Dr. Tom Benberg visit to UGA
January 20, 2010

Notes from SACS QEP Team meeting
1:00 p.m., Peabody Boardroom, Administration Building

Those present:  John Albright, Allan Aycock, Caroline Barratt (for Pam Kleiber), Bob Boehmer, Cheryl Dozier, Denise Gardner, Laura Jolly, David Knauf, Kasee Laster, David Lee, Jean Martin-Williams, Rodney Mauricio, Connor McCarthy, Marisa Pagnattaro, Bill Potter, Shannon Scott, Fran Teague, Kyle Tchepikow, Jan Wheeler, Barb White, Shannon Wilder, Adam Wyatt

Those absent:  Meg Amstutz, Katie Barlow, Irwin Bernstein, Joe Broder, Paige Carmichael, Paul Chambers, Pam Kleiber, Jerry Legge, Heidi Leming, Luke Naeher, Bill Vencill

Rodney Mauricio called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed Dr. Benberg.  Dr. Benberg made a few opening remarks, stating that there are two kinds of failure associated with the QEP:  first, failure to meet COC standards, and, second, failure to meet the goals of the QEP itself at the five-year mark.

Elaborating on the second type of failure, Dr. Benberg commented that SACS is not overly concerned about meeting all the goals we establish for our QEP.  We shouldn’t play it safe, because if we do, we won’t learn very much.  UGA should be thinking big, should be a pace-setter.  At the end of five years, what have we learned?  Our job is to enable students to learn something.

Rodney asked the team members to introduce themselves to Dr. Benberg.

Dr. Benberg then invited questions.  A summary of those follows.

David Lee:  We hope our QEP is transformative in terms of rigor, resources, and research.  Will we have the latitude to adapt and change the plan as we go?

Benberg:  Yes.  We should assess, measure goals.  Figure out what’s working and make changes to ensure that the program becomes the most effective it can be.  Be sure to keep records as to what precipitates any changes.

Marisa Pagnattaro:  Would you cite examples of QEPs that have been transformative?

Benberg:  A particular community college had a QEP with a very broad scope.  Let the human spirit soar and do what it can.  An example of a type of program with a broad scope (transformative) is internationalizing the curriculum.

Bob Boehmer:  We have had a high level of student participation in this process, but most students don’t know what a QEP is.  What do review teams do to measure student participation?  Have you seen creative ways of involving students?
Benberg: Get leadership from SGA. Post ideas and ask for feedback. On the evaluation component, get student point of view as well as faculty.

Cheryl Dozier: How do we engage faculty? We are launching QEP in difficult budget times.

Benberg: Look at SACS website for QEP abstracts. There is a contact listed for each abstract. Discuss with contact. Funding challenges are a part of life now. SACS’ position is that no university should be required to have a QEP that will break the bank, but it still has to have significance. Developing a QEP will create discussions. May be able to secure external funding, but be careful of soft money. Funds may be reallocated. There are ways to get things done—need to change the status quo. Ask the question: Is the QEP more important than other things we’re doing now. Look at university holistically, as a service to society. This is part of the beauty of the QEP. It creates conversations about teaching and learning. It reaches to the level of the president.

Jean Martin-Williams: Do you have any examples of institutions’ being surprised during the implementation phase of their qeps?

Benberg: The assessment area is full of surprises. Need to align assessment instruments to the goals of the QEP. Faculty load issues (“creeping load”) are of concern. Need to keep momentum. Need to be sure you have adequate resources.

Fran Teague: Effect on advising, orientation? How much emphasis is there on coherence?

Benberg: Plan must be ready to go, not a plan to plan. (JW: not sure this was a direct response to Fran’s question.) Plan must be done by review team visit.

Fran: We must nail it down!

Connor McCarthy: Are you familiar with any QEPs that lack consistency? Is a lack of academic freedom an issue?

Benberg: Similar to five people having the same syllabus and classes being dissimilar. Plan and syllabi need to be anchors.

Bob Boehmer: What will be expected of the University during the March 2011 visit?

Benberg: The review team sticks to the standards--Core requirement 2.12 and its five or six components. The review team is likely to want to talk to a group of people who understand the process of developing the QEP, can speak to the QEP’s learning outcomes and assessment. Should identify the best people, 30 minute meetings. The review team will hold a lot of group interviews.

Bob: Would a typical committee ask for representative focus groups?

Benberg: This question goes to the issue of broad-based involvement (power structure). The review team will talk to faculty senate groups, deans’ council, students (usually at lunch), assessing non-monetary commitment to the QEP.

Allan Aycock: We understand that Principle 2.12 has been changed. Will there be other changes?
Benberg: Explained change to 2.12. Didn’t hear answer about other changes to existing principles.

Bob asked if there were any more questions. Hearing none, he thanked Dr. Benberg for coming.

Rodney adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Wheeler