

## **Progress Report**

### **Encourage and Maintain Academic Excellence Taskforce**

**Members:** Katherine Jackson (B&E, co-chair), Rebecca Torstrick (Sociology/Anthropology, LAS, co-chair), David Barton (Arts), Linda Fisher (Library), Randy Isaacson (Education), Anne Brown (Mathematics, LAS), Marta Makielski (Health Professions), Katherine Karl (SPEA).

#### **Scope of Project:**

We identified three “themes” or areas for our situational analysis this semester and future study:

- 1) Excellence of Programs: standards, goals, assessment, accreditation reports
- 2) Student Excellence: recognition, incentives, support for excellence (grades, SMART)
- 3) Faculty Excellence: recruiting, developing, and retaining excellence (support for research, scholarship, support for teaching, support for service, role of UCET)

#### **Activities to Date:**

We have held five meetings to date (February 8, 19; March 12, April 2, 16). Our opening meetings focused on the difficult task of defining “academic excellence” as a focus to our future work. Areas for exploration that came up in these conversations included the issue of standards (admission and grading), of grade inflation, of remediation and how it affects excellence on campus, resources available to students and faculty, different systems for measuring excellence across different disciplines, programs on campus that attempt to encourage or maintain excellence. Assessment will be a key issue in all of these areas: how do we define, measure, and reward excellence at IUSB? How do we accommodate our institutional diversity? Are there different strategies to assess different units? It is also clear to our members that our charge overlaps a great deal with the Student Taskforce and we will want to coordinate our efforts.

#### **Issues Raised:**

In the following meetings, we have focused on collecting basic data and discussing the following areas: standards for student admission, continuation and graduation from programs; standards for tenure and promotion for faculty; campus programs that encourage excellence (UCET/FACET, Honors Program, SMART, Faculty awards structure, disciplinary structures for undergraduate research and recognition of student excellence). Much of this information is available from university bulletins, university reports on assessment, the NCA Self-Study, ICHE Campus Profile. We have requested data on our student profile and information on recruiting strategies for outstanding high school seniors from the Admissions office. Other data will be collected from the individual departments, Colleges, or Divisions regarding practices for supporting and encouraging student excellence.

#### **Next Steps:**

We hope to have this data compiled in our 1 July report. This report should provide a baseline description of current resources and practices for encouraging and maintaining excellence on campus. Our next steps will include starting a discussion with faculty, student groups, and administrators about their vision of what the resources and practices should be, assessment of how well current practices are working, and developing better institutional structures for encouraging and maintaining excellence, keeping in mind the differing roles and needs of our constituent units.