

University Council

Student Engagement and Success

Minutes: November 16, 2016

Attendees: Brown, Jenna; Byrne, Michelle; Caillet, Barb; Gannon, Debbie; Kemp, Sukanya; Krovi, Ravi; Levy, Paul; Messina, John; Simmons, Todd;

Absent with

Notice: Pluess, Carol;

Absent: Angeletti, Ricky;

October SES Committee minutes amended and approved

Old Business:

- I. Scholarship/Financial Aid/Admissions Q & A with Diane Raybuck & Jennifer Harpham
 - a. How do we see the scholarship cap effecting enrollment?
 - i. UA is taking a global outlook when administering financial aid. The overriding philosophy is that they would like to take the funding that is available and spread it to as many students as possible to increase access. The work study program being a prime example, there is little funding but it is broken up to make an impact on more students.
 - ii. Finances are the main reason for withdrawal from the university. The responsibility of the university is to increase access while decreasing the need for student loans.
 - iii. The cap is also a mechanism to control the spending from the general fund. The cap was proposed after an outside company assessed how UA distributed funds and determined that using a grid system to spread funding would help UA to attract, recruit, and enroll the students who persist to graduation. The cap can fluctuate based on tuition and trends related to the caps effectiveness.
 - iv. The main students this cap impacts is the students who are middle range, not top 5% but not low income. These students make up 60% of the population and are the students that UA retains and persist to graduation. The scholarship cap helps us to better support these students.
 - v. A student could hypothetically cover the current cost of tuition and with the cap. The cap cutoff typically impacts less than 100 students that are considered the top students.
 - vi. UA's top competitor institutions offer "up to full tuition", which puts UA in line with them. Kent State, UA's biggest competitor, offers very similar financial aid packages.
 - b. Do we have data from 2012 on that shows that the goal of the cap is being achieved?
 - i. Since open enrollment was ended in 2011 the average class GPA and test scores have increased suggesting that the now UA is a more competitive admission institution. The new class profiles are the support for the caps effectiveness.

- ii. From an admissions perspective we do not necessarily know why students choose UA, but funding and small awards to make UA more competitive (UA Now, UA Silver/Gold housing awards, etc.) play a role.
- c. Scholarship Packages:
 - i. By the holidays in December most incoming students will already know their entire financial aid package. Need based aid is sent throughout December.
 - ii. Room and board seems to be the most prohibitive for students.
 - iii. We need to re-assess how these packages are sent and explained to students and explaining to students how to read their overall UA bill.
 - 1. This communication has changed over the last year. These packages now start with a direct message about their specific aid and is followed by other important information.
 - 2. Information about specific tasks to get financial aid (entrance counselling, etc.) is sent after the initial package.
 - 3. Communication about how the student's bills are packaged and how we can make them easier to read and understand is not necessarily out committees work, but something that can be passed to others to assess further.
 - iv. Creating a checklist for students may help them to better understand their aid.
 - v. Communication to parents about parent loans needs to be assessed.
- d. Scholarship Assessment and Loss:
 - i. Scholarships are re-evaluated on a yearly basis. UA academic scholarships are the only funds that are guaranteed (if a student continues to meet criteria) but colleges can award a student different funding yearly.
 - ii. Financial aid related holds are addressed monthly via email. Students need to take responsibility for these holds but often times do not, until the hold prevents them from registering for classes.
 - iii. When a student loses their scholarship we assume that they leave the university when in reality they may be seeking outside loans. Finding the percentage of students who stay versus students who leave may be the next step in assessing how to assist students who lose their funding.
 - iv. We tend to lose a lot of students who have a significant amount of credits but have exhausted their financial aid.
 - v. The Retention and Completion Grant evaluates a student's profile at the end of their career to provide small amounts of additional funding to get them to graduation.
- e. Top 5% Students: Is there a way to determine what is offered to the top 5% students and how many of these students we lose because of the scholarship cap?
 - i. This has been consistently studied and has remained consistent throughout past/pre-cap percentages.
- f. At-Risk Students
 - i. To cover the students who need a lot of funding to cover their financial gaps is not sustainable under the current cap program, which is not a retention focused

program but an access focused program. These students often need more funding than what the university can cover.

- ii. We need to determine a program for these at risk students that retains them through work-study initiatives.
- iii. Working on campus contributes greatly to student success. There needs to be a re-evaluation of the areas that are making cuts to student employment opportunities.
- iv. Hiring at-risk students for work positions that are interest linked and career focused at their NSO's would contribute to retention.
- v. Departments who set up this type of employment and mentorship based program should receive funding to support this retention initiative.

g. Books:

- i. Tuition refunds are dispersed 10 days prior to the semester in order for students to cover costs like books.
- ii. At this time we do not know if there is a book specific scholarship.
- iii. Barnes & Noble has the ability to put books against a student's account in order for students to use financial aid to cover costs. Athletes currently do this at UA.
- iv. At this time we do not know if IT can handle this type of initiative with Barnes & Noble.

New Business:

- I. Enrollment:
 - a. We are up 16% in admits in comparison to this time last year.
 - b. We are up 14% in application in comparison to this time last year.
 - c. Overall enrollment is up 8% in comparison to this time last year.
 - d. But, comparing overall confirmation data will be difficult due to the anomaly that was last year.
 - e. By the beginning of April we will have received about 50% of confirmations. Throughout April we will receive the rest of confirmations.
 - f. Historically, the week before the May 1 deadline UA receives about 500 confirmations.
- II. Spring semester goals should include recommendations following today's guests and the discussions around the scholarship cap.
- III. The student proposal for the UA Global Scholarship is being looked at by Ricky Angeletti.