Student Learning Enhancement Team (formerly QEP Team) Minutes

October 7, 2008

8:00 a.m., Room 121B, Davison Life Sciences Complex


Those absent: Meg Amstutz, Joe Broder, Paul Chambers, Art Dunning, Loch Johnson, David Lee, Jean Martin-Williams, Shannon Scott, Judy Shaw, Fran Teague, Shannon Wilder

Rodney Mauricio called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

Rodney presented the talking points he had written for team members to use in the forums that the team will schedule this semester.

Barb White stated that we must be clear about the significance of the student learning initiative. Others must understand that UGA has no choice—developing a Student Learning Initiative is a required part of our reaffirmation of accreditation process.

David Knauft and Jere Morehead both added that we need to specify in the talking points that this is a plan that is for undergraduate students. SACS has specified this requirement.

Irwin Bernstein said that we must stress that real resources are involved. Jere Morehead supported this idea and asked if SACS provides any guidelines for a university of our size in terms of the amount of money that must be committed to executing the plan.

Bob Boehmer replied that SACS offers no objective guidelines. When the SACS committee reviews our plan they will look closely at the budget. They will want to see a plan that is aligned with our mission, one that has an appropriate focus topic for UGA, and that adequate resources have been allocated. The reviewers will be exercising their judgment.

Jere asked if we knew the size of budgets that other, similar institutions have submitted. Adam Wyatt replied that there is a very wide range.

Irwin stated that the way the budget is developed is important. We must demonstrate that this is “real” money. Bob agreed – SACS will require that. Irwin added that the plan needs to be one that UGA would develop anyway; we should not create and implement a plan only to satisfy SACS requirements.

Robin Tricoli pointed out that Georgia Tech recently received Board of Regents funding for a new program and asked if it would be possible to link our plan with a Board of Regents’ plan and get funding from them.

Jerry Legge reminded the group that its job is to come up with a topic. Denise Gardner added that we first need to focus on getting input from campus. Jere asked what would happen if we came up with a plan and the Leadership Team said we can’t afford it. Bob replied that the team will keep the Leadership Team informed as we progress—we shouldn’t reach that point.
Allan Aycock stressed that the task for us this year is to name a topic; our task next year is to develop the plan.

Bob gave the example of Columbus State’s writing center budget, $750,000 total for five years, as a way of informing the team of what a much smaller institution was spending. Bob believes that we shouldn’t go public with any amount of money. What we can’t do is go to SACS with too little allocated.

Luke Naheer asked if this might be an opportunity to partner with the Athletic Association.

Irwin asked how we can encourage people to attend a forum—why should they bother? How do we sell this idea to the campus?

Rodney would like to encourage creative ideas. Should we be specific about suggested topics in order to get the campus interested?

Katy Bowers brought up a point from a previous meeting about coming up with a good idea and then scaling it to fit a given budget. Katy likes the idea of using creative, random ideas to capture people’s interest.

Irwin suggested using Georgia Tech’s QEP as an example.

Jere supported that idea. We should look at the plans of comparator institutions. We must keep in mind that money matters: good ideas die without financial support. We must put our QEP in the context of what others have done.

Pam Kleiber said we should include peer and aspirational institutions’ plans and use those at forums.

David Knauft suggested looking at NC State and UT Austin in particular.

Bob pointed out that NC State’s plan is very expensive. Connor McCarthy responded that he likes NC State’s plan and that we should pursue it as an idea.

Katy said that we need to consider how we will use the feedback we get from the forums in generating and reviewing proposals.

Rodney stated that within the next six weeks we will have a campus-wide public relations plan and will get our web site up in order to inform the campus and to solicit survey responses and proposals. Team members need to speak with Deans, attend monthly meetings of department heads, faculty senates. Within six weeks, we should hold two faculty forums, one or two student forums, and a staff forum. We should reach the alumni through their web site.

Leslie Atchley added several suggestions about reaching students: through a list serve, my uga, fliers to classes and at the Tate Center, tent cards in dining halls, Resident Assistant programs, and the Red and Black.

Rodney encouraged the team to be entrepreneurial and work through their respective colleges.

Allan asked how we would present survey findings and other input to the campus.

Rodney stated that this semester we are in a data gathering mode. The committee must be fair in its review of ideas for the focus topic. By the end of November, we will review all the input we have
received and determine what is emerging. In January we will publish our findings and invite presentations. Then we will decide which two or three ideas we want. We will then survey students about two or three ideas.

The question of what to do with ideas that are not chosen arose. Jan Wheeler responded that some institutions use those ideas as their next QEP topics.

Irwin added that we must collect data, inform the campus about the data, and then get an opinion from the campus as to which plan has the most support.

Bob said that we must remember that the process has to be creative and inclusive. The topic selected must be based on data (for example, NSSE results). As a committee, we must make it clear to the campus that all proposals must be based on evidence.

Rodney said that all input will be archived on our web site.

Jere said that our surveys need to be scientific. Rodney stated that the first survey would be more open. A poll at the end of the process will be more scientific. We must be sure that everything we do focuses on student learning objectives.

Bob asked the committee to consider Luke’s idea about a partnership with the Athletic Association. The team should think creatively about both the topic and its funding. If we have creative funding ideas, we will be able to leverage the plan.

Rodney said that he will meet with Sharron Hannon to develop a public relations plan. He then asked the team to look at the pre-proposal.

Robin said that it should be clear to anyone submitting a pre-proposal that the topic must be data-driven. Rodney replied that he didn’t want to scare people. He added that we would be presenting the survey on our website. Denise said that it might be a good idea to require demographic data for the survey, because it would allow us to follow up with the survey respondent on specific points. There was some discussion on this point, and it was agreed that we would not require respondents to identify themselves.

Pam asked if we could link the survey to the web site. Allan Aycock said we could and that we could also put the survey results on the website.

Denise asked if we could clarify our process. First, we will gather input from surveys, forums, and meetings; next we will solicit pre-proposals; we will then review those and ask for full proposals; finally we will review full proposals. Denise suggested that we may want to solicit pre-proposals.

Rodney asked members of the team not to submit pre-proposals. There was some general discussion on this request, and there was agreement that we should adhere to that policy.

Rodney encouraged the team to get our campaign going. He will coordinate with Irwin and Fran Teague to inform the Franklin College about our plans. Other team members should work with their colleges. Paige Carmichael asked where the College of Veterinary Medicine fits, since it is not an undergraduate program.

Katy reminded the team that they need to keep minutes of meetings and forums related to our work. Jan Wheeler emphasized this point. Team members should forward their minutes to Adam Wyatt, and he will enter them on Sakai.
Pam Kleiber stated that once the press release is published, we can use it as an attachment when communicating with individuals and groups about soliciting ideas for a focus topic.

Rodney reminded the team that once the p.r. plan has been put into place that we will begin the forums. Denise suggested that we keep University Council informed about our work.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Wheeler

Attachments: talking points, pre-proposal template