TO: Tih-Fen Ting, Chair, Campus Senate
FROM: Dyanne Ferk & Ted Mims, Co-Chairs Committee on Admissions, Recruitment, and Retention (CARR)
DATE: April 26, 2010
RE: CARR report AY 2009-10

As of April 2010 the CARR Committee members are: Gary Butler, Allan Cook, Andy Egizi, Dyanne Ferk, Kamau Kemayo, Ted Mims, Calvin Mouw, Jorge Villegas and two student members. Ex Officio members of the Committee include: Tim Barnett, Brian Clevenger, Gerard Joseph, Lori Giordano, Karen Kirkendall, Rick Lane, Karen Moranski, Lynn Pardie, and Pinky Wassenberg.

On March 21, 2008 the Senate adopted Resolution 37-24 to create a committee on admissions, recruitment, and retention. The committee was charged with the responsibility for developing, monitoring, and evaluating campus educational policies and standards related to admissions and re-admissions of UIS students, and policies which concern the retention of students, registration, and class scheduling. In addition, we were also charged to make recommendations on procedures and practices in the Office of Records and Registration, Admissions, Financial Aid, and Enrollment Management that have an effect on the attainment of the University’s educational objectives.

With any problem-solving process, it is appropriate to begin with idea generation and investigation. The committee identified issues related to the charge above, prioritized the issues and decided to identify three sub committees to pursue three themes. The sub-committees were comprised of voting and ex-officio members. Sub-committees were given time to discuss issues and receive information in order to learn more about policies and practices and each committee developed a report that included recommendations.

Attached you will find the reports developed by each sub-committee. Representatives of the three sub-committees will be present at the Campus Senate meeting to highlight recommendations and the rationale for each issue. Please refer to the report in its entirety for the entire scope of recommendations.
Subcommittee Members: Andy Egizi, Dyanne Ferk, Calvin Mouw, Gerard Joseph, Lori Giordano, and Rick Lane.

The following recommendations have been listed in priority order:

1. **Creation of an Academic Advising Task Force.** The committee recommends that Vice-Chancellor Berman and Vice-Chancellor Barnett create a task force to review our undergraduate advising system and to recommend changes and new initiatives to strengthen our current efforts and to bridge existing gaps in service. We believe that this should be a university-wide effort so that the resulting recommendations can be implemented consistently by each of the colleges and by the appropriate staff members in Academic Affairs and in Student Affairs. We encourage the committee to consider the following issues:

   - UIS has many student populations each of which may have unique advising needs. In some cases, students’ needs may even vary within populations, for example, freshmen entering UIS from high school may have different needs than adult freshman.

   - It is important to consider what constitutes academic advising and who should be responsible for the various components. A team approach to advising including faculty and professional advisors is not only a viable option but one that colleges are beginning to implement on their own.

   - While there are valid reasons to centralize lower division general education (freshman/sophomore level) advising in Academic Affairs, major advising should remain in the colleges. Also, because general education needs are not limited to lower division advising, major advisors must be knowledgeable in this area as well. It is important that there be a clear hand-off so that all students continue to be served throughout their degrees.

   - We encourage the committee to consider the concept of a ‘master advisor’ who has the ability to work with all students when called upon but who also has a close relationship and a precise knowledge of a specific major or majors. This will allow them to provide specialized advisement to students in those programs and establish relationships with program representatives. We encourage the freshman/sophomore level advisors to consider this model as well. Assigning advisees based upon the students’ future major rather than arbitrary assignment (such as by last name) will insure that the advisor is more able to help students transition into their majors. Students who have not declared a major can continue to be randomly assigned to an advisor who has the broadest knowledge of all programs.

Rationale: Undergraduate advisement is a key factor in our ability to retain students. The most recent data from the National Survey of Student Engagement suggests that there is a gap between our students’ expectations for advising and their satisfaction with
the advisement they've received at UIS. More importantly, the data suggests that this gap has widened between the 2001 and 2007 surveys. The most recent Noel Levitz surveys also note that quality of advisement and related scheduling issues are challenges UIS should address.

2. **Clear lines of communication.** The policies and procedures that effect academic advising are subject to change. It is vital that these changes are communicated to everyone who is responsible for advising so that advisement quality is consistent across campus. The committee recommends the creation of an academic advising listserv or similar communication system. This will not only allow advisors to remain on top of changing policies and procedures; it will provide a forum for collaboration which might lead to innovative approaches to advisement, to problem-solving, and to the creation of student-oriented tools and resources.

Rationale: The components of academic advising are complex; different populations of students have unique needs and the existence of shared curricula combined with the complexities associated with DARS serve to make the process confusing for students and faculty. To effectively advise students, we must share information, we must better utilize our existing tools, and we must be prepared create tools when necessary to insure that students and their advisors have accurate, up-to-date, and easily accessible information.
Subcommittee Members: Gary Butler, Brian Clevenger, Ted Mims, and Lynn Pardie.

The following issues/recommendations have been listed in priority order:

1. **More classes should be scheduled outside the 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM time period.**
   The most underutilized time slots occur during the day on Friday and Monday night. We would encourage departments to consider offering more classes during the day on Friday and on Monday night.

   Based on data from Janice Marvel, there are several time slots for classes that have an excessive number of courses being scheduled by departments on certain days and nights. Therefore, there are not enough classrooms to accommodate the requests. At other times the classrooms are greatly underutilized.

2. **Better coordination of course scheduling among UIS units.** UIS needs better coordination of course scheduling between departments offering lower division required courses in the major and departments offering lower division general education and CAP Honors courses. We also recommend that a process be developed and implemented to review the procedures used to schedule lower division classes into allotted time slots.

   Scheduling conflicts seem to occur most frequently when courses required for the major, general education classes and AP honors classes are scheduled during the same time slots. These conflicts have resulted in the recommendation to some students that they take the general education classes at a community college.

3. **Departments/programs should prepare a 3-4 year schedule of required and elective courses for majors and post the schedule on the department’s website.**
   UIS needs to ensure students have the opportunity to graduate on schedule in a timely manner. This could be facilitated if the departments would develop multi-year published plans that indicate the semester courses will be offered.

4. **The process of entering and updating the course schedule be reviewed** in an effort to determine the optimal method of data entry for building the schedule and for modifying the schedule after the initial data has been entered.

   Each semester there are errors in the course schedule when it ‘goes live.’ The process for entering scheduling data has been decentralized and moved to the department level. This decentralization provides the opportunity to spread the data entry to the department secretaries. However, correcting any errors after the data is entered can occur at multiples levels and may result in changes that may not get validated at the appropriate levels of approval.
Subcommittee Members: Allan Cook, Kamau Kemayo, Jorge Villegas and Karen Moranski.

In the process of identifying the issues and scope of for this subcommittee, members of the committee interviewed a number of UIS personnel including: Karen Moranski, Laura Dorman, Tena Helton, and James Ermatinger.

The following recommendations have been listed in priority order:

1. **Creation of a writing task force.**
   The committee recommends the creation of a task force to explore the current status, needs, and plans for the role of writing in undergraduate education. This task force should be seen as a university-wide endeavor since writing is not only an essential element of higher education but it is also uniquely applied in all disciplines.
   We list an initial set of issues that the task force should look into:
   
   A. Evaluation of the current writing abilities of undergraduate students, including lessons from the placement test used to evaluate incoming freshmen.

   B. Interviewing department chairs and faculty members to assess:
      a. Perceptions of students’ writing abilities and deficiencies.
      b. Current writing requirements of the programs.
      c. Current formal assessments of writing.

   C. Determine current campus resources available for students and faculty members to improve and evaluate writing. Can/how can these resources be further engaged to involve 1) faculty development projects, and 2) the needs of entering students, including transfer students?

   D. Explore the possibility to integrate a university-wide writing effort through:
      a. Use of ECCE courses as an opportunity to improve, assess, or test the writing abilities of the students. An idea to explore is to create a committee that would recollect the writing of students and then develop some type of global evaluation of the writing abilities of students.
      b. Use the capstone courses of majors that offer one to do something similar.
      c. Potential of implementing a Writing Across the Curriculum program

2. **Evaluate the relationship between students’ writing abilities and retention.**
   The writing subcommittee of CARR should cooperate with Committee on the Assessment of Student learning, as well as Karen Moranski, Laura Dorman, Tim Barnett, and others who are working on a dataset that explores retention issues. Part of the information would be beneficial to determining if there is a link between retention and students’ writing abilities. If this relationship can be empirically proven, the committee and recommended task force will reinforce the importance of writing.