Notes from Department Chairs Meeting, October 7, 2008

The Associate Dean, Department Chairs, and the Director of Resource Management met from 8-9:50 AM in the Deanís Conference Room. The meeting was rescheduled from the previous week due to the Jewish holiday.

When Bruce became IDS Department Chair in Fall 2006, he wanted to have a way to contact alumni of IDS programs, and could not get the information that he needed from the BSR database. He successfully built the IDS Alumni database, which is managed completely online (i.e., modifications are made by the alumni themselves) and includes a forgot password feature. 350 alumni are in the database, and he has a linked-in site. IDS alumni are receiving a newsletter and participating in multiple assessment studies via contact through the database.

He has been approached by multiple departments to setup similar databases for their academic unit. He has resisted this because he suggests that it would be poor design for the college because there is a one-to-many relationship between an alumnus and departments. Multiple databases would result in data redundancy and inaccuracy throughout the college. He recommends that we view the IDS database as proof-of-concept and build something that the entire CBA can use or, if possible, modify the existing BSR system to make it more accessible to alumni and faculty members. This would entail a larger effort, and the chairs felt that this should really fall under the responsibility of the University Development Office.

Jim will suggest to Gail (she was at WACSB) that we invite the appropriate parties from University Development to come to an Executive Committee meeting (we felt this would be of interest to EMC, CIBER, and other centers) to discuss how we could assist them in developing a database which could better serve the needs of the CBA, as well as the other colleges.

The Provost has told Gail that faculty budgets will be decentralized. Well before Gail became Dean, we have had a centralized budget, in which all faculty and lecturer salaries are taken out of the same college pool, and then GA and travel/equipment monies are assigned to each department. This has allowed the college to maintain some flexibility to allow for shifts in numbers of majors, unanticipated faculty sick leaves and other situations which required one-time funding shifts.

Under a decentralized budget, each department will be responsible for all of the faculty salaries, GA, and travel/equipment funds. Departments would also be responsible for meeting FTE targets, and receive additional funds for exceeding targets, but paying back funds when falling below targets (all colleges do this with the central administration). Summer school would remain centralized.

There was a discussion about class sizes for the major undergraduate classes beyond the core. We all agree that class sizes are too large, and pedagogy and quality suffer as class sizes are increased. The issue was brought up as to how class sizes are determined, and if
there was any college policy (there is not). Jim reflected that in previous discussions with former Associate Dean Wilbur, that class sizes were left to the department, subject to being able to generate sufficient FTE given budgetary requirements. Unfortunately, with the current budget conditions, smaller class sizes require that more sections need to be offered and this results in increased faculty costs, so that savings have to be achieved somewhere else, by going to larger classes in other sections or reducing funding in other areas (GA, travel).

Joe described the approach that Marketing uses. He said the Marketing department made some tradeoffs between raising sizes of some other major classes to achieve some smaller sizes in the capstone classes.

If departments can create cost savings from larger classes in some areas, they can reduce class sizes in others. As we move to a decentralized budget, each department will need to decide how they want to deal with this issue, and establish priorities for cost-savings with regard to class sizes, GA allocations, travel/equipment, or other appropriate uses of funds.

In anticipation of our AACSB visit in 2012-13, Jim works with Kelly to see how we are doing on the metrics that are required as part of our self-study, specifically faculty sufficiency and faculty qualifications. He has been preparing reports each year on our progress in these areas, and we are currently below the standard as a college on faculty sufficiency, as we don’t have enough participating faculty positions. In lay terms, a participating faculty member contributes to the college’s strategic mission beyond just classroom teaching, which covers the tenured, tenure-track, and FERP faculty and some of the part-time lecturers. Gail and Jim have had an ongoing discussion of this issue with the central administration, and Associate VP Ethan Singer recently met with the chairs to assess possible options, given the current budget situation.

Kelly updated the most recent statistics from Fall 2008, and Jim will send a revised report to AVP Singer. He asked the chairs for any feedback on the report.

Gary Grudnitski (the CBA representative on the University Grants Program) suggested to Jim that if newer faculty wanted to apply for UGP grants, that they might defer their summer money to a future year if they were awarded funds. In the past, some junior faculty have been discouraged from applying for summer funding if they were already receiving summer support as part of their university contract. Jim suggested to the Chairs that they consider this option for their newer faculty members.