Doug Estry <estry@msu.edu>

04/26/2006 06:19 AM

To:    sticklen@msu.edu
cc:     allenwi@mail.msu.edu, geleroi@msu.edu, youatt@msu.edu,
        kwilcox@msu.edu
Subject:        Academic Council

Jon:

First let me thank you for offering up an amendment at yesterday's Academic Council that allowed the report of the WGIUE to move forward. As I was not officially recognized to speak at the meeting I would like to offer some observations and points of clarification as ECAC moves forward with its deliberation.

1. It was unfortunate that the misconception about the role of the Council on Liberal Learning was not clarified. Importantly, WGIUE was very concerned about not creating another layer of academic governance. The intent of the Council was to be a group, under the auspices of the Dean of Undergraduate Education, that functioned as a community of scholars interested in advancing both the institution's and the student's understanding of what it means to have a liberal education. To the WGIUE this meant things like facilitating campus speakers and workshops, designing ways of assessing our progress toward the liberal learning goals, facilitating the work outlined in the Writing, QL, and Integrative Studies Taskforces, identifying and seeking external funding to assist in this initiative. It seemed to the WGIUE that MSU needed a "place" for this kind of conversation and work to occur and this was our way of defining that place.

2. Although there was a suggestion to the contrary, the core of the Council on Liberal Learning was defined to be the Integrative Studies Directors, the Director of Writing, and a yet to be determined individual with knowledge of QL. The basic foundations for this Council came out of the work of the Integrative Studies Task Force and was considered by that group and through campus wide discussions as an acceptable alternative to other proposed models.

3. The Liberal Learning goals are just that, broad statements of the overarching goals of MSU relative to what it means to be liberally educated. As goals, there needs to be further work to flesh out what standards relative to each. For example, if you consider the goal for QL, the QL Task Force has already defined, in its report, specifically what the learning outcomes are relative to this goal. Importantly, as the QL report recognizes, these goals will change over time as we learn more. For instance, right now the State of Michigan has passed more rigorous HS graduation requirements and is about to adopt a new set of Mathematics, Statistics, and QL standards. What this should signal to MSU is that we need to revisit the prerequisite knowledge recommended by the QL Task Force so we stay ahead, or at least even with what is happening in K-12 education.

4. I would like to strongly encourage ECAC to move quickly. The WGIUE was very concerned, particularly relative to the reports of the QL and Writing Task Forces that once again momentum around important initiatives
was quickly dying. As a campus we are ready to spend faculty, staff, and student energy on implementing recommendations that will enhance undergraduate and graduate education. It is time to move forward not time for more debate and discussion about what we should move on.

5. Finally, I can't help but express my disappointment in the tenor of the conversation among members of ECAC. Only Dr. Putnam, representing UCAP, seemed to have analytically evaluated the report and was seeking clarification. For some members to suggest a broader campus discussion clearly demonstrated their lack of connection to the process. As you recall, the WGIUE created elaborate electronic presentations around each goal, set up the presentations in the main lobby of the library and had committee representatives available to answer questions. In addition, input was sought electronically from the entire campus community. During the 4 hours that I took my turn at manning the presentations 2 people stopped to look, read, and ask questions. As it turned out, 1 was a State Journal reporter and one was working with Dr. Klomparens on the preparation of the NCA self-study and wanted an update for the purposes of the report. In addition, you could count on two hands the feedback received electronically. Finally, to my knowledge, the WGIUE received no requests to attend various governance meetings, other than Academic Council, to clarify any issues in its report. The fact that at least one member of the Academic Council was not even aware of the report was disappointing.

Let me end this rather long e-mail by once again thanking you for helping to move this initiative forward. The WGIUE strongly believed that if an institution like MSU could meaningfully implement, assess, and study the recommendations flowing from these various Task Forces we would have placed our selves clearly on the map as demonstrating how "Research Intensive" both encompasses and is manifest in undergraduate education.

Sincerely,
Doug

Douglas W. Estry
Assoc. Dean for Student and Academic Affairs
College of Natural Science
Michigan State University
103 Natural Science Bldg.
E. Lansing, MI 48824-1115
tel. 517-355-4474
tax. 517-432-1054

Jon Sticklen
04/26/2006 08:12 AM

To: Doug Estry <estry@msu.edu>
cc: allenwi@mail.msu.edu, geleroi@msu.edu, kwilcox@msu.edu, youatt@msu.edu
Subject: Re: Academic Council
Doug,

I am profoundly sorry that you did not speak yesterday at Academic Council. I lay that error at my feet. I should have seen you in the room and asked for a motion to allow you to speak. I would ask Doug that should anything analogous every happen again that you please make your presence directly known to whomever is Chair of ECAC, and request a motion like enable you to have voice. I am sure the discussion would have benefited from your input.

Second, the action to let ECAC frame "next steps" was put forward in an attempt to keep the process moving - as you perceived. Last summer, ECAC played a role in forming a summer committee to frame the issues of the Faculty Voice Committee into actionable items that were then presented to Faculty Council in Sept 2005. I see this situation as loosely analogous. Some of the Academic Council simply did not want to move forward with an omnibus and far ranging set of recommendations at the meeting yesterday. But they were content to enable ECAC to develop the next steps in the process, which I will propose at the next ECAC meeting (next week) to be the establishment of a small committee to take your final report and carve specific motions for action by Academic Council. I am confident that whatever the makeup of that committee, members of the Working Group will be asked for input to help clarify the intent of the Working Group.

Thanks for your letter this morning Doug. Since I seek you are CCing a number of folks, I am going to take the liberty of assuming this was not a private communication, and I will have your letter made part of the discussion at ECAC next week.

---jon---