Enrollment Management Committee Minutes

October 5, 2005

Opening: Bryce Brimer called the meeting of the Enrollment Management Committee to order at 3:35 p.m. on October 5, 2005 in the Stratton Taylor Coffee Shop.

Present: Bryce Brimer (Communications and Fine Arts), Lindsay Fields (Enrollment Management), Jae-Ho Kim (Mathematics and Science), David Newcomb (Social and Behavioral Sciences), Clem Ohman (Health Sciences), Chip Rogers (Communications and Fine Arts)

New Business

In this refreshingly brief and efficient meeting, Bryce Brimer and Chip Rogers, the only members who served on this committee last year, acquainted the new members with the fundamental mission of the committee and summarized our progress last year. Bryce shared his copies of the 2001 RSU Initiatives to Increase Student Retention and also the materials Dr. Boyd provided the committee in our December 2004 meeting. Bryce promised to distribute these and all other pertinent materials he has in hand to the committee in hard copy through campus mail.

After some brief clarifying discussion, the committee agreed that our focus this year should again be on fact-finding with the primary aim of making suggestions to the administration for improving student retention. We hope to build rapidly on the progress of last year's committee in agreeing on a firm and efficient list of questions that we can pursue through improved exit survey strategies in order to give us a clearer picture on which student populations we retain and which we tend to lose, so that we can recommend improvements to increase retention.

The committee unanimously reelected Bryce Brimer to serve as committee chair and Chip Rogers to serve again as committee secretary.

Agenda for Next Meeting

We agreed to meet again in the Library Coffee Shop on Wednesday, October 19th, at 3:30 p.m. Our primary business will be to arrive at a final version of the list of questions we want answered by students who leave RSU before completing degree programs.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Chip Rogers, Communications and Fine Arts.

Opening: Bryce Brimer called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. in the Stratton Taylor Coffee Shop.

Present: Bryce Brimer (Communications and Fine Arts), Jae-Ho Kim (Mathematics and Science), David Newcomb (Social and Behavioral Sciences), Clem Ohman (Health Sciences), Chip Rogers (Communications and Fine Arts)

New Business

Though most committee members had not received the packets Bryce Brimer distributed via campus mail in time to review them thoroughly, we did discuss some highlights of these materials as they relate to our current focus on retention:

We noted in the executive summary from *What Works in Student Retention—Four-Year Public Institutions* the three retention practices the authors deem to have the greatest contribution to retention: 1) academic advising, a) with a central office of professional advising staff, and b) utilizing "advising interventions with selected student populations"; 2) first-year programs (i.e. College Experience courses); 3) learning support through subject-area tutoring centers. (This executive summary was included in the packet Dr. Boyd shared with the committee last year.)

We agreed especially that the advising intervention strategy would be a good idea—identifying at-risk students early in the semester would give us the chance to intervene with these students and help them stay on track and succeed, increasing the likelihood of retention.

We discussed one drawback of such an early intervention system being that faculty might feel an unwelcome burden in having to report on student progress as requested by those managing the tracking of the at-risk student populations, and further, that not all faculty take attendance.

In the November 2001 "Rogers State University Initiatives to Increase Student Retention," we noted that an "Early Alert System for Absences or Poor Academic Performance" (p. 3) was apparently put in place in fall 1999, but no one on the committee knows if this system is still in use.

This "Early Alert" system is indicated in the "Initiatives to Increase Student Retention" as falling under the purview of the Office of Student Success and Retention. Since we believe this office is no longer operative, we are unsure of who might oversee such an early intervention system if it is presently in place (or if it is not and the university should decide to implement it anew).

In response to an initiative to "Increase Faculty/Student Interaction in and Out of Class" ("RSU Initiatives to Increase Student Retention" p. 4), we agreed that maintaining and using a listserv email list for all current students to receive blanket communications and announcements (from the administration, or from faculty with filtering review and approval by the administration) might foster a greater sense of community among non-resident students. Even though many students apparently choose not to use their RSU email accounts, we might still reach a number of them and help them feel more a part of the university community.

We looked at the sections devoted to Student Retention in the current Enrollment Management Plan (10.0-10.1) and noted the very low retention rate recorded at the time of the plan's writing, 39%, which we agree is unacceptable. We also noted that the "Plan of Action" (10.1) included the following:

"Develop a system of college advisement that will impact student success and retention in all disciplines.

a) Develop a method of intensive advising to target students most in need of assistance in transitioning to college life.

b) Develop an early warning system to identify "at-risk" students and implement an intervention system, which includes: tutoring, successful time-management and study strategies, ADA identification and accommodations to ensure successful learning as well as crisis intervention and resource identification.

c) Compile an Advisor's Manual/Handbook to standardize advising procedures."

We believe all these ideas are good ones, but we need to investigate to discover which items in the plan of action have been implemented and which have not (and why).

Old Business

We agreed upon the following list of questions to which we should seek answers to get a clearer understanding of who our non-returning students are and what we might do to improve retention. We understand that while many of these questions may be answered only through exit surveys, some answers may be obtained through the Office of Institutional Research.

- Age
- Academic year
- Which degree pursued initially, if any (i.e. in which discipline)
- Full-time or part-time student status (part-time being less than 12 hours)
- Which campus attended primarily (Claremore, Bartlesville, Pryor, online)
- On-ground vs. online—breakdown of percentage one vs. the other
- Race or ethnicity
- Marital status
- Whether they have children (how many and ages)
- Whether they receive financial aid
- Whether they work, either full-time or part-time (and how many hours per week)
- Living arrangements: in dorms, with parents, or living on their own off-campus
- If not on campus, home town and distance from RSU campus attended primarily
- Whether they are/were involved in student organizations (and which)
- Whether they feel or felt connected with the RSU community
- Whether they have respect, comfort level with faculty
- Whether they have respect, comfort level with student population
- Highest level of education completed (high school, GED, vocational training, some college)
- Whether they attended other colleges or universities prior to RSU (and which)
- How well they felt prepared for college-level work by their secondary education
- If returning to school after time away, how long have they been away from school
- Whether RSU is primarily responsible for their not returning, or whether the circumstances are beyond RSU control
- Specific reasons for not returning to RSU, with check-boxes from a list such as this one:
- Transferring, relocation, graduation, financial, family obligations, work conflict, health problems, personal obligations, major/courses/programs/support services not available at RSU, other (please explain)
- Whether they plan to attend college elsewhere, and why there
- What, if anything, could RSU improve upon to keep them attending or that would influence them to return in the future

Regarding the collection of information from non-retained students, we believe that the system used in some departments (Health Sciences, e.g.) of having students indicate their reasons for withdrawing from classes or programs at the time of withdrawal would be a good idea, perhaps requiring department head signatures on all withdrawal forms and completion of a withdrawal survey in order to be allowed to withdraw officially. (We understand that this tactic would still not reach those students who "fade away" without officially withdrawing.)

Regarding the administration of surveys (e.g. an exit survey) through U.S. mail, David Newcomb noted his discipline, Sociology, depends a great deal on surveys and that 3% is a standard rate of return on "cold" surveys distributed through the mail. We noted that the response level is significantly higher through telephone surveys, something we should probably pursue with non-returning students. We also noted that some information is better than none, so we should make every effort to have non-retained students complete surveys even if the return rates are low.

We agreed that having all attending students fill out a brief survey near the end of the semester or near the end of the academic year would provide information on retained students which might be useful through comparing their results to the whole student population, thus enabling us to draw conclusions regarding significant sub-populations not represented (because they have withdrawn or have stopped attending).

Chip Rogers agreed to distribute to the committee the exit survey composed by the Office of Student Success and Retention that he received via campus mail from Lindsay Fields; to discover whether this office still exists; and to discover whether Wanda Baker has been replaced and how we can go about retrieving demographic information from the Office of Institutional Research. (Subsequent to the meeting, we learned from Lindsay Fields that the Office of Student Success and Retention is indeed now defunct.)

Agenda for Next Meeting

We do not anticipate another meeting in the immediate future, though we do plan to review the proposed list of questions above individually and to refine it vial email for final submission to Dr. Minks. The timing and agenda of our next meeting will be communicated among the committee via email.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Chip Rogers, Communications and Fine Arts.