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Finance minutes 11/29/2012

Finance Committee

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UMM Finance Committee Minutes November 29, 2012

Members Present: Bryce Blankenfeld, Brad Deane, Pierranna Garavaso, Sara Haugen, Michael Korth, Reed Olmscheid, Lowell Rasmussen, Gwen Rudney, Dennis Stewart, Laura Thielke, Tara Winchester, Timna Wyckoff, Mary Zosel

Members Absent: None

Guests: Jill Beauregard, Jacquie Johnson, Colleen Miller (note taker), Melissa Wrobleski

1. Approval of the November 15, 2012 minutes
Laura Thielke requested three corrections to the minutes.
Minutes, as amended, from November 15, 2012 were approved: 12 approvals and 1 abstain.
2. Michael Korth invited Chancellor Jacquie Johnson to give the committee an update on what is happening with respect to the student One Stop on the Morris campus. Chancellor Johnson handed out a 2-page document entitled "*University of Minnesota, Morris One-Stop Office Proposal*" and briefly covered the materials in the handout.

This was followed by a Q & A session. Answers were provided by Jacquie Johnson, Jill Beauregard, Financial Aid Director (One Stop would also be under Jill's supervision), Tara Winchester and Lowell Rasmussen.

Timna: Recurring funds will be used to support the new One Stop position. What are those funds currently being used for?

Answer Jacquie/Jill: The source of the recurring funds is an "Administrative Cost Allowance" paid to UMM Financial Aid for administering Federal PELL, the federal work study program and Perkins Loans. This allowance hasn't been used (spent) in the last two years and is still included in Financial Aid's carry forward balance. Prior to two years ago, these funds were used to help offset deficits in scholarship programs. Going forward, the allowance will be used to partially pay Financial Aid staff salaries (e.g., Carole Backman, administers student Work Study program), which will free up O&M dollars to pay for a new One Stop position.

Michael: Is this a reliable, consistent flow of recurring funds? Has there been a shift over the years? (The concern is that these funds may cease and O&M dollars would then need to support the new position in the One Stop.)

Answer Jill: Yes, there is a consistent flow; and we do have some control over the funding. If anything drastic happened to our federal funding it would affect more than just the student One Stop.

Sara: How does this support Native Americans? Is the new counselor position in the One Stop?

Answer Jacquie: The new Financial Aid Counselor position was approved as a result of the FY13 Compact process and funding for this new position was made available through Compact initiative dollars. The Financial Aid Counselor position will be staffed in the Financial Aid Office, not in the One Stop.

Pieranna: One of the concerns raised in previous meetings was, “Is there a need? We are not a big University. Why do we need a One Stop vs. co-location of departments?”

Answer Jill: The One Stop will provide a holistic service and is not just about Financial Aid. There will not be a disruption in the service given to student, as there is today. The goal is to avoid students being given the “run around.”

Answer Tara: I have an example that happened numerous times this past fall. Students are allowed to add or drop classes up to a certain period of time after the term begins (e.g., go from 16 credits to 12 credits).

Current process

- a. Financial Aid staff member receives a request by a student to drop a class. Financial Aid staff reviews the student’s financial aid information and looks at the award.
- b. Student is sent up to the Registrar’s Office since dropping a class is currently a Registrar function.
- c. Amount of financial aid awarded changes due to the number of credits being taken.
- d. The amount owed by the student changes as a result of dropping the class and the change in financial aid. The student is sent to the Business Office to settle up for the difference in the bill.

One Stop

- a. Student works with a One Stop Counselor who is able to review their financial aid and award.
- b. One Stop Counselor advises student that dropping a class will result in an adjustment to the amount of financial aid awarded and the student will owe additional money.
- c. Student now prefers to swap out Class A for Class B.
- d. One Stop Counselor advises student that there is still a balance owing on student’s account and inquires as to how the student plans to pay for amount owed.
- e. Student’s response may be use of a payment plan – One Stop Counselor can explain different options.
- f. Or student may indicate that parents will make payment – One Stop Counselor inquires whether parents have Parent/Guest access? Helps student set up guest access.
- g. Parents are notified that they have been given Parent/Guest access and have questions on how it works. One Stop Counselor is able to answer their questions.
- h. Parents inquire on availability of work study? And so on . . .

Other areas that One Stop Counselors may assist in are questions on health insurance, waivers, or any other subject matter that affects all three offices (Business, Financial Aid, Registrar). The goal of the One Stop office is to help students with the business of being a student.

Timna: I am still troubled by the idea that doing things differently takes more dollars. Renovation for the One Stop – how did this get to the top of the list?

Answer Jacquie/Lowell: The prioritization is tied into the available HEAPR dollars for the year. (Chancellor Johnson acknowledged with, “Isn’t it interesting?” Being that there are now two committees (Planning and Finance) where there used to be one (CRPC), this question is related to Planning. She asked Lowell Rasmussen to briefly talk about HEAPR funding.)

Answer Lowell: We need to manage the HEAPR list of projects each year. If you do not spend the amount of HEAPR dollars awarded, they are lost to UMM; and the rules on how you are able to spend HEAPR have changed as well. There has been a change in the central staff who manages HEAPR funding. HEAPR may no longer to be used on programmatic projects or projects with a life of less than 20 years (e.g., replacement of carpeting is no longer allowed). There have been several discussions between central and UMM on what constitutes programmatic costs versus capital projects. Approximately \$1.6 million in HEAPR funding was awarded to UMM this past year. (At this point Lowell was asked if he would read off the list of projects that had been approved for HEAPR funding. The list included \$170,000 for the One Stop and \$130,000 for the Business Office remodel.)

Answer Jacquie: Let’s come back to Pieranna’s and Timna’s questions. We need to be successful in a competitive market. We haven’t been as successful as hoped. Last year we lost over 100 students fall to spring. We need to find ways to help students and to improve retention. At this time of year, we have students with registration holds for spring due to non-payment. If they go home for the holiday break before they are able to register, it is more likely that they will not come back. We need to find ways to help them with their expectations.

Timna: Why can’t this happen with our current offices?

Answer Jill: I have looked at various ways on how to redistribute the workload within Financial Aid. Our office is down to three people to do the processing of financial aid for the entire student body. We want to be proactive rather than reactive. In the past, the three offices (Business, Financial Aid, Registrar) have used a “silo” approach in providing customer service to students.

As a One Stop Counselor, Tara has been instrumental in identifying missing documents for students earlier in the process. She assists with contacting students are not able to register due to nonpayment (referred to as our Triage processing). We need a minimum of three people to run a One Stop Office. We are asking for one more person in addition to the three financial aid processors. We need 3 processors in financial aid and 3 one stop counselors. A One Stop can be more holistic and help, not only with retention as the Chancellor mentioned, but with recruitment and graduation rates as well

Timna: Why the need for more space?

Answer Jill and Tara: Offered that those questioning the space need come take a look at the current office layout in the Financial Aid office. “We need to make students a priority!”

Answer Jacquie: Looking back to when Admissions occupied space on the first floor of Behmler before moving to the Welcome Center, there was an issue of crowding. The space issues for the One Stop are different. The space in question is not configured to 21st century expectations. We need to redesign it to provide for smaller individual offices to afford privacy to students when discussing their financial situation. Imagine it from a student's perspective. The Business Office has taken the step to post a sign asking people to respect privacy issues. Can you imagine talking about an overdue bill, trying to explain a situation, and asking for assistance in front of others? Both the Business Office and the Registrar's office are not handicap accessible. The Welcome Center is a good example. Will it be better with the remodel? Yes.

Answer Lowell: Another concern is the point of entry in regards to the three separate offices today – Business Office, Financial Aid and Registrar – there is no data capture of the traffic coming into these offices. Financial Aid has been capturing the number of student appointments for the past couple of years, but this does not capture all the traffic.

Answer Jill: A queuing system will capture data at point of entry.

Michael: Another concern from last spring is whether this is a data driven decision or an actual need from students. How will success be determined?

Answer Jacquie: We don't have a One Stop in place as of yet. We have taken steps. There is some data available as well as anecdotal evidence.

Answer Jill: I have been here twenty years. This is the way to serve students. The One Stop will have a charge – goals for which they will be accountable. It will be hard to determine the exact impact on retention. We will have numbers on how many students have been served.

Brad: Is there currently data available?

Answer Jill: We currently have information in Financial Aid based on the number of comments - where counselors have assisted students.

Answer Jacquie: We don't have comparable data for the number of students served in the Registrar or Business Office.

Brad: We don't have a way of assessing? What about when Jen Zych Herrmann conducts the exit interview?

Answer Jacquie: There is some information available on assisting students (e.g., Sandy was able to pull up information from a data base for the residence halls). For a new program, it is difficult to find data in advance. Students need to be able to get their questions answered. It is not okay for a student to have to wait for an individual person to return to work from vacation or a sick day to get back to a student. We need to be consumer driven and not in an environment where just one person can provide the answer. This is the proposal and the path. It follows Best Practices. There are national conferences for this sort of "thing" (Jill - Integrated Student Services).

Timna: It's a good idea, but could it happen without the renovation? I continue to have questions about what kinds of decisions we are being asked to decide.

Sara: It is very confusing, now that there are two committees. Has the Planning Committee given their approval?

Answer Jacquie: The minutes of the Planning Committee would reflect the conversation that took place there. They didn't take a vote and it didn't appear that they had additional questions.

Answer Jacquie: We did meet with the Student Affairs Committee last year. We haven't gone back to them this year as they supported the One Stop when we met with them previously.

Michael: Our time is up for today.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting is December 6 in the Moccasin Flower Room at 8AM.