I. MINUTES:

Jane made a motion to approve the November 9, 2006 minutes which was seconded by Bob. The minutes were unanimously approved.

II. DISCUSSION

1. Update of SACS offsite Review ................................................................. Carol

Carol provided the committee an update on the SACS compliance review, which was completed in mid-November. She noted the areas for which we must provide a focused report (2.10, 3.3.1, 3.5.1, 3.4.1) and emphasized the pivotal role that the SPC has and will continue to play in the SACS reaffirmation process. She highlighted 4 core standards that the SPC figures prominently into.

1) 2.4 Mission
2) 2.5 Planning
3) 2.11 Financial Stability
4) 2.12 Quality

Ray noted that much of what we provided for in our response to 2.5 (the core standard related to strategic planning) in terms of documentation involves the SPC and we need to be aware that successful implementation of our planning framework will require that this committee take its role seriously. Carol concurred and noted that one of the questions we will need to clarify is whether the SPC is advisory only or will it have specific tasks related to implementation of our strategic planning process.

Next Steps in SACS

- Focus Reports – end of January
- QEP Due end of February
- On-Site visit – in April
- On Site recommendations – voted on by COC in December.

2. Update on State and UNC System Initiatives ........................................... Ray

Ray provided an update on State and UNC System initiatives, particularly as related to the emphasis on retention and graduation rates as summarized in the UNC Transmittal Memo #50. A copy of his presentation was provided to all attendees.
In response to the State expectation that students should, whenever possible, graduate in 4 years, there was much discussion about factors that delay time to graduation. Undergraduate students are expected to enroll in at least 15 semester hours credit per term. Factors that inhibit students from taking full loads:
- Withdrawal policy.
- Financial Aid regulations on full-time and part-time status.
- Policies related to scheduling. Miscommunication: graduate courses in Asheville when students think it will be in Cullowhee. That decision is made at college-level.

The State Transmittal Memo noted that working on campus was positively correlated to retention. Several committee members including Bob Orr and Scott Higgins noted that we need better data on student work patterns at WCU. Richard Beam noted that students don’t have a place to work in this area so they move. Jane Dunford commented that much of the federal work study money goes unused as many students would rather work for more money off campus. Melissa Wargo noted that work issues are becoming more important as the proportion of tuition/fees covered by financial aid declines requiring students to make up that shortage with outside work.

Another factor that delays time to graduation is major selection. There was some discussion on our policy of having freshman declare a major early. Richard (?) commented that perhaps we should not allow students to declare at all until their sophomore or junior year and concentrate on their Liberal Studies. Bob noted that the WCU policy came as a result of a study done several years ago that showed students who declare early graduate quicker. Melissa commented that there are models at institutions that don’t allow students to declare a major until a certain number of hours have been met, using a pre-major strategy instead.

Ray also summarized our tentative retention and graduation goals for the next 5 years. These goals are not yet final. Steve Henson noted that the conservative goals seemed to communicate that we as an institution are content to remain in the poor to mediocre category and urged the group to consider aggressive goal setting in order foster significant change. He noted that we must begin to think with more vision. As for the SPC, he noted that if we do not ask for money to achieve our vision we won’t be able to see results. Scott concurred with Steve’s comments and reiterated that we ought not to be content with average goals. Bob noted that we do have some history at WCU with setting aggressive goals and then following through on them. He referred to the fact that 10 years ago our retention rate was 69% and our student quality was poor. He noted that when the institution set a goal to improve quality and increase the retention rate that we did successfully move toward to our goals. Bob recommended that we identify what we did right with that initiative and use it as a model for change.

3. Update SWOT Analysis.......................................................................................... Ray & Melissa

Melissa noted that due to the late hour we would postpone our discussion and update of the 2005 SWOT analysis until our December 14th meeting.

III. NEXT MEETING
Thursday, December 14th, 3-5pm. Location: Rogers Room.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rocio Sharpe