

University Retention Committee Meeting April 18, 2007 - Minutes

Attending: Aaron Andersen, Cynthia Arocha, Rachel Brighton, Peggy Buttars, Noelle Call (chair), Gary Chambers, Peg Hennon, Wendy Holliday, Mary Leavitt, Keri Mecham, Whitney Milligan, Carol Rosenthal, Nate Sanders, Robert Schmidt, Marcy Skinner, Gary Straquadine

The meeting began with sending our thoughts and concerns to Virginia Tech. Utah State is posting a letter on the parent's website addressing concerns about the incident and giving suggestions as to where parents can go to find resources. There is also an overview of USU's safety regulations on the website. The letter will also accompany the parent's newsletter that is sent out each month. Keri reported that individuals can write condolences on the Block A banners on the 1st floor of the TSC. These will be sent to Virginia Tech. Whitney reported that the residence life staff is deeply affected by the tragedy. They are planning to do something special for the RA's at Virginia Tech.

1. Retention/Graduation Report – all students – Aaron Andersen –

Aaron reported on the numbers AAA has put together on the University retention rate from the 2005 cohort. The retention rate for the 2005 cohort is 72.2%. This is counting the number of students, who are full time, first degree seeking students that attended in the fall of 2005 and returned for the fall of 2006. This number does not include those who took a leave of absence. This rate is up 1.6% from 2004. Our 4 year retention rate is 72.6% and our 6 year graduation rate is 47.9%. Transfer students are not included in the cohort which may explain why our graduation rate is a little on the lower side. Missionaries are added back into the cohort when they return to school. It was asked if these numbers were lower than peer institutions and the answer is yes, they are a little lower. But the fact that certain factors are not included in the final numbers, like transfer students, needs to be considered. It was also asked if the numbers have stayed consistent from past years. The answer is yes, they have stayed pretty consistent. A question was asked, are we really doing better or are we just keeping better track of our numbers? The answer is the University started keeping better records of where their students were going and why they were leaving in 01-02. So the University is doing better on both bookkeeping and retention. It was also asked if students still got a deal on tuition if they graduate in four years. The answer is yes, the graduation guarantee is still in place, but it isn't used enough to make a significant difference statistically.

2. Trends noted from students who have left the university – Aaron Andersen –

An email survey was sent out to the 380 students who did not return to USU and did not file an official leave of absence in the 2005 cohort. Of these 380 students 60 students responded. The survey asked for gender, geographic location, and major. Students were given a list of 20 different reasons for leaving. They were asked to rank the top 3. They were also asked 12 questions about their experience at USU and 6 "yes" or "no" questions about their involvement on campus (did they live on campus, etc.). Of the 380 that left, 58% of them were female and of the 60 that responded, 65% were female. These are the top three reasons picked as a primary reason for leaving; 24.1% left for financial reasons (this was the most cited reason), 10.3% left because of marriage or engagement, 10.3% left for family concerns. The top three reasons picked including first, second and third choices are; 43% left for financial reasons, 15.5% left for academic difficulties, and 13.8% left because of the unfriendly atmosphere at USU or complicated processes. 32.7% of total respondents left with a scholarship and 42.1% of those with scholarships say they left because of financial reasons, 27.7% of which indicated it as a primary reason. 56.9% of respondents say they hope to return to USU at some point in the future. Of the 12 questions asked about students' experience at USU, students were most likely to agree with the following statements: "I made at least one good friend at USU," and "My overall experience at USU was positive." Students' were most likely to disagree with the following statement: "I made a personal connection with

at least one professor.” Statements like; “I was frequently homesick or traveled home on the weekends,” and “I made a personal connection with at least one professor” had high standard deviations regarding responses. Students’ either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. There wasn’t much middle ground. Students’, who were from Utah, but outside of Cache County, were more likely to agree with the question regarding homesickness/traveling home on the weekends. There will more information about this survey coming in future meetings.

3. Service Learning Retention initiatives – Robert Schmidt –

Robert handed out two handouts. One explaining what the Academic Service-Learning Program and Certificate is and one that outlines the positive things that come from Service-Learning Programs. Service-learning is a strong retention initiative. Participating in service-learning increases a students contact and engagement with the university. About two years ago, Robert became director of the program and many new classes and scholars have been added.

There are two new initiatives for fall 2007. Ten sections of Connections will include a Service-Learning component and five sections of English 2010 will have a service-learning designation. If there are any questions, Robert can be reached at 797-7947 in the afternoons.

4. Psych 1730 – A new model – Carol Rosenthal/Debi Jensen –

The Academic Resource Center has redesigned the Psychology 1730 class. From a traditional 3 credit, 15 week course, the course has evolved into a 2 credit, 7 week course, offered 2 times a semester. This way student’s who are struggling in the middle of the semester can enroll in the class and receive help. Prior to this time, mid-semester students could go to the Academic Resource Center for individual consultations. This was not efficient. The ARC was short on staff who could provide individual consultations and it was challenging to get the students to make a commitment for the appointment. The course change is a very carefully designed decision. The staff began with a needs analysis and decided on core topics for the class. They are; organization, time management, note taking, and student beliefs. The class is going to be offered 2 days a week with a required lab once a week. This new model will be in effect fall 2007.

There were several questions and concerns that the ARC will continue to address.

5. USU Retention Symposium – Fall 2007/Gary Straquadine –

The Retention Symposium will be discussed next month when there is more information to share.

6. Next Meeting – May 16, 2007 @ 1:30 – TSC 336

2007 Meeting Dates

June 13

Sept 19