

Student Life Committee Minutes December 9, 2009

Attending: Bruce Mann, Lisa Ferrari, Mike Segawa, Geoff Proehl, Alison Tracy Hale, Aislinn Melchior, Jan Leuchtenberger.

Mike Segawa gave a presentation to the Committee on the findings of the Retention Task Force:

- Compared to peer institutions, Puget Sound is about 3-5% behind in retention.
- According to the data, we have a group that just shouldn't be here, but the data also show that if they stay to their junior year, they will likely graduate.
- Those sanctioned in the first year have a 50% less chance of graduating. Those who survived that and stayed were surveyed for reasons why they stayed
- Another group that was surveyed included those who told someone they planned to leave in the first or second year, but ended up staying.
- Overall, engagement was the single most important factor in students staying.
 - The academic turn-around group made clear that faculty played the most prominent role as agents of retention.
 - In focus groups, students were aware when a class was taught by an adjunct or a visitor, and felt that those faculty were less engaged in the campus community.
- The recommendations of the task force were:
 - To reinforce faculty advising and support.
 - To create a seamless, holistic support system
 - To use the available data to learn more
 - To achieve earlier identification of expectations and responses to those expectations.

Committee members asked the following questions:

- Is the fact that we lag behind peer institutions in retention because we start out with a larger at-risk group of freshmen than our peers?
 - This is not known. Nine percent of our freshmen are generally considered at-risk, but the other institutions don't provide that kind of information so they cannot be compared. Also, we can't know if students who left here went on to graduate from a different university.
- In the focus groups, were there many students indicating they wanted to leave because Puget Sound was not rigorous enough?
 - Some indicated they expected more academic conversations outside of the classroom and couldn't get them. Residential

seminars were intended to help support that kind of environment. But we need to ask what kind of intellectual environment we are creating on campus outside of the classroom – study that more.

- Has there been any attempt to integrate the recommendations about student expectations with the re-design of the website?
 - Yes, this has been taken into account. Feedback is already showing that prospective students are becoming more aware of UPS as a liberal arts institution, and more are likely to be applying here in addition to other liberal arts institutions.
- The Chair asked Mike Segawa if there were any specific questions for the Committee. Mike said the RTF would be focusing on four or five things this year and would probably come to the Committee for feedback on them.

The Chair said that those issues would be on the agenda for January.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Leuchtenberger