

Retention Committee Minutes Thursday, November 18, 2004

Present: Dana Barnard, Carl Burns, Anthony Chiles, Harvest Collier, Kate Drowne, Stephanie Fitch, Greg Gelles, Amy Gillman, Gearoid MacSithigh, Mark Mullin, Emily Petersen, Steve Raper, Dave Saphian, Keith Stanek, Lynn Stichnote, Laura Stoll, Bob Whites.

Absent: Ron Bieniek, Jennie Bayless, Meg Brady, Steve Clark, Chad DeShon, Lauren Etheridge, Fathi Finaish, Jay Goff, Matt Goodwin, Martina Hahn, Marcus A. Huggans, Tammy Pratt, Chris Ramsay, Kristi Schulte, Tina Sheppard, Roger Terry.

- I. The amended minutes of the November 4, 2004 meeting were unanimously approved pending changes to better reflect quotes by Mark Mullin, Paula Lutz and Laura Stoll.
- II. It was announced by Keith Stanek that this would be Co-Chair Dave Saphian's last Retention Committee Meeting. He is leaving UMR and his last day will be the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. In addition, Keith Stanek is retiring from UMR on September 1, 2004. Thus, we need co-chairs, one immediately and one in the Fall of 2005. Volunteers should email Keith Stanek.
- III. The discussion of the instructor initiated drop policy was continued.

Greg Gelles stated his dislike for this policy. He said we were seeking statistical goals vs. actual student achievement. The policy will not fix UMR's problems. He questioned why the Chancellor's Office supports this policy.

Carl Burns stated that he has never seen a flow of students like this before.

Mark Mullin stated that he has not yet heard a positive reason for the policy. He questioned whether it did any good. He questioned if students knew about this policy prior to reviewing the syllabus on the first day of class..

Anthony Chiles (student) said he was not aware of the policy before the syllabus was reviewed during the first class session. He said the students were informed that if they needed help, they should attend LEAD sessions. Most students are not used to needing help and they are reluctant to seek it.

Stephanie Fitch noted that a large number of students in one of her classes switched to hearer status. She questions what good this creates. She noted that students who change to hearer status get no refund and lose credit hours which may be needed for scholarships, insurance, athletic eligibility, etc. Hearer status is for attendance only.

Mark Mullin asked why a student with a 58% on the first exam couldn't stay in the class? We should struggle to motivate students rather than force them to drop classes.

Harvest Collier discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the policy. The policy is creating a change in the Math Department. He feels the change is needed and the question is how the change should be achieved.

Gearoid MacSithigh asked where the faculty's academic freedom is if they are required to drop students.

Harvest Collier said the faculty have always had the flexibility to drop students for poor attendance or poor academic performance. The problem revolves around lack of motivation or a lack of desire to learn.

Carl Burns stated that he believes this policy addresses a symptom, rather than causes, of underlying problem. He would like to see at least two significant grades having occurred before a student would be dropped, and that the committee consider recommending that any student receiving a D or F on the first quiz or test be required to attend a Math Learning Community or some other learning support resource as an alternative to being dropped.

Anthony Chiles stated that some students simply don't want to succeed and aren't motivated to be at UMR.

Stephanie Fitch questioned if the DF&W lower rate is a bad thing and are statistics available to compare UMR's math and physics ("gatekeeper") rates with other research universities.

Dave Saphian stated that there are multiple reasons students fail first tests. Would two tests reflect tendency to improve? Would it be possible to rebound? Would advising and counseling deal with emotional issues affecting test scores?

Dana Barnard discussed that students have new freedoms away from parental follow up, i.e. progress reports. Also, the first six weeks in a dormitory is an adjustment period.

Bob Whites stated that the student has the right to sit in the class for 16 weeks and fail the course.

Mark Mullin stated that some students lack confidence.

Dana Barnard said some students don't want to be here.

Gearoid MacSithigh said he advises students of facts, opinion, dropping courses, how to contact an advisor and treats the student as an individual. He's not convinced everyone is doing that. "Their gun, their foot."

Carl Burns stated there is pressure from administration. Can we go to administrative channels to change the policy? We need to do more the first few weeks of classes.

It was decided that we need to gather facts such as:

- A. Do other universities have faculty initiated drop policies?
- B. Are the levels of DFW grades at UMR in basic courses comparable to peer institutions?

It is hoped that Institutional Analysis can dig up some statistics. Committee members were urged to seek information from contacts at our peer institutions.

Carl Burns stated that math placement program structure is a daunting challenge.

Several committee members discussed having an F on a college transcript is not the tragedy it once was, especially with retake policy. 20% of graduating students received one F but the graduation rate drops significantly with greater than three Fs.

Keith Stanek stated that the committee should create a short and succinct statement of concern. This statement should quickly name concerns about recruitment and retention

Carl Burns stated that this policy is not the right motivation, and the institution is not responding proactively.

It was decided that the Committee would not meet until December 16th to allow time for data gathering and re-organization of the Committee leadership.

- V. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 am.