Minutes from the Student Development work group

Date: Thursday, November 11, 2010 at 8 a.m.

Present: Suzanne Bailey, Dan Byrne, Vincent Harper, Mike Jacobs, Ralph Larmann, Steve Mussett, Debbie Kassenbrock, Brock Reneer, Gary Rigley, Ellen Sawin, Monica Spencer, John Stanley and

Absent with Excuse: Tamara Wandel and Dana Clayton

The committee approved the minutes from the November 4, 2010 without any objections.

Brock Reneer opened the meeting with a discussion of an informal survey that he had taken. He had asked students “What do you think Student Life is?” Most freshmen and sophomores failed to provide an answer and had difficulty identifying areas outside the classroom where they were involved in life development. When he asked “What do we do well?” Brock found students mentioned Career Services, but also noted weeklong waits to attain an appointment. Brock believed that this should be enhanced and that the university strengthen its alumni mentoring program which currently only has 40 participants. On the question of negatives facing the university, students focused on facilities including the Village residences and the fitness center. One student stated “We save our worst [housing] for our best [students].” Brock suggested several questions for our discussion with students on November 17.

- What do we do well? What exemplifies this excellence?
- What did you notice at other schools that would positively affect student life?
- If you can change one thing at the University, what would it be?
- How do students feel about the different types of housing or residence life offered?

John Stanley turned the committee’s focus to social life. Ellen Sawin noted that planned events go very well, but there is not enough weekend programming to keep students on campus. She suggested that more coordination versus competition of Greek life would allow for more attendance at their organized events. Other members of the committee discussed the need to develop “tailgating experiences” for students and alumni.

Ralph Larmann asked the committee to consider the distinction between the questions of “What attracts the students to the university?” versus “How do we enhance our campus life and community?”

Vincent Harper offered the university should turn to its Methodist connections and principles and present a focus on core values with a focus on character development. While some members expressed concern about stressing a church affiliation, Dr. Harper focused on the importance on developing a common or singular identity which students could engage throughout their tenure at the university and as alumni. He believed that the university could stress a question like “where do your core values come from?” Daniel Byrne suggested that we might seek to develop a coordination effort for services projects from both religious and secular organizations on campus.
Ellen Sawin noted that the Ridgway building and the promenade had opened up new social space. In this vein, she suggested that new residence facilities be built around quads along with multi-purpose buildings.

Debbie Kassenbrock noted that she had been spending a lot of time with struggling freshmen who strongly wanted to remain at the university. She has asked them why it was so important to remain at UE and they emphasized that “we have built a family at UE.”

When asked by Dr. Byrne about the importance of intramural sports, Brock Renner explained intramurals are too Greek. Brock suggested the need to develop more club sports or ways to build teams across departments or colleges in addition to Greek teams.

John Stanley summarized several points that the committee considered and noted that several questions should be asked of students on November 17. He suggested that we ask questions regarding facilities, fitness center, residences, wellness, career services, social development, attendance at athletics events, religious or spiritual development, and the overarching nature of student life.

Sarah Solinsky suggested that we bring athletes to the November 17 student meeting.

The committee also asked that we ask students where they liked to study and the type of environment that you would like to study in.

The committee asked that we also create open ended questions to solicit student response.

The committee expressed a need to find out the question “what makes the university so special?”

The committee adjourned at 9:05 AM.