

December 9, 2008

District Academic Senate Report to the Board of Trustees

As we know, in less than two weeks, fall semester 2008 will be over and we are already looking toward spring semester 2009.

As with any semester there have been exciting times and there have been challenging times.

I would suggest that one of the most challenging times has been the completion of the accreditation self-studies at the four colleges. While the current accreditation standards have been in place since 2002, this is the first time that the colleges have responded to these standards. The standards are very compliance focused. There is a decided focus on institutional planning and evaluation of institutional planning and institutional processes; a focus on program review in all areas; and a specific focus on student learning outcomes and assessment.

Our work on integrated strategic planning and the development of educational master plans, the facilities master plan, the integration of the facilities master plan with the educational master plan, and the current focus on a technology master plan, hopefully will be acknowledged by the visiting teams. We will still need to update our short-term implementation matrix.

We are very fortunate that we made the decision in spring 2007 to conduct program reviews in all instructional programs and in that same semester to have conducted the state program review process for categorical student services programs.

We are also very fortunate that we have provided release time for Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Coordinators to coordinate the efforts in this area. The challenge is now to move to assessing outcomes and to do so in a way that is of value to faculty and to students. I assume we will make some progress before March in implementing TaskStream, the software that will assist in managing student learning outcomes assessment data.

I suspect we are all still working on assembling evidence files that substantiate what we wrote in the self-studies. I suspect that this will occupy our time as we move forward and as we prepare for the visiting teams to join us on March 9 through 12.

What we have learned in this process is that self-study, in keeping with the current accreditation standards, is not something we do every six years, but rather it is an ongoing process of responding to these standards. We will have to remain focused and attentive to the standards and the agenda they set for us.

Integrated planning will need to continue, we can't say that the visit is over and now we can relax;

Instructional program reviews will need to continue and we definitely need to set a date for when they will be updated, we definitely need to review the calendar and format for student services program reviews, and we also need to focus on administrative services program reviews;

annual unit plans in all areas will need to continue to happen;

development and refinement of student learning outcomes and appropriate assessment of those outcomes will need to continue and become a regular part of our culture.

While we can talk about the challenges of the new PASSPORT system, the financial aid process, and a variety of other "hot button" issues, nevertheless we cannot lose site of the agenda the accreditation standards set for us and our need to keep those in the forefront of our work and our actions.