Student Learning Enhancement Team

Minutes for January 6, 2009 meeting

4:00 p.m., Peabody Boardroom, Administration Building


Rodney Mauricio called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded, and the team voted that they be approved.

Rodney then reviewed the team’s progress. The fall semester was a period of data-gathering. We surveyed faculty, staff, and students and held three forums, two for faculty and one for staff. Rodney thanked Katy Bowers, Connor McCarthy, and Leslie Atchley for their work on the student surveys. Articles appeared in Columns, the Red and Black, and archnews. As of the time of the meeting, twenty-five pre-proposals had been submitted, representing a wide variety of possible topics for plans to improve student learning at UGA. In addition to the forums, meetings about the student learning initiative were held with other groups such as the Lilly Fellows.

Denise Gardner asked if we would accept pre-proposals that arrive after the deadline. Rodney answered that we probably will. If necessary, we could discuss this in a future meeting.

Rodney added that by April we will need to make our recommendations about a focus topic for the student learning initiative to the Leadership Team. During the next academic year, we will construct a detailed plan.

Next, Rodney reported on his December meeting with the Leadership Team. Dr. Mace requested that the Student Learning Enhancement Team submit several ideas. He is concerned about the budget and wants to be able to look at three or four ideas, weighing their pros and cons.

Rodney pointed out that among the 25 pre-proposals there are many elements that could be linked. Many ideas are good.

David Knauft asked how much we will have to take the cost of any plan into account. Rodney responded that a look at the budgets for QEPs at similar institutions indicates a range of spending equal to $500,000 to $5,000,000 over a five year period.

David Lee asked if those who submitted pre-proposals will be asked to develop them more fully and was told that they would be.
A team member asked Bob Boehmer how he would evaluate the response to our call for pre-proposals. Bob stated that we have a very good start compared with other institutions, especially with respect to the number and quality of pre-proposals. It will be clear that UGA’s topic was not pre-determined, something that will be in our favor when SACS reviews our topic selection process. In addition, our input from students has been very good.

Fran Teague pointed out that faculty, staff, and students have submitted pre-proposals.

There was a general discussion about the pre-proposals. In order to be seriously considered by the team, a proposal cannot be too broad. Some pre-proposals could be combined. Pre-proposals must be scalable in terms of budget.

Jere Morehead reminded the team that Dr. Mace wants the student learning initiative to have a significant impact on undergraduate education at UGA.

The team then considered how we should proceed. Robin Tricoli suggested that we encourage and facilitate collaboration among those who submitted pre-proposals. Rodney stated that we need to synthesize the student input we have received and also schedule forums for generating comments.

Katy Bowers reported that students were excited about the survey. We must let them know that their responses are being read. Allan Aycock replied that we will be posting the raw student survey data on the student learning initiative web site.

Fran observed that a number of pre-proposals deal with the first year experience. Because UGA already does a lot for first year students, should we consider an emphasis on transfer students?

Connor McCarthy would like to focus on an initiative that would benefit all undergraduate students.

Rodney suggested that we solicit feedback from the entire campus, then narrow the field to four to six pre-proposals as soon as possible, possibly a few more. Jere proposed devoting a meeting to narrowing our list prior to holding a forum, and Denise reminded the team that ideas could be combined.

There was discussion about the different ways we could organize, combine, and sift through the pre-proposals. Leslie Atchley pointed out the importance of waiting to evaluate the information from the student surveys before weighing the merits of individual pre-proposals. She is concerned that students know that their comments are being taken seriously.

Bob asked if we could distill themes from the pre-proposals, synthesize the student comments, and conduct a survey of recent alumni prior to the final selection of the pre-proposals that we will present to the Leadership Team. Denise added that we should also schedule a forum to get input from the campus around the end of January. During February and March we would consider all the input. Bob suggested creating subgroups to manage all of the tasks we have to do. Robin reminded the team of the need to offer the authors of the pre-proposals the opportunity to collaborate.

Rodney suggested inviting all the proposers and the campus to a forum to give the team input.
Leslie said that she would need two weeks to summarize the results of the student survey.

Jere asked if we could develop a time table, and Bob responded that two or three people could work out a detailed time table that would include all the necessary steps. Allan Aycock volunteered to do this.

Fran brought up the question of how we should deal with proposals that we do not recommend to the Leadership Team. We must have a courteous and effective way of forwarding good ideas to the Curriculum Committee and other groups. Rodney added that all pre-proposals are important the reaffirmation process.

Allan stated that we must develop clear criteria for evaluating pre-proposals as a step in our process. Making these known will also help people to understand why their pre-proposals were not advanced.

Rodney summarized the work to be done in the short term. Leslie, Katy, Denise, and Connor will work on writing a summary of the student proposals. Allan and Paul Chambers will develop a time line with input from Bob and Jan Wheeler. Fran, Joe Broder, Paige Carmichael, Katy, Jere, and Allan will develop a list of criteria. Joe Broder will chair the criteria committee.

A group to evaluate the pre-proposals will be named at a later time. Denise recommended that anyone from the team who was interested should be able to meet with the evaluating group.

Rodney will schedule a forum and subsequent meetings of the whole team. He has asked the Teaching Academy for their input. Jean Martin-Williams asked if we need the criteria committee’s ideas prior to the next meeting. There was general agreement that we do.

Rodney stated that we also must consider the SACS criteria.

Judy Shaw asked for clarification about what exactly we would submit to the Leadership Team. Rodney replied that the pre-proposals we recommend must be more fully developed.

Rodney adjourned the meeting at 5:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Wheeler