

Accreditation Team (A-Team) Discussions, October 11, 2013

In attendance: June Turner, Michael Gaubeca, Tencha Rivera, Brian Thieboux

We had a small group today, so our discussions were limited to just a few topics, but we thought there might be interest in some of our ideas.

The purpose of the discussions was to evaluate, from an accreditation standpoint, what could have been done better in bringing forward into discussion two important and timely proposals, namely, the ESL position and the Learning Skills Center.

As we all know, accreditation stresses the importance of full exploration and evaluation of ideas and proposals, dialogue with constituencies, and the reaching of conclusions that help promote student learning.

The A-Team attendees at today's meeting believe that there are processes in place and effective organizations and committees that can accommodate and evaluate ideas and proposals: divisions, an array of committees, College Council, Academic Senate, CTA, and CSEA, among others.

Despite the organizational resources available, though, there was some confusion in the manner in which the topics were handled, accompanied by uncertainty on how to proceed. Solutions were eventually arrived at, but only after some awkward false steps.

So, how could the confusion have been avoided?

Both the ESL position and the Learning Skills Center proposals have impact on the college in various ways, including budget, enrollment, academic standards, student success and learning. The committee that considers these topics and has college-wide membership is the College Council, the key strategic planning committee of the college representing all constituent groups.

The proposals were aired in the College Council, but we wonder whether there was enough time allowed for representatives on the College Council to confer with their constituent organizations, and to respond to the proposal in a subsequent College Council meeting.

Specific thoughts on the Learning Skills Center

What would be the purpose and function of the learning skill center—tutoring only? Or, would it involve a whole host of student learning services? And, depending upon the scope of services, will the center be staffed by a full-time faculty member? The function and scope of the center will have considerable impact what kind of location is suitable for it.

Here are some brainstorming ideas the A-Team members came up with to help the committee assigned to this effort:

1. Consider renaming it to: Student Success Center, Learning Resource Center, Academic Skills Center, Tutoring Center, or?
2. Services: tutoring only, or: writing lab, skills workshops, assessment and placement testing, self-paced tutoring services, etc.
3. Would faculty (in various disciplines where considerable writing is required) consider requiring attendance at, say, a writing lab, as part of their course requirements? If so, participation of students would be greatly increased.
4. Staffing: full-time faculty/staff person? Tutors?
5. Funding: is funding available to pay a full-time person and tutoring staff, if that is the direction, or should the center be dedicated only to tutoring?
6. Location should be quiet, with little traffic, to facilitate learning; the mall area, where the LSC was formerly located, is not a suitable location for tutoring, testing and related learning support services.

The team concluded that finding a suitable location is only one part of the question. The committee assigned the task of finding a home for the center needs to first consider the extent and type of services, staffing, and funding sources. Using the College Council to discuss the proposal, with constituent response, would have helped answer these questions and made for a smoother, more effective process.