Provost Report to Faculty Senate

10/28/12

1. Faculty recruitment grant from General Administration

General Administration invited proposals from all 17 UNC campuses to recruit faculty. GA had $1 million available for the program. The proposal had to show how the faculty appointment would lead to national prominence or relieve bottlenecks for student graduation. WCU submitted two proposals – base salary to fill the Elingburg Endowed Professorship in Innovation for the College of Business to support the Entrepreneurship Program, and a Chemistry professor to expand capacity to serve increased majors, as well as programs in health and forensic science. We were informed that we were awarded $100,000 for the Elingburg Professorship. GA received over $10 million in proposals, so WCU was extremely fortunate to receive this award. We will recruit to fill the position hopefully by the Fall of 2013.

1. Dean searches

We recently announced that Dr. James Zhang has been appointed permanent Dean of the Kimmel School. Search committees have been appointed for the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Health and Human Sciences. I hope that we can launch searches for the Dean of the Graduate School and Research and the Dean of Educational Outreach this spring.

1. Expansion budget proposals

WCU submitted two proposals for our Expansion Budget. The proposals had to be an expansion of current programs, and our total request for the two proposals could not exceed 1% of our state budget or $2.4 million. Our top priority was a proposal to expand our current Bachelor in Special Studies program to an on-line program designed for degree completion for military personnel, veterans, and other adult learners. The Lumina Foundation indicates that 1.2 million North Carolinians have some college credits but no degree. To expand the percentage of North Carolina citizens with college degrees from the current 38% to the 59% that will be required in the workforce of 2025, North Carolina must award almost 800,000 degrees in the next 12 years, more than all the high school graduates during that period. This expansion proposal will expand our capacity to offer liberal studies courses online, as well as better processes for reaching and serving returning students and military personnel.

Our second expansion request was a proposal to offer a bachelor’s degree in engineering at Biltmore Park in the Asheville/Hendersonville growth corridor. There is no full engineering degree offered west of Charlotte. Having an engineering program within 50 miles is essential to attract industry, according to studies by the Milken Institute. We feel this program could be significant in serving employees in the manufacturing sector in Western North Carolina who cannot re-locate to other universities in the state to complete their degrees.

1. Ft. Bragg visit

Leaders from Ft. Bragg and from Fayetteville Technical Community College visited campus last week to explore further opportunities for collaboration with Western. For a number of years, large numbers of soldiers from Ft. Bragg have enrolled in the Emergency Medical Care on-line program. We wanted to explore other degree programs to serve their needs, as well as better ways to articulate two-year degrees from FTCC to encourage more military personnel to complete their degrees within the state. Not only is Ft. Bragg one of the largest military installations in the country, but we also feel that programs designed to serve the military personnel there will prepare us well to attract military and veteran students more broadly. The visit went extremely well, and we are confident that it will be a source of enrollment growth for WCU.

1. The Program Prioritization Task force is fully engaged in researching models used at other universities and in developing criteria to be used. The Task Force hopes to have criteria developed by late next month, and will host another Faculty Forum to discuss and gain faculty input. The PPTF has developed a website that will allow the campus to examine the progress of the process and to offer input.
2. Performance funding

We are continuing to negotiate with General Administration about the targets for the performance funding measures we have chosen. After two attempts to propose targets for six year graduation rates, we were given a target by GA that we feel will be a significant stretch for us to meet. It is still unclear at this point whether the legislature will appropriate additional funds to be allocated on the basis of performance funding.

1. Community Engagement metrics

I have been participating on a GA Task Force designed to develop measures to evaluate community engagement. We hope that these measures will help us begin to develop an inventory of all the efforts our students, faculty, and staff are doing with community organizations. This will be helpful to us in developing our proposal for continued status as a Carnegie Engaged University, and over time will help us in assessing impact of our efforts.

1. Academic Partners visit

We invited representatives of a firm that specializes in supporting universities in developing large-scale online programs to visit with campus leaders last week in a very preliminary introductory conversation to understand their services. Academic Partners is a firm that has been in business for seven years and now works with over 30 universities across the country in developing a few programs on each campus that might have the potential to scale to larger regional or national enrollments in their on-line programs. AP currently has no academic partners in North Carolina. If we decide to take the conversation further with the firm, we will invite them back to campus to meet with faculty members to discuss their model and services.