

Senate Admissions and Advising Committee
Minutes of meeting 18 Oct 2006, 4:00-5:15 pm

Present: J. Blodgett, O. Grant, A. Grens, R. Isaacson, J. McLister, P. Saksena, Q. Xu, S. Zechowski

The committee began discussion of retention-related issues, including a review of "action items" proposed in the 2002-'03 Retention Action Plan. Major points included:

- The need to adequately staff sufficient sections of developmental courses (Education U100 and X101, English W031, Math M004 and M014) to accommodate the needs of the students whose Placement Exam scores mandate their enrollment in these classes, especially those who place into X101-Techniques in Textbook Reading and/or W031-Pre-composition, as a student without these skills is basically unable to take other college-level courses. Emphasis was placed on the need to hire appropriately trained instructors for these developmental courses at the time that Summer and Fall registration begins, in April, even though these classes generally do not fill until late July or August. Review of student Placement Exam results for the past several years supports the view that the majority of the students who require developmental courses do not register until shortly before classes begin. A student who is told that he/she is required to enroll in certain classes in the Fall semester and is then told that those classes are full and not available is unlikely to be retained, or to be satisfied with their IU South Bend experience.

- The importance of faculty-student interaction in promoting student success and retention, and the burden this can place on faculty, especially tenure-probationary faculty. Advising/mentoring students needs to be recognized as a faculty responsibility in decisions about reappointment, tenure and promotion. Different mechanisms for distributing the advising load among faculty were discussed.

- The importance of distinguishing between academic advising as schedule planning, which some faculty may ill-prepared to do, and advising as mentoring, in which all faculty should be prepared to participate. Examples of different approaches to student advising in different academic units were discussed.

- The role played by peer mentors in different academic units. There was consensus that the Retention Action Plan recommendation that units increase their reliance on peer mentors was a valuable one, as peer mentors were generally viewed as one of the most successful ways to reach other students, especially new students. There was also discussion of the changes in the Peer Mentor Program that were implemented in Spring 2003, which resulted in the campus-wide program being disbanded.

It was agreed that discussion would continue at the next meeting, which was scheduled for Wednesday Nov. 15th.