

Retention Committee Minutes

Thursday, October 21, 2004

Present: Dana Barnard, Carl Burns, Anthony Chiles, Harvest Collier, Stephanie Fitch, Gearoid Macsithigh, Mark Mullin, Emily Petersen, Steve Raper, Kristi Schulte, Keith Stanek, Lynn Stichnote, Laura Stoll, Bob Whites

Absent: Jennie Bayless, Ron Bieniek, Meg Brady, Steve Clark, Chad DeShon, Kate Drowne, Shari Dunn-Norman, Lauren Etheridge, Jamie Ferrero, Fathi Finaish, Jay Goff, Larry Grayson, Martina Hahn, Rod Lentz, Mark Potrafka, Tammy Pratt, Chris Ramsay, David Saphian, Tina Sheppard, Roger Terry

- I. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 am by co-chair Keith Stanek.
- II. Minutes of the October 7, 2004 meeting were accepted as distributed.
- III. The main agenda item was to discuss the presentations given during the last two UMR Retention Committee meetings:
 - September 23, 2004 by Dean Jay Goff
 - October 7, 2004 by Vice Provost Harvest Collier

Steve Raper related an incident regarding a freshman he was advising. The student was under a lot of pressure from his father. This student needed more than academic advising. He needed personal attention and support. He is receiving scholarship support from UMR and is inclined to stay at UMR.

Keith Stanek mentioned Q & A with ECE seniors. They always emphasize a dislike of Rolla and the lack of activities for college students. Perhaps the new Havener Center will help when it is open. It has many new features. Other problems are high ratio of males to females (3:1) and lack of a mall. However, larger campuses are more impersonal than UMR.

The discussion turned to what will and does keep students at UMR:

- Well planned Orientation Weeks that help to form lasting friendships (time for fun).
- Quality relationships built during first semester in school.
- Effective staff relationships (Patty Frisbee cited as a positive example).
- Laura Stoll mentioned connections to campus and formation of relationships.

Harvest Collier mentioned that two issues are key:

- Students want to be successful
- Students want a social life (to have friends and a support network).

Anthony Chiles discussed how the Minority Engineering Program has provided that support network for him.

The discussion turned to the role of advisors. Harvest Collier noted the difference between basic academic advising and “developmental advising.” The second type involves raising awareness and getting rid of barriers.

The advantages of “advising centers” such as found in Civil Engineering were discussed. One of the basic advantages is that students don’t find a locked faculty office when they need a signature or a form to fill out. They get timely assistance. These advising centers are needed in the five largest departments: Civil, ECE, MAE, Chem Eng and Computer Science.

Laura Stoll related how a campus-wide advising system at a large institution attended by one of her children was impersonal and ineffective. It prevented student/faculty interaction and connection.

Keith Stanek noted the average UMR freshman came in with a high school GPA of 3.6 and the average first year student at UMR earned a 2.9. It was noted that most students would not feel they were “successful” at UMR when they see their GPA drop by almost 0.75. It was suggested that UG GPA at UMR be published in the “Miner” each semester so students can benchmark. Additional information for the Miner includes the re-instatement policy for students who lose scholarships.

Admission officers have a list of three key factors for new students:

- A roommate that has common interests.
- The participation in a study group before the first quiz.
- Adjusting to Rolla and finding a “best friend.”

It was noted that the Advising Conference on October 25th is poorly timed since it falls on the first day of pre-registration week. It was suggested that each faculty member on the Committee bring a faculty member from his/her department.

Stephanie Fitch noted that there are three musts in advising:

- Be available to advisees.
- Know the curriculum.
- Make a “connection” with the student.

Steve Raper noted that some faculty should not be advisors.

Carl Burns noted some frequent issues with students who are having problems:

- UMR is a “poor fit” for the student.
- Pre-emptive drops cause serious problems.

Laura Stoll initiated a discussion of a new policy in Math related to pre-emptive drops.

NOTE: Dean Lutz will be at the November 2nd meeting to clarify this issue. No action will be taken by Retention Committee before the next meeting.

Gearoid Macsithigh discussed CAPS report and use of PeopleSoft. It was pointed out that CAPS is superior to PeopleSoft printout, so it is being preserved. CAPS reports can be printed by an advisor for any student.

Anthony Chiles mentioned that pre-emptive drops are “embarrassing” and “discouraging” to students.

The topic of students making a “connection” was discussed. Groups or programs that enable students to make a connection include:

- MEP
- Voyager
- STUCO
- Residential governments
- Design teams
- Best practices
- Mentoring

Pre-emptive drops were discussed in more detail. Legal issues were sited, financial issues were raised. Laura Stoll stated the policy is not a problem, it is the procedure of implementing it that is a problem. UMR has had the policy for decades. The number of pre-emptive drops has more than tripled. This topic will be discussed further on November 2nd.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 am.