

## Transformational Change Working Group

Monday, February 16, 2009

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

427A Waterman

PRESENT: Bob Taylor, David Barrington, Lynne Bond, Jim Burgmeier, Richard Galbraith, Domenico Grasso, Michael Gurdon, Susan Harrington, Sharon Henry, Stephanie Kaza, Chris Lucier, Kathy Manning, Berth Mintz, David Neiweem, Rodney Parsons, Julia Russell, Mara Saule, Sherwood Smith, Sondra Solomon, Annie Stevens, Steele Taylor

ABSENT: Sha Bradley, Patty Corcoran, Clinton Jasperson, Eleanor Miller, Thomas Vogelmann

STAFF PRESENT: Catherine Symans

STAFF ABSENT: Gary Derr

After introductions, Chair Bob Taylor mentioned the reports posted on the Transform website and suggested that the group review the following documents:

- ACT: What Works in Student Retention? Four-Year Public Colleges (2004)
- Copernicus: Brand Positioning Research Findings & Implications (April 2008)
- Noel-Levitz: Student Retention Practices at Four-Year Institutions (2007 National Research Report)
- COBE Report: General Education at the University of Vermont (1979)
- Retention at the University of Vermont – Joan Smith (2001)

Beth Mintz requested that we continue to look for the McGuire report. Chris Lucier volunteered to locate the report along with the SEM reports and will get them posted on the website. In addition, Catherine Symans will get the reports of the UPC Action Idea Groups posted on the website.

Chair Taylor outlined two tasks for the meeting:

1. Try to clarify the goals and tasks of the group
2. Come up with a plan of action for how we can go about achieving these goals in about six weeks.

He reminded the group what President Fogel said at the last meeting and in his memo:

- How we might approach enhancing student retention and increasing the graduation rate
- Increasing curricular, scholarly and administrative efficiency
- Think about ways the organization might be able to enhance a general education program for all undergraduates
- Creating a student advising center

President Fogel had also recommended that we evaluate up to two other models. In addition, we might also consider holding our organization constant.

Chair Taylor noted that the comments which were emailed to Gary Derr prior to this meeting addressed issues of redundancies and inefficiencies, moving from a 15-credit average to a 12-credit average per semester (Dean Grasso suggested, in a similar spirit, that we might consider moving to a 4 credit course/16 credit average semester model), look at what other institutions are doing to promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and the need to continue developing peer-to-peer mentoring programs.

The bulk of our meeting was spent in a wide-ranging discussion of the goals and tasks facing this group. The following key points were made:

1. The goals found in the President's charge do not sufficiently account for the importance of research and graduate education to achieving our vision of becoming a premier small research university.
2. Any proposals we make must be informed by a commitment to financial sustainability.
3. There has (repeatedly) been good work done at UVM on what we would need to do to enhance student engagement, and it is important that we not spend our time rediscovering and reinventing all this material.
4. The group feels that the President is correct in much of his assessment of the problems we face – the need for a more cohesive curricular experience for students, a need to break down barriers (for both students and faculty) between schools and colleges, the need to develop a more consistent and professional advising system for students, the profoundly different academic cultures found in various corners of the university and the difficulty of moving easily between them, etc. The question remains: is reorganization the proper remedy for these problems? Some committee members believe these problems can be well addressed within the current institutional structure (for example: the Faculty Senate could take a stronger role in imposing curricular cohesion on the University than it has); some believe administrative and collegiate reorganization could aid in helping to address these matters (even though it is obvious that reorganization alone won't solve them all).
5. It was decided that before directly addressing reorganization issues, we would spend the next meeting flushing out the main goals to be addressed in any evaluation of university organization.

The group identified the following six issues/goals to be addressed:

1. A common curricular core for all undergraduates
2. Undergraduate engagement, e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> year experience, advising center, and some sort of senior experience
3. Financial sustainability, including the strategic allocation of resources to address student capacity issues, etc.
4. Research and graduate programs
5. Interdisciplinarity
6. Administrative efficiency

It was agreed at that at the next meeting, the group will break into six smaller groups to define terms, issues and ideas with regard to these six goals. After 45 minutes, the groups will report back for discussion in the larger group for the remainder of the meeting. Chair Taylor will develop a list of groups prior to the next meeting. The next step would be to evaluate two models (the President's proposal, and the current university structure) as to whether or not they address (or could be made to address) the problems.

The group agreed to six more weekly meetings (Mondays 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.) to prepare a draft report by the 1<sup>st</sup> of April and report back to the President by mid-April.

**Next meeting:** Monday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. in Livak Ballroom, Davis Center.

### Working groups for the February 23 meeting

#### Two Notes:

1. For those who weren't at the February 16 meeting, it was decided that we would begin next Monday's meeting by breaking into six groups. These groups would each be assigned a topic/issue, as defined in the previous meeting (see below). The first 45 minutes of the February 23 meeting will be spent in these small groups; in the second hour we would come back to the larger group for reports and discussion. The idea is that by clarifying our ideas about these issues, we will be in a better position in future meetings to evaluate various organizational models.
2. I am assigning taskforce members to these six sub-committees somewhat arbitrarily. If you have strong objections to your assignment, I'll try to accommodate your interests, but you should remember that these groups are simply designed to allow for brief, more intimate (and hopefully productive) conversation in the opening hour of the next meeting. It would be helpful if folks would give some thought to the topic assigned to your group prior to Monday's meeting.

#### Group 1: Common Undergraduate Core Curriculum

- Steele Taylor
- Lynn Bond
- Jim Burgmeier
- Sherwood Smith

#### Group 2: Undergraduate Engagement

- Kathy Manning
- Annie Stevens
- Patty Corcoran
- David Barrington

#### Group 3: Research and Graduate Education

- Richard Galbraith
- Tom Vogelmann
- Clinton Jasperson
- Sondra Solomon

#### Group 4: Financial Sustainability

- Julia Russell
- Michael Gurdon
- Mara Saule
- Christopher Lucier

#### Group 5: Interdisciplinarity

- Domenico Grasso
- Susan Harrington
- David Neiweem
- Beth Mintz

#### Group 6: Administrative Efficiency

- Eleanor Miller
- Sharon Henry
- Stephanie Kaza
- Rodney Parsons