations, even though the policy states that only "currently-enrolled degree-seeking undergraduate students" are eligible. CCE asked that this point be clarified and emphasized in the FAQ. It was also requested that the FAQ clarify that College in the Schools students are not eligible.

The draft policy states that no department will be required to offer special examinations for credit or proficiency.

Another significant change to the draft policy is the move away from the term "resident credit." To better reflect the other revised academic policies, the draft policy states, "Credits earned by departmental exam have no bearing on students' campus-specific credit requirements."

The final significant change is the removal of any mention of "C-" work. In the revised policy, minimum standards for passing the examination are set by the department. Mary Koskan asked if students would be informed of the standards. Ingrid replied the assumption is that the department would inform them before administering the examination. Emily Holt raised the question of whether removing the C- standard introduces an inconsistency, because for Twin Cities undergraduates the C- is equal to an S grade. Others commented that the C- minus standard could be problematic because credit is usually accepted for non-major courses in which students earn a D grade. If the C- standard was listed on the transcript, the credits could also be interpreted in a way that isn't accurate. It is also difficult to translate the special examination credit to a grade, because grades awarded in courses involve points awarded for things besides a single exam.

Ingrid clarified that special examination credits are not calculated in the students' GPA. Special examination credits are listed on the transcript with a grade of T; proficiency is listed on the transcript as a memo.

Ingrid will send a revised policy to the group and schedule a follow-up conversation for the August meeting.