SPARC
March 13, 2012
3:00 p.m., WCCC
Meeting Summary

In Attendance:
Cathy Archer
Shelly Armstrong
Dave Eisler
Fritz Erickson
Dorothy Hart
Jackie Hughes
Mike Hughes
Leonard Johnson
Michelle Johnston
Brooke McComb
Kristen Motz
Miles Postema
Kristen Salomonson
Nate Tymes
Deb Tyson
John Urbanick
Helen Woodman

Guests:
Antonie Coleman (Torch editor), Katelyn Crain (Torch reporter), Sara Dew, Jeremy Mishler, Dave Nicol, Dan Tuuri

I. Action
Approval of the 2/14/12 meeting notes.
SPARC members approved the February 14, 2012 meeting summary.

II. Opening Remarks
Chair Leonard Johnson made introductions, reminded members of upcoming meetings and General Education discussions, and shared the possibility of the annual SPARC Retreat on Monday, July 9, 2012.

III. Student Debt – discussion
a. Presentation – President David Eisler
He stated that this topic has been offered in forum format in Big Rapids and Grand Rapids, it is posted online, and he is collecting ideas and suggestions over the next few weeks. Comments will be organized and shared on a website dedicated to this topic.

Small group discussion:
• What are your ideas for addressing student debt?
• How can we help more students graduate?
• How can we help students graduate more quickly?
• How can we reduce costs for our students?
• What might be some other approaches we should consider to address this growing challenge for our students?
Groups shared their discussions and solutions: peer mentoring, tuition window, monitor student progress, intrusive advising, long-term student scheduling/advising, financial incentive to earn degree, eliminate duplicate courses and restrictions, reduce directed electives, don’t require students to pay for unpaid internships (or company pays for student hours), advertise CLEP testing and offer study sessions for those; retention/student success tools to automate alerts when help is needed, financial course in FSUS, more online courses offered, strong 4-year plan with advisor, internship scholarship, no textbooks.

b. Financial Aid – Sara Dew
Financial Aid Director Sara Dew distributed student loan debt case studies. Students who failed or withdrew from classes and then repeated courses may no longer be eligible for Ferris aid or Federal loans based on lack of academic progress, but may continue to pursue private loans. In two sample cases, the grand total of their loans were $111,192 and $144,577. These students may or may not graduate based on their academic progress / gpa. SPARC members were appalled at the examples and discussed possibilities.

The Financial Aid office is attempting to assist students and parents to better understand what their debt and loan choices really mean by using repetitive messages, providing workshops, and building a financial literacy website: http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/admision/financialaid/financial_literacy/financialliteracy.html

Next meeting date:
Tuesday, April 10, 3-5 p.m. at WCCC
Discussion topic:  Gen. Ed.

Adjourned 4:45 p.m.
Submitted by Elaine R. Kamptner