Minutes of the CSBS Senate Meeting on 11/05/08

Present: Cindy Juby (Chair, Social Work), Linda Walsh (alternate for Seth Brown, Psychology), Cyndi Dunn (Soc-Anth-Crim), Annette Lynch (DTGFS), Henry Owusu (Geography), Brian Roberts (History), John Johnson (Interim Dean).

I. Approval of the minutes from 9/15/08

Dean Johnson offered a correction to the spelling of Carolyn Hildebrandt’s name. The minutes were approved as amended. Senator Roberts noted that he was unable to read or print the minutes because they were in a newer version of Word. Future minutes will be sent in the 97-2003 version of Word.

II. Presentation by Bev Kopper, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs concerning reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission

The first step in the reaccreditation process is a comprehensive self-study of the entire university. The committee would like this to be a meaningful process that will be followed through with an actual action plan rather than just being a report to sit on a shelf.

The last site visit was in 2001 and our previous accreditation report noted several issues chiefly involving assessment of the general education program.

In the first part of 2008, we organized committees to write the self-study. More than two hundred faculty, staff, and students have volunteered to participate in this effort. She asks that we please thank all of the people involved for their work. During 2008 and 2009, the various committees will gather data and draft the different parts of the self-study which will then be shared with the university community. The site visit will occur in either fall 2010 or spring 2011. The original plan was to have the accreditation team visit the campus in spring 2011. However, we are making good progress and may be able to move this up to fall 2010.

UNI has decided to participate in a voluntary program offered by the Higher Learning Commission which allows us to create a customized self-study which would combine the regular self-study with the Foundations of Excellence program focusing on the first year experience. Associate Provost Kopper provided senate members with a handout on the details of this program. Senators Lynch and Walsh are both participating in this effort.

One important criterion for reaccreditation is that the university “live its mission”. Associate Provost Kopper noted that the timing is a bit awkward here since our strategic planning schedule is out of sync with our reaccreditation schedule. Specifically, the Board of Regents is currently developing their strategic plan, and UNI cannot proceed with our strategic planning until they have finished theirs. Senator Walsh asked whether the mission of the university really changes that much from year to year. Associate Provost Kopper responded that with a new president, there may well be some changes in goals or direction. Senator Lynch noted that she had previously been involved in strategic planning at the college level under the previous provost. She asked where the college level strategic planning fits into the larger picture and whether the
college has a regular schedule for strategic planning. Dean Johnson said that he was not aware of any specific schedule. Associate Provost Kopper noted that the lower level strategic plans need to fit into the higher level plans, so it needs to be done first at the Board of Regents level, then at the university level, and then at the college level. Senator Lynch commented that there often seems to be strategic planning going on at several different levels without any connection between them. Dean Johnson noted that with everything else that is going on this year, he has not pushed for strategic planning at the college level and it seems advisable to wait for the university plan before proceeding at the college level. He also stated that we will have the Student Outcomes Assessment plans for all of the departments in the college ready by the end of the academic year.

Associate Provost Kopper discussed some of the logistics of creating the self study. We are using SharePoint, which is an electronic database manager, to organize all of the data related to the self-study in one place so that it will be easily available and searchable for future reference. In order to avoid multiple, overlapping requests for information, Kate Martin has been designated as the point person to coordinate all information requests relating to the self-study. We are also creating a “resource room” in the ITTC which will have hard copies of all of the relevant documents.

She then discussed the criteria for reaccreditation, the first of which is mission and integrity. They are looking for understanding of and support for the mission at all levels of the university. Other important criteria including showing that we value and embrace diversity and planning for the future. This means demonstrating that we not only gather data on various topics but actually use that data for planning and decision making.

Another important criterion is student learning and effective teaching. The goals for student learning outcomes need to be clearly stated for each educational program in order to allow for effective assessment. This includes both graduate and undergraduate programs. She noted that this reaccreditation will involve a greater emphasis than in the past on student outcomes assessment. We need to assess learning at the level of the course, the program, and the institution by using multiple direct and indirect measures, and the results should be available to interested constituencies, including the students. She noted that in the past, surveys based on self-report data were considered acceptable, but that is no longer the case. It is also necessary to have direct measures of student learning.

Senator Lynch asked whether the criticisms of SOA in the previous reaccreditation report were concerned primarily with the Liberal Arts Core. Associate Provost Kopper said that this was the case. She said that currently across the university programs vary widely in how well they are doing with this. In the past, some departments have gotten by using only survey data, but this will no longer be considered sufficient. Senator Lynch commented that DTGFS has been using student portfolios for SOA for several years now and that the emphasis on direct measures is not really something new. Associate Provost Kopper noted that the Board of Regents has mandated SOA as part of academic program reviews for some time now. She also said that for the most recent set of program reviews, this was one area where board members had a lot of questions and wanted more detail. Senator Lynch noted that the Board of Regents tends to want statistics. That is easy to do with survey data, but meaningful direct measures such as portfolios often
involve qualitative analysis that the board may find less satisfying. Thus, there is a bit of a contradiction here and there may be a need to educate the board on this issue. Associate Provost Kopper emphasized that the Higher Learning Commission does not mandate how one does SOA but rather is looking for evidence that we are doing it and using the data to make changes in our programs.

Senator Walsh asked how outcomes assessment should function at the course level. Associate Provost Kopper said that outcomes should be listed in the syllabus, and one should discuss those outcomes with the students, and be able to show how one is assessing them. Senator Dunn asked if this means that we need to make and keep copies of every test and assignment that we give. Associate Provost Kopper said that is not necessary, but one should be able to give examples of how one is assessing learning. Each of us should be able to answer if asked how we are assessing student learning in our courses. She also noted that we do not necessarily have to assess every student; it is acceptable to use a sample. Similarly, we do not have to assess every outcome every year; it is acceptable to focus on just a few. She would rather see a department focus on just three outcomes and make it meaningful.

Senator Lynch pointed out that her department uses portfolios to assess student learning, but once the assessment is made, the portfolios are given to the students to use as a resource in job hunting, etc. This is a problem if we are expected to archive the materials. Associate Provost Kopper suggested that one might be able to provide examples of what a portfolio looks like or at least to document the assessment process.

Returning to the issue of general education, it is important that general education be “valued and owned.” We need to clearly articulate the purpose, content, and intended learning outcomes for the Liberal Arts Core. This has been “in progress” for some time, but it needs to get done. Associate Provost Kopper said that she would really like us as a university to have a conversation in which we discuss and develop learning outcomes for the LAC.

Senator Lynch asked whether there are also some national measures that we are using for assessing the LAC. Associate Provost Kopper said that UNI is currently taking part in a national voluntary system of accountability. This information is available on the university website under the heading “College Portrait.” This system allows colleges and universities across the country to provide comparable data on size and composition of the student body, financial aid, progress to degree, etc. which prospective students and parents can access to compare different schools. Part of this involves data from two national surveys, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP). The NSSE data are available on the website. We have been pilot testing the MAPP for several years and the data are not yet available. We have also been pilot testing another possible test. Senator Lynch asked whether the MAPP data allows us to track students over time. Associate Provost Kopper said that is not currently the case. Currently we just compare samples of freshmen and samples of seniors, but we do not track individual students.

More information on the reaccreditation process is available from the website at www.uni.edu/accreditation. They want this process to be open and transparent with widespread participation from as many people as possible. Associate Provost Kopper finished by making
several requests. First, she asks that departments, programs, and individual faculty please update their websites and ensure they are current. Second, if Kate Martin contacts you to ask for information relating to accreditation and the self-study, please respond in a timely manner. She also asks that we thank people who are working on the project since this involves a great deal of effort. Once the draft reports are ready, they will be seeking input and feedback from across the university.

III. Nominations for the Regents’ Award for Faculty Excellence

The CSBS Senate may submit up to three nominations for the regents’ award to the University Senate. The CSBS Senate received two nominations with supporting materials for Donna Hoffman (Political Science) and David Walker (History).

Senator Roberts noted that the college guide for awards states that “Each College Senate is asked to forward the same number of nominees as they have seats on the University Senate - SBS (3). Winners of college-level faculty awards from the previous year are also automatically nominated as well.” It was unclear whether that means that we should submit the names of previous award winners in addition to these two nominees (Hoffman and Walker), or whether this happens automatically without the college senate being required to act. No one was sure what had been done in previous years. It was pointed out that we have supporting materials for the two people nominated by their departments, but we do not have supporting materials for the winners of last years’ college awards. It may be that they would be asked to supply those supporting materials at the time that their names are forwarded to the university senate.

The college level awards are given for excellence in a specific area such as teaching, research, or service whereas the regents’ award requires excellence in all three areas. Therefore, some people who received the college level awards might not be qualified for the regents’ award and might not even want to be nominated. Furthermore, we would not want to jeopardize people’s chances by sending forward more names than are allowed.

The senate agreed that both Hoffman and Walker are well qualified for the regents’ award and we would like to nominate them. Senator Dunn moved and Senator Roberts seconded that we nominate Donna Hoffman and David Walker for the Regents’ Award for Faculty Excellence. The Senate directed Chair Juby to send those two nominations to the University Faculty Senate and also to contact the chair of the faculty senate and request clarification on the wording regarding the automatic nomination of previous award winners.

IV. Comments from Interim Dean Johnson

We are currently conducting eight faculty searches in our college. In addition, the university is conducting searches for provost, associate provost, and a director for the Teaching and Learning Center, as well as the new dean for CSBS. Ads for the position of college dean have been placed in the Chronicle of Higher Education and relevant disciplinary journals.

Plans for the renovation of Sabin are moving ahead. Political Science will move out during finals week. Social Work and the dean’s office will move in January. The Center for Social and
Behavioral Research will move in December. The building will be closed around the second week of January.

We are currently conducting a program review in the Department of Political Science and a review of the head of Design, Textiles, Gerontology, and Family Services. For the review of the department head, we are using a new, on-line survey form provided by a company that specializes in evaluation surveys for academic administrators. This survey is nationally normed. The survey will be followed by individual interviews with interested faculty and he expects a draft report from the review committee by the end of the fall semester.

This is also the year for curriculum review. We are encouraged not to add new courses or, if we must add courses, to balance this by dropping a course.

This year we are also conducting the academic audit. The first committee has made their report to the provost. We should in the near future to expect a communication from him regarding this and setting forth the schedule for the rest of the audit process. At this time the deans have not been informed of very much, but the next step is to complete self-studies of all the different programs. Senator Walsh asked whether this applies to every program on campus. Dean Johnson replied that every program will have to do some type of self-study. It may be that programs that wish to be considered as candidates for growth will have to provide more detailed information than those which simply wish to be maintained at current levels.

In addition to the Alderman scholarships which provide support for CSBS students, the Alderman bequest also included funds for guest lectures. Apparently no one was aware of this, and the money has remained unspent. We are currently planning to use some of this money to bring Carol Gilligan to campus in the spring to give a lecture in conjunction with the CSBS Student Research Conference. Dr. Gilligan is a psychologist who is well-known for her interdisciplinary work on gender, particularly her book *In a different voice*. Her visit is tentatively scheduled for April 17 and 18 and we are hoping to have her provide an interdisciplinary workshop on Friday afternoon as well as her public lecture on Saturday. The Alderman money will also be available in for guest lectures in future years.

There is currently a great deal of uncertainty about budget matters. The regents will be pushing for a 4% tuition increase for in-state students and 2% for out of state. We expect money to be tight with little optimism about new money for the near future.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Cyndi Dunn