

Academic Priorities Council
Thursday, November 20, 2007

Attendees: Richard Bogartz, Kathleen Debevec Witz, Jean DeMartinis, Bryan Harvey, Randall Knoper, Anne C. Moore

Guest: Kevin Kelly, Admissions

1) Minutes from October 16th meeting were approved with 2 corrections: deletion of “We will begin with 2006-2007 reports and move backwards” and rewording of one sentence to read “Bryan Harvey will send the Instructional Analysis from the Amherst 250 process to committee members.”

2) Discussion of Supply and Demand issues with Kevin Kelly from Admissions

The most competitive and attractive programs at UMass for potential students (particularly those from NE) are:

1. Management (ISOM)
2. Sport Management
3. Hospitality and Tourism Management

Students are perennially interested in Arts & Sciences majors such as English, History, Government, and various social sciences. Those thinking about health professions and public health do not speak with our admissions folks. Kids are not necessarily going to school to prepare for employment. Half of history majors are looking to go to law school.

Those who are not admitted to ISOM become undeclared (SBS, Economics). Of the 1200 or so who are undeclared, 400 are ISOM alternate accepts. The phasing out of pre-major programs, which used to take these students in, has clearly had an impact. The direct admit to management, engineering, music, art, dance, English, communication, psychology, computer science, and nursing allows the major to skim the best students off the top. Students want to get into nursing because of the good money and availability of jobs, but 5,000 potential students couldn't find a slot last year. We are controlling the size of our undergraduate nursing program and focusing on graduate programs. There is always significant interest in journalism and communication. Our journalism program focuses on print and the craft of writing. Students want digital media. In communication we are not doing broadcasting and need sports broadcasting. These are both large majors with low student satisfaction and serious resource issues. Eight positions added in the last 2 years through UMA250, so they are just about ready to handle the students they have. A new chair arrives in Journalism in January. The advent of web-based media including blogs, YouTube, and other social media may be an opportunity for us to expand our program in spite of poor facilities. Our yield rate is down. We need to create something students want to be competitive in the higher education marketplace. We only make money on the out-of-state students. Yet we lose many out-of-state students because of our non-competitive financial aid packages. We have merit-aid, but few need-based packages for out-of-state students. Many of the top state universities go after the top students throughout the country and can attract them with excellent financial aid packages. We are the safety school for both in-state and out-of-state

students, so we end up getting a lower quality student. Eighty percent of our out-of-state students come from New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

SOM has a faculty line. How much bigger could it get without a decrease in the quality of the students? Ranking is controlled by profile of school and student. We need to take in more students, but keep the quality bar high.

International relations concentration has continuing interest: public service, language training, and study abroad. Programs related to environmental and green concerns are extremely popular. The bottom has dropped out in agriculture. Biology interest is huge. Need more medical school slots. Amherst College, which has an 85-90% yield rate, wants to get larger – another threat. We continue to struggle to attract quality students. QuestBridge might be a good program for us: try to increase minority and low-income students with good grades to give them a free ride. Posse program in which you fully-fund 40 kids who have had a 2 year training program in high school. Provide a supportive program. Hugely expensive.

Boutique programs that are successful, but with small numbers: music, English writing, kinesiology, and chemistry.

A one-credit seminar in how to study might help students succeed once they get here: value-added.

We are weak competitively; we try to overreach; try to bring in too many for a chance of success; our place is defined by last 200 we admit. Smaller class sizes and more selectivity work better. We have 19,000 undergraduates now, but 17,500-17,800 is optimal. Cut bottom tier to be more successful.

Advising and connection to adults on campus helps with retention. SOM and Engineering have the most effective advising programs. Direct admits and freshman seminar will likely help. Two-thirds of students who leave in the 1st year are having academic problems. How much can advising help with the academic problems? One-third leave because they don't like it: size and lack of personal attention results in alienation. Investigate expert systems to support advising.

3) Kathy Debevec will try to arrange for Pamela Marsh-Williams from Advising to attend the next meeting to continue the conversation on Supply and Demand. If Pamela cannot make it, Kathy will try to get John Cunningham to attend. If neither can attend, we will discuss the AQAD reports. Dick will send out the Buzzword access info again, so committee members can read and annotate the reports.

Next meeting: December 18 from 1-2 p.m. in CC805-09