

Student Life Committee Meeting
Jan. 26, 2012, Thursday, 4:00 p.m.
Meeting called to order by chair, Bruce Mann.

Present:

Cameron Ford, Nathan Little, Bruce Mann, Sierra Phillips, Geoff Proehl, Mike Segawa, Hannah Smith, Nila Wiese

Minutes accepted as corrected.

Chair Bruce Mann invited agenda items for future meetings.

Today's meeting focused on completing Dean Segawa's review, begun last semester, of the 2011 Retention Task Force Report.

Segawa distributed a handout – the Retention Task Force Executive Summary – and returned to where we left off, with year three of the four year plan. He drew our attention to point #1: "Implement ERP related upgrades," which aims toward better synthesis of all the data the university collects. He then moved on to point #2: "Enable more faculty, especially those noted for teaching excellence, to offer First Year Seminars," noting that Dean Bartanen and her staff is already making these adjustments.

We then moved on to point #3: "Provide greater weight to advising effectiveness." Hannah Smith indicated that students talk among themselves about advisors, an informal but ongoing form of advising assessment. From her perspective, ease of making an appointment and the advisor's willingness to meet with students, along with his or her knowledge of advising options, are all critical: a good advisor knows the student and his/her interests/needs. Other students, however, may feel less of a need for advising in general, as noted by Nathan Little. Mann described his notion of advising: not telling the student what to take but presenting options. Cameron Ford noted the need for a balance between advising styles, especially when a student begins to take classes in a new department, so that he or she can attain insight into a better course of study.

Segawa observed that, from his perspective, faculty members, in general, have a less mechanical, and more personal approach to advising, but acknowledged that there is a tension between the "nuts and bolts" and what happens after, the question, "How are you doing?" Sierra Phillips underscored the importance of conversations about post-grad plans. From her perspective, with respect to retention, more relationship, presence, and gateway skills are important. Nila Wiese also remarked on the difference between knowing the basics and learning more of the culture of advising that Puget Sound practices and desires. Ford remarked that some students may not be all that comfortable with this more personal approach. Segawa summed up by saying that a good deal depends on the student and his or her readiness to learn, and advisor having a handle on this so that he or she can better enable the student to know and take advantage of what the university has to offer. Puget Sound depends on the faculty member to facilitate this. From his perspective, advising is working, but needs tweaking. The ongoing challenge is how to measure and recognize good advising when and as it happens.

Segawa then moved over point #5 in the three-year plan ("Limit the number of adjunct taught courses taken by a first year student"), which we had already touched on, and point #6, "Provide more departmentally based opportunities for student engagement (research, clubs)," as in some of the activities initiated by the Chemistry department (apple pressing; Magic Show).

This spring, the Cabinet will meet with the Board of Trustees to work on the strategic plan for the next five years with a particular emphasis on four areas: 1.Retention; 2. Recruitment; 3. Residential Experience; 4.Branding. In terms of branding, it is a matter of letting people know how good we are and exploring what are the messages we should lead with and enforce: the product is of the highest quality, but it has not always resonated as it should.

With respect to future plans, Little asked about the possibility of the tunnel kitchens returning to the Union Avenue. Segawa replied that the university is not looking at this option, but renovation of Wheelock from its sixties era state to the present is planned: improving facilities and increasing space in order to keep up with the university's residential vision. Mann noted that the old tunnel system divided the campus.

Segawa reported that the university would break ground for a new residential facility in April for an opening in the fall of 2013. The new residence will be in the area of the old OT/PT buildings across from Regester. It will have four levels in a terraced configuration; suite style, single rooms; campus event space; multiple entrances. The entrance for public spaces and classrooms will be separate from entrances for residents. Thus far, the intention is for this residential facility to house several programs 1. a Humanities House; 2. a program for pre- and post-study abroad students (a global focus); 3. a program with a focus on environment, sustainability, the outdoors; 4. (either here or elsewhere on campus) a program with a social justice, spirituality component that would bring together students with passion and experience in these fields. The design also attends to connections between the outside and inside of building, as in a focus on urban agriculture. The intent is to create a space that values the need both for privacy and community.

Meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m. with an invitation from Mann for future meeting topics.

Respectfully submitted,
Geoff Proehl