Minutes of the Academic Program Liaison Committee Meeting

Friday, January 22, 2010
3:00-4:00 PM
Osborne 107C

Members Present:
Cheryl Addy, Sally Boyd, Wayne Buff, Jim Burns, Mary Ann Byrnes, Nancy Floyd, Dan Friedman, Kris Finnigan (Chair), Gary Geer, David Hodson, Miriam Johnson, Sarah Keeling, Sheryl Kline, Amy Lantz, Aaron Marterer, Martha Moriarty (via telephone), Mike Perkins, J.T. Thornhill, Irma Van Scoy, Jennifer Vendemia, Robert Wilcox, Nancy Zimmerman

Members Absent:
Steve Adams, Marsha Dowell, Andy Gowan, Suzanne Ozment

Guests Present:
Janice Byrd, Helen Doerpinghaus, Gail Morrison, Michael Raley

K. Finnigan welcomed two guest speakers from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE): Dr. Gail Morrison, Director of Academic Affairs & Licensing and Deputy Director, and Dr. Michael Raley, Associate Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing.

Dr. Morrison explained that there are two types of state-level entities regulating higher education in the United States, governing bodies and coordinating boards. Governing bodies, often known as Boards of Regents, tend to have greater institutional authority than coordinating boards. Twenty-three states, including North Carolina and Georgia, have governing bodies.

Coordinating boards, of which CHE is one out of 25 in the US, leave the management of institutions to the institutions themselves. CHE is one of the stronger coordinating boards, and its statutory authority is rooted in Act 359. CHE's charge includes 1) the administration of LIFE and HOPE scholarships; 2) federal and state mandated reporting such as the English fluency report; 3) protecting the interests of education against potentially damaging effects of legislation; 4) briefing lawmakers on the effects of proposed legislation; 5) determining the allocation of money among the state's institutions; 6) participating in federally mandated programs (GEAR UP) to improve teaching quality; and 7) statewide planning for higher education (Action Plan).

The goals of CHE are 1) to increase the number of people in the state holding an AA or BA degree; 2) to enhance research and innovation; and 3) to enhance work force preparation for careers.

CHE has a staff of around 50, of which 20 are full time and 25 are on soft money. The structure of CHE is built around standing committees of Commissioners, and advisory committees of representatives from the higher education institutions. Ad-hoc committees are formed as needed. CHE representatives appear before the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees on behalf of all institutions statewide, and have been strong advocates for a bond bill for the last eleven years.

CHE serves a very important data function, sending data to legislators, constituents, national groups, and the federal government, as well as students and parents. They work with a wide variety of departmental agencies, but primarily the Department of Education. CHE uses data from the Department of Motor Vehicles for information on the percentage of graduates who stay in South Carolina. In the private sector, CHE works with the chamber of commerce on efforts to improve low-performing schools. In its licensing function, CHE's role is consumer protection. The Commission has also assisted with transcript provision in cases of institutions that have gone out of business.

In the approval of program proposals, CHE gives doctoral proposals the most rigorous scrutiny due to their generally much higher cost per FTE. Master's programs are subject to somewhat less rigor, given


that they are viewed as serving place-bound audiences. Program proponents should be mindful that CHE Commissioners, board members and legislators will not understand the long trail of incremental changes in a discipline that precede the program proposals they are considering.

In comparison with other states, South Carolina is still in "program development" mode. Six to seven new programs are approved per quarter at USC and Clemson combined, many at the graduate level. There has been an overall increase in enrollment of around 30% during the last decade, in addition to the establishment of a new 4-year campus at USC-Beaufort.

Dr. Morrison elaborated on the concept of "Mission Resource Requirement" (MRR), which is a statistical tool CHE uses to determine the viability of a proposed program. The MRR is a statement of what CHE calculates is needed to mount a program at an acceptable level of quality. It is based on the number of new students/number of FTE's that are projected to enter the program, not on how much money a new program is going to bring in. In employing the MRR tool with each new proposal, CHE's intent is not to prevent new programs from being developed, but to help Commissioners uphold their fiduciary responsibility.

The variables within the MRR are 1) faculty student ratio; 2) average national faculty salary in discipline from peers; 3) student support services; and 4) administrative support facilities. The numbers in the MRR chart are theoretical numbers which come from a formula using these variables. The formula is reviewed periodically by University CFO's and others. The MRR is a statement of need; CHE seeks to ensure that institutions are accurately planning according to the resources available (from the state and from tuition) to meet the new program needs. If a proposal does not present with the resources sufficient to meet the program need, CHE suggests ways the institution can project a plan that does.

A question was raised concerning how peer/aspirant peer institutions are designated, and whether these change over time. Dr. Morrison said that typically the Chief Operating Officers of institutions determine which are the peers/aspirants of a particular institution, and that these are changed occasionally.

According to a chart Dr. Morrison subsequently provided for distribution (attached to these minutes), USC is at 56.7% of what CHE thinks we should receive from state appropriations. In his public presentations, the President of the University uses a different number, based on calculations and variables other than the MRR.

Following up on another question concerning why it is so difficult to change CIP code numbers, Dr. Morrison explained that CIP codes are established by the Federal Government to facilitate comparability of reporting. She recommended consulting the online CIP catalog of program descriptions when designing new programs. CHE reserves the right to veto a particular CIP code choice, if most institutions within the state use the code differently. As a general rule, if program seeks to move from one CIP code to another with an entirely different first two digits, in CHE's eyes this represents a significant change of program substance requiring a full program proposal.

Dr. Morrison requested that new program proposals should specifically indicate 1) whether they are for a 4-year or 5-year program, and 2) whether the program is eligible for STEM money.

Due to the late hour of adjournment, important announcements are to be forwarded to members by email. The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM. The next meeting will be Friday, February 19, 2010 at 3:00 PM in Osborne 107C.