Iowa State University
Faculty Senate Academic Standards and Admissions Committee
Minutes for November 19, 2009 Meeting

Attendance: Geoff Abelson (chair), Kathy Jones, Mike Retallick, Robert Bergmann, Phil Caffrey, David Failing, Barb Licklider, Karen Zunkel, Mary Jo Gonzales, Wolfgang Kliemann (Guest)

1. Welcome and introductions.

2. Minutes from last meeting were approved with two corrections: Barb Licklider was added to the list of those present and Kathy Jones was changed from visitor to member.

3. Professor Wolfgang Kliemann, Chair of the Mathematics Department, presented information to the committee concerning the development of project ALECKS for placement of students into math courses.

- Dr. Kliemann noted that math proficiency has traditionally been a significant obstacle to graduation for many ISU students. While ISU requires that students complete one year each of algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra for admission, inadequate math preparation is still a major cause of attrition. For example, the success rate for students who take ISU’s Math 140 series is only 40% for the first attempt and 50% for those who attempt it a second time.
- The success rate for students to take the Math 10 sequence (remedial math) is 85%. It’s believed that this higher success rate is due primarily to the method of instruction. For example, Math 10 has a lecturer who is dedicated to Math 10 only, 3 teaching assistants, and much small class sizes. This more individualized method of instruction is possible because of the revenue generated from the Math 10 course fee.
- To try to increase awareness of the importance of math preparation for success in college, our Math Department is working with all of Iowa’s Area Education Agencies. In addition, the Math Department is conducting visits to some of Iowa’s largest high schools to speak directly to their sophomore and junior classes. Finally, the Math Department is working directly with Iowa community colleges to insure that the level of math being taught at the community colleges is similar to the level taught at Iowa State.
- Project ALECKS will allow entering students to take a computer based math assessment through AccessPlus as soon as they are assigned a university ID. This assessment will provide our Math Department with a wealth of information concerning the student’s level of math proficiency. In addition to helping the department appropriately place the student, this information will also help the department adjust the content of its courses to better meet the needs of the students. ALECKS will be launched this spring as a pilot project for students entering the College of Engineering and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. If all goes
well, it will be expanded next year to students entering all of the colleges. In addition, high school students who have not been admitted to Iowa State will have the opportunity to take the computer-based exam to assess their own math skills as often as they like for a $5 fee/testing.

4. In response to the question raised by the Academic Affairs Council concerning the success rates of freshmen who enroll at Iowa State with community college credits, Jones provided data that compared the Summer and Fall 2008 entering freshmen who brought in community college credits to the Summer and Fall 2008 entering freshmen who did not bring in community college credits. The data clearly showed that freshmen who entered Iowa State with community college credits achieved a higher ISU GPA and persistence rate, and also accumulated more total credits than the freshmen who entered with no community college credits. The committee did not feel there was any need to explore this matter further, especially since the university is already planning to appoint a task force to look at the issue of freshmen who enter Iowa State with college credits.

5. Abelson distributed a handout of Iowa State’s Waiver of International Perspectives for Veterans with Overseas Experience policy. It was mentioned that the Faculty Senate approved a change to this policy months ago, but this committee did not know about it. As such, this document will need to be updated.

6. Meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m. The next meeting will be from 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Dec. 10 in 107 Lab of Mechanics.

Submitted by Phil Caffrey