SPARC
January 17, 2012
3:00pm, WCCC
Meeting Summary

In Attendance:
Cathy Archer
Shelly Armstrong
Dan Burcham
Mike Cooper
Dave Eisler
Dorothy Hart
Leonard Johnson
Michelle Johnston
Brooke McComb
Kristen Motz
David Pilgrim
Miles Postema
Kristen Salomonson
Jerry Scoby
Mischelle Stone
John Urbanick
Leroy Wright

Guests:
Ann Breitenwischer, Mike Cairns, Steve Durst, Anita Fagerman, Ron McKean, Mo Milzarski, Dave Nicol, Robbie Teahen, Spence Tower, Chris Vonder Haar

I. Action
Introductions
Attendees provided self-introductions and Chair Johnson thanked guests for joining SPARC’s meeting to participate in the HLC discussion.

Approval of the 11/8/11 meeting notes.
SPARC members approved the December 13, 2011 meeting summary.

II. Setting the Agenda for March and April
Chair Leonard Johnson requested that SPARC members identify meeting topics for the March and April sessions. He will share the suggestions and announce upcoming topics at the February meeting.

III. HLC Team Draft Report – discussion
Associate Provost Robbie Teahen, Self-Study Coordinator, provided summaries of the Higher Learning Commission Team Report in terms of Ferris’ strengths and the Team’s areas of concern/recommendations (see attached documents).

The HLC Steering Committee co-chairs (Chris Vonder Haar, Mike Cairns and Mike Cooper) shared reflections on the process, their pleasure that the HLC Team recognized and wrote positive comments about the self-study process, Ferris’ many strengths, integrity, inclusiveness and broad representation in the Comprehensive Report, and commented on their pride in the institution. They mentioned that Ferris is already making good progress on most of the recommendations contained in the Report.
Chair Leonard Johnson led discussion on the Report’s identified areas of concern, as stated in President Eisler’s memorandum to campus on December 2, 2011 (see attached).

Assessment:
The Report expressed concern on how Ferris closes the loop to ensure that assessment results are used to inform decisions and drive appropriate responses. It also mentioned an inconsistency in assessment across academic programs.
Discussion: A tremendous amount of work has already been done on assessment. We are more sophisticated in how we gather data; however, we could find ways to standardize assessment across the institution and that may assist in a more efficient process to collect and analyze the data. It would also be helpful for users to graphically display the data in TracDat to make it easier to analyze.

Faculty Scholarship:
The Report identified a lack of evidence for and need to address the role of research and scholarship at the institution.
Discussion: This may be a difference in definition; Ferris is a “teaching” not a “research” institution. Although there are many faculty members who perform research in their fields, much of the research is not reported. Research is not part of the criterion for teaching and is not “valued” in the same way as other institutions. As Ferris continues to grow as a university, there may be growth in research. We need a common definition and understanding for “scholarship” and “research.” There is a culture throughout the university that research is discouraged since this is a “teaching” institution; being a “teaching” institution makes us distinct. Many faculty would not want that changed; an example used: “If one spends more time in research, less time is spent on teaching and learning issues. I choose to teach.”

General Education Revision:
The Report stated that Ferris is using a “single event process” to General Education and recommended a continuous approach.
Discussion: Gen Ed is a comprehensive, multi-year process – not a “single event process” at Ferris. The Gen Ed Task Force is currently arranging meetings with academic colleges and other groups to discuss criteria of what is expected of a student and the rubrics to show where the criteria language originated for each outcome. The task force has also requested feedback from the university community on the “defining criteria” for each of the University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes that were approved by the Academic Senate last April.

Graduate Education:
The Report indicated little evidence of an organizational commitment to create an effective graduate learning environment.
Discussion: Ferris is making good progress. A new center has been established, a director identified (who has partial release time this semester to get started), a timeline is planned, and administrative policies are being coordinated across campus. This was just underway then the Team visited, and they did not review the beginning work.

Instructional Technology:
The Report stated the Ferris does not have a strategic plan for IT.
Discussion: The draft document from the E-Learning Management Advisory Team (EMAT) on instructional technology had not been released by the time of the Team visit. It has now been provided, 11 recommendations have been approved by the Provost and
the Senate, and is being implemented. A draft University Plan for IT has been released and is being redrafted.

Kendall College of Art and Design:
The Team Report recommended a progress report on the relationship between Kendall and Ferris. It indicated that the relationship between Kendall and Ferris is confusing and separate.
Discussion: The unique relationship between Kendall College and Ferris State University is not accidental, unintentional, or wrong. It rather reflects a relationship that has been forged over time and realizes that best results are achieved by celebrating the unique strengths of each. The merger was and remains as it was publicly defined and then affirmed by the Higher Learning Commission in 2004. A site visit conducted in 2007 also found Kendall to be adequate in all categories. In mergers and acquisitions and there is this mistaken impression that to be successful one company must consume the other, replacing its culture with its own. What this misses is that it is far more difficult, but often more successful, to find how each can retain its identity and unique characteristics. This is what the team missed here. The progress report is unnecessary and redundant.

Resource Base for Technology Infrastructure:
The Report identified a concern that the resource base allocated to support and expand the technological infrastructure was not sufficient for growing demand.
Discussion: We know there is a growing demand for capacity and support; this is true for all of higher education. Ferris is considering the financial component to decide where to invest for best advantage. The draft University Plan for IT responds to this issue.

President Eisler stated that the HLC Team Report is a strong document with many positive comments. He thanked the Steering Committee and others for their hard work since fall of 2007 in gathering data and preparing the Self-Study documents.

Next meeting date:
Tuesday, February 14, 3-5pm at WCCC
Discussion topic: Student Success

Adjourned 4:35pm
Submitted by Elaine R. Kamptner