

MINUTES
FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE/
GOVERNOR'S ACCESS AND DIVERSITY COMMISSION
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
APRIL 27, 2006

Joint Meeting of the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission

Ms. Sheila McDevitt, Chair, convened the meeting of the Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission at 10:40 a.m., in the Ralph Turlington Building, Tallahassee, Florida, April 27, 2006, with the following Board and Commission members present: Dr. Oswald Bronson, Dr. Castell Bryant, Dr. Gordon Chavis, Dr. David Colburn, Ms. Miriam Lopez, Dr. Stanley Marshall, Dr. Lawrence Morehouse, Ms. Ava Parker, Dr. Martha Pelaez, and Ms. Carolyn K. Roberts. Also in attendance via telephone were Ms. Carmen Brown, Ms. Ann Duncan, Mr. Joe Goldberg, Ms. DeeDee Rasmussen, and Ms. Monica Hayes (for Commissioner John Winn).

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 22, 2006. The motion passed. Ms. McDevitt encouraged available members, upon completion of the meeting, to go to the Capitol and continue to solicit legislators' support for the access and diversity initiatives.

2. Student Tracking and Advising Systems

The Committee and Commission were joined by university representatives, Dr. Joe Glover (University of Florida), Dr. Patricia Telles-Irvin (University of Florida), Dr. Karen Laughlin (Florida State University), Dr. Glen Besterfield (University of South Florida), and Dr. David Dees (University of Central Florida). Dr. Glover provided an overview of UF's Universal Tracking System. He indicated that this model essentially rests upon three "pillars." First, he explained that the model serves as a roadmap or guidepost for students. UF requires students to declare a major upon entry into the institution, and the system lays out milestones, indicating where they need to be in their programs each term. The system alerts UF advisors if students "get off track." Dr. Glover reported that the second pillar is a pro-active advising system. If a student gets off track, the student's record is flagged, an advisor is able to contact the student, and the advisor works with the student in a problem-solving venue, either to get the student back on track or, if that does not seem possible, to get the student to consider another major. Dr. Glover pointed out that this approach actually requires more advisors to be available. (He reported that UF hired more advisors when the Universal Tracking System was instituted.) He stated that the third part of the University's covenant with

the students is that the University must ensure that the seats and course sections are available when the students need them to stay on track in their academic programs.

Dr. Glover provided Committee/Commission members with two graphs, showing trends in graduation rates for first-time-in-college Hispanic and African American students. Dr. Glover indicated that, in the general student population, UF had noted a nominal increase in graduation rates, which was considered somewhat due to the implementation of the Universal Tracking System. He reported that there also had been increases in rates for African American and Hispanic students following implementation of the Universal Tracking System. Dr. Glover pointed out that the system could be easily adapted to part-time students by tracking where the students are in their programs based on the number of credit hours they have taken as opposed to at the end of each term, as is the case for full-time students.

In response to questions from Committee/Commission members, Dr. Glover reported that the system makes sure students are in the right courses from the beginning of their baccalaureate studies. He indicated that UF provides each student with the opportunity to meet with an advisor in the summer and throughout the fall. Some students are flagged for additional advising assistance. Dr. Glover reported that students are not allowed to register if their records are flagged. If a student falls seriously off track, the advisor will discuss alternative majors in which the student might be able to progress on track to graduation.

In response to a question from Dr. Morehouse, Dr. Glover reported that the tracking system works particularly well for students needing additional academic and student support services. He stated that each college at UF has additional support services available for students needing additional assistance. He referenced UF's AIM Program, which works with approximately 300 students who are identified as at-risk. The University maintains a special relationship with these students throughout their undergraduate studies, making sure they receive the assistance they need. Dr. Glover reported that the graduation rate for AIM students now almost matches the graduation rate for the general population, which was not the case ten years ago.

In response to a question from Dr. Pelaez, Dr. Glover indicated that UF tracks 36,000 - 38,000 students per year. He reported that, since the Universal Tracking System was installed, there have been no additional computer costs. He emphasized that the extra costs come from the need to provide proactive advising. Dr. Colburn reported that, when UF first implemented the program, approximately \$3 million was used to fund permanent advising positions.

Dr. Glover and Dr. Colburn reported that UF has two groups of advisors - the full-time professional advisors and the faculty advisors. Students go to the professional advisors who tend to know more about lower-division requirements during their first

two years, but then work with faculty advisors in the discipline once they begin to take more courses in their majors.

In response to a question from Governor McDevitt, Dr. Glover estimated that 5 – 7% of the students actually get “flagged” as needing advising for being off track. He indicated that, as the students have become used to the system, they have had fewer and fewer problems.

Members discussed the enrollment planning function of the tracking process. Dr. Colburn pointed out that one reason it is so important to have sufficient funding for student enrollment is to ensure that an institution can offer the critical courses needed at the times they are needed to keep students on track to graduate in a timely manner.

Dr. Dees, from the University of Central Florida, indicated that he is the chair of the board for the statewide degree audit system known as SASS. He reported that students are also tracked at UCF. Additionally, he referenced work that colleagues at UCF have been doing to identify clusters of characteristics which support or do not support student retention. They are engaged in a data-mining exercise to identify factors that help predict which students are most likely to drop out. By doing so, the University is able to focus more attention on the most vulnerable students.

Dr. Dees explained to Committee/Commission members that, in 1985, the State purchased the SASS degree audit system from the University of Miami at Ohio. He reported that this system provides the information needed for students and their advisors to look at the coursework a student has taken and compare it to the full program of study to determine what is still needed. Dr. Dees indicated that Florida is in the process of purchasing an upgrade to SASS, which is Web based and aligns with the Peoplesoft and Banner software systems used by most of the universities.

Glen Besterfield reported that the University of South Florida started tracking first-time-in-college (FTIC) students in fall 2005. He reported that, unlike UF, USF does not require students to declare a major during their freshman year. He indicated that the University has begun to restructure some advising mechanisms. USF already has hired seven new advisors and wants to get to the point of requiring mandatory advising at the freshman level. Dr. Besterfield estimated that such a move would require an additional seven advisors. He went on to say that the institution also wants to do more for the transfer population. He indicated that the goal would be to require advising for FTICs through the lower division and for transfer students during their first semester at the University.

Dr. Besterfield reported that USF is working on ways to better manage the course delivery schedule. He indicated that the tracking system will help the institution in trying to predict how many seats and sections are needed. He stated that the ultimate goal is to tie the tracking system to the University's registration system.

Dr. Karen Laughlin spoke about FSU's Mapping System. She thanked UF colleagues for their assistance and teamwork in putting the program together. She reported that the system addresses some of the issues regarding having faculty in place to teach the needed courses. She indicated that FSU is being much more proactive in conducting course demand analyses. She went on to say that the mapping system is providing a much more standard view of what students are doing when. Dr. Laughlin reported that the FSU mapping system clearly identifies alternate programs that the student might consider if not on track with a given major's requirements. She stated that implementation of the program caused some anxiety initially, but students, parents, and faculty now seem to appreciate that there is much clearer direction for students.

Dr. Laughlin reported that FSU has 40 advisors working in colleges, schools, the library, and the student union to provide advising when and where the students need assistance. The University has just begun mapping for transfers.

Dr. Bryant questioned if there was research to indicate whether the use of professional advisors or faculty advisors was more effective. She indicated that it would be interesting to conduct research about the personal bonds students establish with professional advisors during their first years at an institution and what impact there might be as students are transferred to discipline faculty advisors when they enter their majors. Panel members reemphasized that trained professional advisors often can keep up with the "nut-and-bolts" advising, but know to direct students to discipline faculty to obtain professional advice.

When asked about racial and ethnic diversity among the advisors, each panelist reported that the composition of the advising groups was pretty representative of the student population on the campuses. Representatives from FSU, USE, and UCF also reported that it is difficult to determine the impact of the tracking systems on retention yet, because of the newness of the programs.

Panelists were asked for their insights as to what they thought could be done to increase retention and graduation rates in Florida. They responded that more financial resources, more advising resources, more tutoring and student assistance services, and tracking systems were needed. Dr. Telles-Irvin went on to report that there are increasing numbers of students with special health and mental health needs attending the universities. Early career counseling was also identified as a need. Dr. Colburn pointed out that institutions of higher education often get criticized for putting more money into these "administrative" areas, but these are exactly the kinds of services that will improve retention and graduation rates. Dr. Chavis contended that, as universities grow, they need to make sure there are sufficient numbers of faculty mentors and staff mentors who "look like the students" being served.

Dr. Pelaez offered a recommendation for consideration in the final report from the Commission/Committee. She suggested that certain advising and tracking services be mandated. Governor McDevitt asked members to forward suggested recommendations directly to Dr. Dorothy Minear in the Board of Governors Office and to do so quickly, so that they could be compiled in an initial draft of the final report. Chancellor Rosenberg indicated that Board staff would be anxious to receive the list of recommendations, but he encouraged members to be mindful that many of the recommendations might have a fiscal impact that would need consideration. Chair Roberts also emphasized the need to be mindful of fiscal impacts.

Dr. Morehouse expressed an interest in looking further at retention data. He indicated that he would like to hear more about what the institutions were doing to improve student retention. Governor McDevitt indicated that more attention would be devoted to retention efforts in Phase II of the Access and Diversity Project. While recognizing the direct link between access and retention, she stated that the primary emphasis of the Governor's initiatives was on access. She reported that, in its Strategic Plan, the Board of Governors decided to measure access by looking at degree attainment. Therefore, she emphasized that learning more about what is working to improve retention will be important to the SUS Access and Diversity Team and the BOG Student Affairs Committee as they move into Phase II.

3. Early-Commitment Financial Aid and "Promise" Programs (Models From Other States)

Dr. Dorothy Minear, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, provided members with an overview of early-commitment financial aid and "promise" programs in other states. She reported that early commitment programs (like Project STARS in Florida) are those which guarantee financial aid for students with need. They usually reach down into the elementary, middle, and high schools. Dr. Minear went on to say that these programs emphasize transparency and predictability for students and their families and supporters – transparency in that they are clear about what students need to do early to qualify for assistance, and predictability in that students know that the programs represent a promise of assistance.

Dr. Minear indicated that these programs are new enough that few have graduation data yet, but participants have higher rates of postsecondary enrollment and higher first- to second-year retention rates. More are beginning at four-year institutions. And, for those programs that have been in existence long enough, there are data which indicate they have a higher six-year graduation rate.

Dr. Minear reported that many of these programs have very specific requirements for the students. Often, participants are required to pledge to enroll in rigorous high school courses, finish high school, remain drug and crime free, complete financial aid forms, and participate in academic and student support services.

Dr. Minear reported that, as Board staff researched these programs, they discovered how important it is to be very clear about program goals and very specific about expectations from the onset. They also learned that it is critical to be clear about participation requirements. For instance, if the GPA expected for participation is set too high, the program becomes a merit scholarship, and may not have much effect on who actually participates in postsecondary education. However, students should be expected to enroll in a rigorous high school curriculum, because this action can increase chances for college success.

Dr. Minear reported that, whereas the "Early Commitment" financial aid and scholarship programs reach down to students as early as elementary, middle, or at least early high school, there is a growing array of related "promise" programs being set up around the country. For instance, Princeton University came out with a no-loans policy, in which 100% of all students' unmet determined need is covered by grants (for both domestic and international students). Many of these programs are moving beyond students who qualify for the federal Pell grant. For example, the University of Virginia is eliminating loans from the aid packages for students from families with incomes up to 200% of the poverty line. Maryland has a guaranteed access grant for students from families with incomes up to 130% of the poverty line. The University of North Carolina started with a threshold of 150%, but has since raised that threshold to 200%.

Dr. Minear indicated that most of these programs are going beyond paying for tuition and fees, recognizing that costs for room, board, books, etc., can often create unmanageable barriers for students. For instance, Arizona State combines grants with other existing sources of financial aid to pay for the direct costs of attendance minus the student's expected family contribution. Harvard has implemented a no-parental-contribution policy. Some of the programs (like the one in New Hampshire) just cover the first year, but most cover at least four years. Minnesota took a little different approach, and decided to match the Pell Grants received by Minnesota residents. Brown provides need-blind admissions to 90% of its students. Rice and Pennsylvania also have no-loan policies.

Dr. Minear shared a number of decision points to consider if an institution, a system, or a state is going to think about implementing a "promise" program: What population will be targeted? K-12 students or postsecondary applicants? First-time-in-college students or transfers, as well? Undergraduates only? In-state residents only? International students? Only those students who are eligible for federal aid? What about that next level of students? All students? How about a particular sub-group—e.g., first-generation students? Students from certain schools, cities, etc.?

What will be required of recipients/participants? What about award decisions? Will tuition and fees be all that is covered? Will there be a no-loans policy? Will the full expected cost of attendance, including room and board, books, etc., be covered? Must

students attend a public institution? A 4-yr institution? A community college? Will attendance at a private institution be covered?

What will be the expectation of students while they are enrolled in postsecondary education? Must they attend full-time? Must they maintain a minimum GPA? Must they participate in specified support services? Must they contribute to their funding through work-study? Must they reapply every year?

Governor Parker asked if there was evidence of any relaxed admissions policies in the programs, particularly in the programs that reached down into the middle and high schools. Dr. Minear replied that, although she was unaware of such policies, it was important not to turn these programs merely into merit-based programs.

Dr. Telles-Irvin provided members with a quick update on the University of Florida Opportunity Scholarships. UF has identified 400 students as being eligible for the Scholarships, and all but 4 are coming to the University. Dr. Telles-Irvin indicated that these students are first-generation students from families making \$40,000 or less. Approximately 70% of these students are African American or Hispanic. The average award will be \$5,000. Overall, the program will cost UF approximately \$2 million this year.

4. Involving Foundations in Access and Diversity Efforts

The Committee and Commission were joined by a panel of representatives from university development offices to discuss how foundations are and can become more involved in access and diversity efforts on the campuses. Linda Lehtoma, the Director of Advancement and Alumni Affairs at Florida Gulf Coast University, indicated that donors "understand helping students," so raising dollars for need-based scholarships is a major focus of the FGCU Foundation. She reported that the FGCU strategic plan includes a commitment to assisting the University in this way. She stated that she and her colleagues also work with other donors in the community who are raising money for need-based scholarships. She reported that FGCU was ready to move forward with the First Generation Scholarships just as soon as a decision about the program was final.

Pierre Allaire, the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at the University of North Florida, provided members with a brochure for "Pathways for Success," which is a ten-year-old program for students with financial need. He indicated the program has roughly \$20 million in endowments secured through the State Major Gifts Matching Program. He went on to say that income from the endowments provided approximately \$650,000 in awards this year to 144 students. He mentioned that five of the 20 or so donors (those providing \$1 million or more in endowments) have mentoring programs which they run on their own. Dr. Allaire reported that UNF is ready to seek matches through the First Generation Matching Grant Program just as soon as a few outstanding questions are answered by state personnel.

Bob Conrad, the Vice President for Planned Giving at FSU, indicated that the FSU Foundation currently does not specifically identify first generation students as a target for scholarships, but this focus will become a priority for the Foundation. He reported that FSU just completed a major capital fund drive, with about 35% of the total \$630 million being designated for scholarships. He reported that President Wetherall has indicated that approximately 30% of the incoming class will be first-generation students. Dr. Conrad stated that the match program will provide a significant tool to increase the number of need-based scholarships. Janine Welch, the Scholarship Coordinator for the FSU Foundation, indicated that the Foundation did have some unrestricted donations that could be considered for use in the First Generation Matching Grant Program.

In response to questions from Committee/Commission members, panelists indicated that scholarship dollars are among the easiest dollars for an institution to raise. They went on to report that, over the last 20 or so years, the trend has been for donors to place more restrictions on the use of the funds. They said that the major focus should be on securing endowments, and using the income from the endowments to support scholarships and related support services.

Chancellor Rosenberg indicated that it would be useful to engage the university presidents in a discussion about the First Generation Matching Grant Program. He stated that he would ask for their guidance regarding the best way to move forward with the effort once the program is in place. Governor McDevitt reiterated her desire to have Foundations more involved in access and diversity efforts.

Dr. Pelaez expressed an interest in looking at data which capture the proportion of students who receive financial aid, the proportion of students who receive support through foundations, the proportion of students who receive scholarships, and the proportion who receive Pell Grants. Governor McDevitt expressed an interest in knowing how much of the scholarship money which is raised is unrestricted. The Chancellor indicated that the Board Office would submit a formal request to the universities to gather some of the requested data.

5. Legislative Update

Dr. Minear referenced the legislative update matrix included in the members folders, and summarized the appropriations bills and the status of the First Generation Matching Grant Program bill. Members were encouraged to contact the offices of Senator Lisa Carlton, Representative Joe Negron, President Tom Lee, and Speaker Allen Bense to solicit support for further funding for the Florida Student Assistance Grant. Dr. Minear also indicated that efforts were being made to get an amendment passed that would establish a Board of Governors Scholarship Matching Pilot Project.

6. Recommendations for Final Report to the Governor

Members of the Committee/Commission were reminded to send recommendations that they wanted considered for inclusion in the final report to Dr. Minear as soon as possible. Governor McDevitt indicated that efforts would be made for members to communicate with Dr. Minear via telephone and e-mail as she drafted the report. A telephonic meeting would be scheduled in May only if needed. Governor McDevitt reported that the next face-to-face meeting would be held in conjunction with the Board of Governors meeting in June.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m., April 27, 2006.

Sheila McDevitt, Chair

Dorothy J. Minear, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs