
Guest:
Dr. George Gabriel, Vice President, Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Walters, committee chair.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the November 13, 2009, meeting were approved as presented.

Presentation on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE):

Dr. Gabriel provided background information on CCSSE, the annual nationwide survey aimed at assessing student engagement. Approximately eight hundred community colleges utilize this survey which is based on research showing that students who are more engaged with faculty and staff, other students, and their studies are more likely to learn and to persist in achieving their academic goals. Student engagement becomes a valuable tool for assessing the success of an institution in utilizing practices likely to result in more students achieving these goals. One hundred and twenty classes are randomly selected for NOVA’s survey.

The data reflect a significant gap between students’ aspirations when they apply for admission and what they actually accomplish. Community college applicants nationwide have definite academic goals (59% want to graduate and 53% want to transfer) but only 25% of these students graduate in three years. At NOVA, the graduation rate is 12 to14%. CCSSE findings show that institutions can impact these outcomes by engaging students—early, often, and intentionally. Studies show that good educational practices equal good engagement which results in more students achieving their academic goals.

Dr. Gabriel noted that in order to allow adequate time to address the CCSSE findings, it has been determined that NOVA will participate in CCSEE every other year. NOVA was the first VCCS institution to participate in the 2005 survey; all VCCS institutions participated in the 2008 survey.

CCSSE has identified five areas (used as benchmarks) that are important for quality educational practices:

- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student Effort
- Academic Challenge
• Student-Faculty Interaction
• Support for Learners

Eighty percent of the activities encompassed by these benchmarks take place inside the classroom with the remaining in student spaces or student services areas. Fifty (50) is considered the national average for measuring an institution’s success for engagement.

The survey items that comprised each benchmark were presented along with the following data:
• Comparison of NOVA’s 2008 results with results from 2004 and 2005
  o The data show an improvement in 2008 for every benchmark except student effort. This benchmark reflects not only the students’ efforts but is also impacted by such college offerings as peer tutoring, skill labs and computer labs.
  o The only benchmark to reach the national norm of 50 was Student-Faculty Interaction.
• Snapshot of 2008 results for NOVA and selected area colleges
  o Benchmark summaries for J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College, Montgomery College, and Prince George’s Community College were provided.
• 2008 Benchmark summary comparing NOVA to the VCCS, its peer colleges, and the national data.

Dr. Gabriel noted the following strategies for engagement:
• Engage early, engage often
• Stress academic advising
• Emphasize effective developmental education
• Redesign educational experiences

The following should be considered when developing these strategies:
• Be intentional: Engagement doesn’t happen by accident; it happens by design.
• Engagement matters for all students, but it matters more for some than for others.
• Part-time students and faculty are the reality of community colleges—and typically are not adequately addressed in improvement efforts.
• Data are our friends.
• Look behind the numbers.

The SENSE survey uses the CCSSE data and is administered to first semester students. This survey aims to identify what students are coming with and what they need. NOVA administers the SENSE and CCSSE surveys in alternate years.

Dr. Gabriel discussed the importance of using these and other data tools to improve education practices as the college focuses on the First Year Experience, the New Student Orientation, and the revamped SDV course. He noted the high attrition rate during the first month of the fall semester.

It was agreed that SDV courses could contribute to this early engagement. However, this course is often taken too late to have an impact. While requiring students to take this course when they
begin their studies would be the ideal situation, issues such as capacity would have to be resolved.

There is also an on-line faculty survey for CCSSE. Dr. Gabriel advised that the college had tried twice to utilize this survey, but participation was too low to provide useful data. It was agreed that the ISSC and CETL would be willing to assist in offering this survey again.

For the 2010 CCSSE, some online classes would be targeted for participation.

New Business:

The ISSC was asked by the Working Calendar Committee to consider how the scheduling of committee meetings could be more systematic. The aim is to provide meeting information early so that members are aware of the commitment for that committee. The committee agreed that this would be very helpful and approved continuing the ISSC meeting on the second Friday of the month. If an adjustment is needed due to a holiday, school break, etc. the meeting will be held on the third Friday. The committee also approved setting a yearly calendar.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Dr. Walters distributed notes from the December 1st Administrative Council meeting regarding Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). The initial collaboration between the Office of Institution Research, Planning, and Assessment (OIR) and lead faculty and coordinating deans has been enhanced to a team model as a means to expand faculty participation in this assessment effort. A timeline of steps to be taken in this effort has also been developed. The committee will invite Dr. Jennifer Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Assessment, to address this topic at a future meeting.

Faculty involvement is critical not only in developing Student Learning Outcomes but also in the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), the college’s five-year commitment to a focused project to advance student learning and/or the environment supporting student learning.

Dr. Dever noted the importance of considering SLOs not only in terms of compliance but as a means to better serve students. These outcomes, developed by the institution, should be a part of a culture focused not just on improving numbers but on the value added to the student’s experience and the improvement of instructional programs.

It was agreed that academic advising is a critical part of the student experience. Dr. Dever will provide the committee with the draft proposal for academic advising recently presented to the Administrative Council.

Old Business:

There was no old business.

Future Meetings:
The next meeting of the Instruction and Student Services Committee will be Friday, February 19, at 10:30 a.m. in the Provost Conference Room (CG 202) on the Annandale Campus.

Future meetings are tentatively scheduled for March 26, April 16, and May 14, in the Large Board Room at Brault.