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UW-Marshfield/Wood County  
End of Academic Year (2005-2006) Report

1. The year-long discussions and activities culminated in a two-hour working dinner off campus at Parkin Place (May 19, 2006 from 3.00-5.30 PM; 18 people attended).
2. The agenda, loosely structured, dwelt on integrating the campus community to achieve a larger sense of “coordinated assessment,” to embrace all aspects of the campus (e.g., Student Services, Administrative, IAS, tenure-stream faculty) and generate a true “culture of assessment” from the ground up. This was aided by the presence of personnel from across the campus from all the areas noted above. An open and frank series of discussions took place in the following areas over the two-hour period:
  - a. Understanding teaching and evaluation; younger faculty—as well as tenured faculty—should feel free to make use of each others’ student evaluations in order to get a larger sense of how students respond to various styles of teaching as well as sundry topics (i.e., humanities, social science, natural science and mass); we should feel free to ask others to visit our classes, preferably from outside our discipline, so as better to understand how well we communicate ideas to people without the requisite knowledge or background;
  - b. There is much desire among tenure-stream faculty, and even the IAS, for the campus-based mentoring program to assuage concerns about classroom competence and campus expectations;
  - c. We then turned to discussion of incoming-student deficiencies as presented in the recent ACT Report as background to the national and local problems that direct effect students’ ability to think critically, analytically and in any sustained way: the linked decline of vocabulary and reading comprehension; we will try to use this reports as an “organizing spine” for our campus assessment focus, working together to help students come up to speed and move beyond remediation;
  - d. Common campus readings in general—and in particular for next year—emerged for discussion, so that Paige and I brought up the booklet we ordered for all campus personnel to help us find a common language and focus for dealing with students; we will distribute the booklet during professional development week (first week of contract) in the fall (the booklet is by Drs. Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools* and will be useful beyond the originally intended use of the LEC 100 classes that form the heart of the ESFY initiative on our campus);
  - e. Talk moved to building bridges between the high schools where we recruit many of students and the frequent discrepancy between their performances on the placement exams and then actual in-class situations. There seems to be some doubt about the reliability and validity of the placement exams.

Perhaps an earlier, more reaching across between our faculty and relevant high school teachers might yield more consistent results (clearly related to point “e” and the ACT Report);

- f. Several people offered suggestions about a virtual outreach program—via web site—as a way increase our community presence and meet a series of unmet needs among those wishing to pursue the first steps towards either and AA or BA;
- g. In this vein, we all addressed the Realpolitik of the competitive marketplace posed by sundry on-line degree options such as Lakeland, Upper Iowa and University of Phoenix, along with the competitive models they provide; this also related back to the discussion regarding deficiencies in student preparedness, lack of motivation, and yet trying to expand our pool of admissions to embrace larger umbers of working adults. There was some talk about the status of our current night degree program, its viability in general and in relation to the electronic alternatives in particular. Perhaps some form of hybrid instruction would help us deal with the range of problems raised thus far while increasing student interaction (motivation, interest and commitment);
- h. Student advising issues emerged in relation this, especially helping students to find the best range of suitable courses for their requirements and prerequisites;
- i. The matter of online teaching in whole or in part (e.g., hybrid classes of online and on site, mixed distance education composed of compressed video and online instruction etc.) brought forward the thought that we could and should embrace the notion of *flexibility* for *teaching* as well as for *learning*; if students do not have to be tied to a campus, why should faculty? Why not use the new technology to permit a part-time release for faculty to study, research, or teach (a partial-sabbatical) off campus while still carrying a one-quarter or half-time teaching load conducted via sundry electronic modes? In this regard we could maximize opportunities for professional development while fulfilling campus/ department responsibilities at minimum cost and hardship to the institution;
- j. Dean/ CEO Andy Keogh thought that this was a very productive and successful session, mentioning that it brought together many branches of the campus to focus on common grounds in a direct and pleasant way; Jeff Meece, Assistant Dean for Student Services echoed those sentiments.

3. The meeting broke up around 5.30-5.45; the library will place the ACT report (in scanned and PDF formats) on the library website for campus access. I will be sure to recap this meeting, its key points and sense of campus direction at the outset of the coming (2006-2007) academic year.