**Provost's Advisory Council**

**Summary of March 17, 2011 meeting**

Rosanna DeMarco

Bert Garza

Pat DeLeeuw

Lillie Albert

Colleen Griffith

Elyce Purcell

Marilyn Matelski

Katherine O'Dair

Thanh Tran

Stephen Pfohl

Tom Wall

John Spinard

Maureen Kenny

Anthony Annunziato

Gilda Morelli

Jenny Baglivo

Callista Roy

Amy Hutton

Don Hafner

Anita Tien

Larry McLaughlin

Francine Cardman

Harrison Kent

David Quigley

Diana Pullin

Renee Jones

David Wirth

1. The summary for the meeting of February 24, 2011 was approved. The summary will be sent to the President's Office. All summaries are posted on the Provost's Office website; members are encouraged to share the summary with colleagues.
2. Harrison Kent (member of the Provost's Advisory Council) and Christopher Kirby of the UGBC introduced materials that have been developed this year as a result of conversations over the last two years about academic advising. The materials aim to increase student initiative and responsibility in establishing and developing productive relationships with faculty advisors. A proposed Advisor Evaluation has also been drafted, which has been discussed with the Provost's Office and reviewed and endorsed by the University Council on Teaching. Students would fill out the Evaluation during the spring semester of each year. The responses would be available to the faculty advisor, the chair, the dean, and the Provost, but would not be available to other students.

Members of Council were asked for ideas about how to encourage students to complete the Evaluation form, about whether the evaluation instrument would be appropriate for graduate students, and for other comments and/or suggestions about the Evaluation form.

* It was suggested that students be asked about how much they valued having an academic advisor.
* It was suggested that the UGBC might consult with Institutional Research about survey fatigue and the optimum timing and frequency for distributing the evaluation.
* A number of incentives were proposed as ways of encouraging students to complete the evaluation: vouchers for food, access to early registration for courses, etc. Alternatively, students might be required to complete the evaluation in order to gain access to registration.
* It was proposed that it would be helpful to know how many times a student’s advisor had been changed.
* It was noted that for the evaluation questions that focus on non-academic matters (e.g., "My advisor shows concern about me as a person by asking about my non-academic life"), it would be helpful to know whether a student considered it important to be engaged in that way by an advisor.
* It was reported that graduate students consider advising to be of great importance, they experience significant variation in the quality of their graduate advising, and they would not need incentives to induce them to complete an evaluation instrument.
* It was suggested that the University might propose an advisor award, in the same way that there are teaching and research awards, to underscore the value of advising.
* It was noted that there needs to be visible commitment among faculty and University leadership to improve academic advising, particularly advising of student majors by departments.
* The current model of advising assumes a one-on-one relationship between a student and faculty. Questions were raised as to whether other models of advisement should be considered?

1. Pat DeLeeuw reported that the university-wide introduction and implementation of the electronic faculty annual report has been very successful. It was noted that questions were limited to those useful for the annual report;, the digital instrument includes other questions judged not relevant for this purpose by chairs, deans, and others who were consulted in the electronic instrument’s development. Some of those questions will likely be included in the next iteration, to enable a faculty member to produce a curriculum vitae.

* It was reported that the amount of time to complete the faculty annual report was considered significant and burdensome by many faculty.
* Some faculty reported that completing the annual reports took more than ten hours; others indicated that the amount of time was quite low.
* Some faculty reported that the selected date (end of term, first semester) for completion and submission of the report was challenging, and requested that a later deadline be considered.
* Some faculty reported that they were unsuccessful in accessing and updating their reports during the semester.
* Questions were posed about how the data from the annual reports would be used. The Provost responded that the information will be used in developing a fuller picture of faculty activity, and is planned for inclusion in the School and Departmental Annual Reports produced by Institutional Research. Adoption of the electronic instrument also was motivated by concerns that departmental profiles provided bi annually by IR and the Office of the Provost do not include important information regarding research and service.
* Faculty questioned whether questions about the amount of time spent on advising--and the answers that were provided--would be helpful or accurate. It was suggested that those questions be amended.
* It was noted that inputting information in the first year was particularly onerous, but that in subsequent years, faculty would only need to input new information. Previously-entered information is preserved and can be updated at any time during the year.
* A comment was made that many of the questions posed focused on advisement and teaching, and this focus was noted and appreciated. It was suggested that these activities should be taken into consideration for merit increases, etc.

1. Provost's Report

* The University has experienced recent annual increases in health insurance costs for faculty, staff, and students on the order of 12-13%. In providing health care coverage for graduate students, the incremental costs are being shared on a 50-50 basis between the Provost's Office and the schools. If schools are unable to provide matching funds from their budgets, they could consider reducing the number of graduate students, but it would not be acceptable to reduce the scope of health care coverage provided to the students.
* Discussions are continuing about the salary increase for 2011-12. The major challenge to the budget is the cost of health care. It is likely that the salary increment will be in the range of 2.5%, with a possibility of increasing that amount for employees earning less than (for example) $50,000 annually.
* Search requests submitted by each of the schools are now under consideration in the Provost's Office. Rationales for requests should specifically address how the hire will strengthen the academic program of the department and how it will reshape the distribution of teaching loads within the department.

The next meeting of the Provost's Advisory Council will be on Thursday, April 28, 2011.