SELF-STUDY SESSION: “PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE” (Criterion #2)
Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
January 29, 2009

Criterion #2 concerns planning and the allocation of resources. The team will be chaired by Pam Lau, director of the Center for Academic Success.

There are many levels of planning. “Strategic Planning” is asks “where is the college going?” It is usually very broad and involves big ideas. Most recently, input into the college’s strategic plan came from the many “town hall” meetings in the district. “Annual Planning” supports the strategic plan and involves tangible items, such as buildings, programs, and colleagues. This is done at the department level with the use of the annual planning database. Annual planning helps us keep track of personnel. It is all tied to the budget.

“College Priorities” are usually set annually but this has been altered to coexist with the planning cycle. The priorities were invented to provide a focus for timely items. $150,000 is set aside annually for proposals which are tied to annual planning. The process for determining the priorities is currently under review by the College Planning Committee. This year, groups receiving money in the last cycle will be held accountable. They will be presenting short reports to the College Planning Committee next month. Though College Priorities allows innovative ideas to be funded, there is still the sustainability issue since funding is currently only provided for a period of one year. How do we know these projects have had an impact? This process needs to be clarified through the College Planning Committee and the Institutional Accountability and Research office. If an idea is not productive, why not?

The annual planning database is used to request tangible items with these items being attached to one of the college’s performance indicators. Items can also come from either the academic assessment or support assessment processes. It was thought that maybe everyone did not know this fact. Is there a connection between annual planning requests and assessment plans?

In current economic times, can Parkland continue to be all things to all people? Should we possibly focus on what we do best?

Who reads the assessment data? Information on the two assessment web sites (academic and support) is used by the A-wing, by the Office of Institutional Research and Accountability (especially for state reporting), the College Planning Committee, and used as a basis for annual planning requests.

When we’re writing the self-study document, we need to be sure we are using evaluative language, not just narrative. Where are our successes and how do we know they are successes? Where are our challenges, how do we know, and what steps are we taking to deal with these challenges? Perhaps the clarity of the planning process is one of these challenges?
In the next 1½ months, the college will be choosing committees/teams to evaluate areas of the college prescribed by the five criteria set by the Higher Learning Commission. Everyone is encouraged to get involved! An Information Management Team will coordinate data. The Steering Committee will soon approve a template.

We also need to get our students involved in the teams, especially when evaluating the service learning component. For example, Parkland has invested funds in our scholarship recipients. Should Parkland get something in return in the form of service on a committee? Might we rewrite some of the scholarship requirements to include this service? We need to record events such as meet & greet events with the college president. What evidence do we have of student involvement?

- Notes by Dave Leake