**Program Prioritization Task Force**

**October 1, 2012**

1. **Introductions, get acquainted**

Present: Angi Brenton, Brian Railsback, Tim Carstens, Mary Jean Herzog, Jason Lavigne, Laura Cruz, Bruce Henderson, Debbie Burke, Dave Kinner, Chip Ferguson, Joan Byrd, Dave Hudson, Hannah Wallis-Johnson, Georgia Hambrecht, Vicki Szabo

Absent: Jannidy Gonzalez

Introductions were made. Angi thanked the group for their willingness to be part of this important work.

1. **Overview of process -- Angi**

Angi reviewed the handouts beginning with Initial Thoughts on Program Prioritization – an overview of the process. We are good at adding programs, but not good at eliminating. For the first time some of our initial assumptions are being questioned.

1. **Go over handouts, materials – Angi**

There are several immediate drivers for our process:

1. 2020 Vision
2. Pursuit of excellence
3. Budget cuts
4. Enrollment growth
5. Stewardship and accountability

We need to become less reactive to budget cuts – these end up being opportunity cuts, this is not a strategic way to position us for the future.

The function of this task force is to be an advisory committee that makes recommendations to the chancellor with the final decision being his. Some of the programs we will review will be 1) those that show great promise and want to grow; 2) programs that are fine as they are; 3) and programs that we think need some revision to be viable (i.e. right sizing, degree has too many concentrations, undergraduate doing well but graduate is struggling). This third group is the most difficult category to deal with and may be the largest category that we deal with. There may be few that need to be eliminated but many that could be more efficient.

1. **Discussion of processes at other campuses, how do we want to investigate -- Vicki**

Angi briefly reviewed the packet of materials, specifically the three handouts from NC State, ECU and UNC-Greensboro. Maybe some of these templates will give us a head start.

Vicki provided another handout from ECU’s program prioritization process. ECU focused on productivity, centrality and quality and also had section on opportunities.

Angi is interested in us having conversations with other campuses that have completed this process. In addition to speaking with the chairs of these processes, we may wish to speak to faculty and other stakeholders that may have a different view. How would we like to go about this - a visit, phone interviews? Angi would prefer to divide and concur – 3-4 of us each going to a campus.

The universities that have completed this process are NC State, ECU, UNC-G, A&T or Central (need to determine which one). Committee members could reach out to their corresponding peers at these institutions as well as combine with a visit they may already have planned.

Another model to review (in your materials) is North Texas – Bain Model.

1. **Expectations of task force members – Angi and Vicki**

* We all represent WCU, not narrow constituencies
* Transparency
* Confidentiality of specific task force discussions
* No unexpressed concerns
* Disagreement can be healthy and productive

One of the reasons why members of this task force were not elected is that Angi did not want anyone to feel like they are representing narrow constituencies. We are representing the whole, all of WCU. One of the reasons you were each attractive in assembling this task force is that each of you are broad and creative thinkers. We want this to be a very transparent process, but content in the room stays confidential. It is not okay to share individual committee members’ votes or comments. General decisions are okay to share. It is important for us to develop an effective communication plans for students, staff and faculty. Please express your opinions in this group. It is fine for us to disagree, but not okay for us to keep silent. There are going to be points that we do not agree – we will work through it. We can do this and be collegial.

There will be no proxies for the committee. If you cannot come, do not send a substitute. If you have to miss and need to send a comment or materials that is fine. The Provost’s main role is to facilitate, will not vote. The Provost’s involvement is to signify the importance of this effort. Discussion ensued.

1. **Proposed activities, timeline -- Angi**

It was recommended the committee read broadly about all the models out there. At an upcoming meeting we will invite Melissa or one of her staff to assist us with information we may need. It was suggested the task force look at models that worked well and those that have not worked well and the need to honor anxiety that may exist from previous processes.

Angi reviewed the timeline. She would like to complete our research of other campuses in the next six weeks so by end of semester we can begin to request data from departments. By February 15 we would like to have program information and assemble profiles for our review making this available to programs to correct data or add information. Reviews will intensify toward the end of February. That will make March our heaviest time when we are making assessments. We will have to decide how we do that – as a group, or to develop quartiles that we would share with one another. This would at least get us to the point of making distinctions. Then by early to mid-April the task force will publish the first version of our conclusions. The campus can review and respond to that report. We could then consider any additional data and at end of the semester give our recommendations to the chancellor. If we need to expand the timeline, we can do that. We need to have forums and lots of mechanisms for feedback. April is a very busy month for departments.

1. **Discussion -- Vicki**

What will we define as success of this task force?

* Organized process based on data
* No faculty outcry
* Faculty support and buy-in, the sense that this was a fair process, based on objective quantitative data
* Excellent communication plan that we follow – what besides forums? Website? – maybe a visual email flash that comes out weekly with a link if individuals wish to go deeper – might help with students; Staff Senate newsletter; department meetings, updates at Faculty Senate as well as have senators communicate with colleges; task force representatives could invite ourselves to departmental meetings or send complex emails to department heads. Redundancy is good – some department heads will be better at communicating than others.
* University to be healthier, more effective at meeting its mission, distinguish from other institutions
* Change – prepare for some being unhappy with results
* Identify problems
* Change WCU’s image in the state
* Programs of excellence be identified that make WCU more distinctive
* Pillar of excellence – Greek life
* Process should not end in May – iterative, constantly looking at how we met our objectives over long term
* Scale it successfully regarding programs - what is really excellent, and what really needs improvement? Do we need to set a financial target of savings? Not sure how to set a mark like that.
* Align our resources with the strategic plan
* When will we know about savings? That can be way downstream… with some things there may be more short term savings, some will be long term. Phasing out a program is a process that requires providing students in the pipeline to complete their degree and reassign tenured faculty members; more long term strategic approach.
* Be proactive with a set of priorities
* Do we want to frame this through finance? We would be successful to martial our resources to maximize student success. That is what this should be about. One of the reasons the QEP has been successful is because individuals agree this makes our students more successful.
* Clearly articulate justifications for what we are doing.
* Need to also spend more money, find ways to raise more money, not just cut funds
* This can set us up for the comprehensive campaign coming in the future
* Programs take this time to be reflective formative and summative

What concerns do you have about this process?

* We are not NC State or ECU, we are a small community and our decisions will impact our friends, our neighbors, etc.
* We could be demonized
* We need to be realistic about some of the push back we will get
* Need to avoid any perception that something was a done deal
* The process must be credible
* It must be clear we are not replicating the previous process – some previous data can feed into it, but it is a new process
* What is the outcome supposed to be? We need to sell this as a way to make this a better institution for our students (current and future), not just about the bottom line
* Name of task force – rename it?
* Perception that central data is not reliable – true or not? This undermines the credibility of the process. Early on we have to address this issue – we have to sort out artifacts we can control
* Tension between strategic priorities/quality of program
* How do system goals dovetail with our process regarding duplicity and redundancy of programs?
* What are the intersections of general education review and program prioritization.

What hurdles do we need to overcome?

* A faculty culture that protects itself and colleagues, preservation of the status quo
* A strain toward democracy or equality in resources
* The last program prioritization process – gauge things to prevent
* Different units level – no looming cuts
* More objective comprehensive data base
* We often hear generalizations about faculty culture – thus we have too many over generalizations that some people believe, but not all. We have a lot of positive aspects to our faculty. We have to be careful not to buy-into ideas that we a certain kind of culture that is unilateral.
* Timeframe

1. **Discussion of assignments and next meeting date -- Angi**

We would like to develop a website that will provide multiple ways for giving feedback aside from forums.

Laura will assist us in setting up Blackboard for all the task force materials.

Angi encouraged the task force to develop a simple data set – 10 to 15 meaningful measures. We will invite Melissa to the next meeting.

**Q:** How are we defining program? **A:** This is a decision we will have to make.

Data capture – there will not be an analysis level at the college level. For each program once criteria is developed, we will get that from IOEP and then get the survey data from departments. We may need graduate assistant help.

**Q:** Are their programs off the table? **A:** No – we are looking at everything. However, we are just looking at academic programs.

**Q:** Is the general education report that is going on simultaneously part of this? **A:** We need to familiarize ourselves with this report at the same time. There are some important linkages. We need to at least keep this in mind to some degree. Not sure how to integrate the two processes. We are looking at academic programs, not general education, not departments. We are looking mostly at majors and programs. Discussion ensued.

We will initially need to meet more frequently in the next 6 weeks. The task force agreed that Mondays from 12:30 - 2:00 will work. ***Our next meeting is Monday, October 8***. We will try to focus on a plan from other campus and criteria for next week and will see if Melissa can join us. Please review the materials, highlight criteria you like. In looking at the departmental questionnaire also highlight items you like.