

Middle States Steering Committee
January 5, 2015
Minutes

Attending: Sister Margaret Ellen Mahoney, Sister Sharon Slear, Candace Caraco, Katie Cook, Jim Culhane, Kathy Doherty, Sister Mary Fitzgerald, Erin Foley, Debbie Franklin, Natalie Gillard, Anne Henderson, John Keenan, Anne Lin, Sabita Persaud, Susan Repko, and Warren Szelkowski.

Excused: Sharon Bogdan

Sister Sharon Slear called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM, welcoming back members after the Christmas break, and then turning the floor over to Sister Margaret Ellen Mahoney for the opening prayer, which was a selection from Cardinal John Henry Newman.

Following the prayer, Warren Szelkowski provided a brief introduction to the Sharepoint system that has been set up for the Middle States self study. All structure for the Middle States site has been established, with Steering Committee and Work Group member accounts set up in Sharepoint. Each work group site has workspace, a library for document storage, and a connection to the site as a whole. Warren would join the group at the Faculty Institute on January 22 and provide a presentation about the Sharepoint site and training/development expectations and opportunities.

The agenda then moved on to a review and evaluation/discussion of the research questions developed by members for each of the standards. The discussion began with Standard 1, Mission. Debbie Franklin, Work Group chair for Standard 1, reviewed the ten questions she had presented related to mission and goals. Focus for this standard was on the ways in which NDMU lived out its mission and provided opportunities to achieve mission through strategic goals. Candace Caraco then presented on her questions for Standard 2, Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal. It was noted that one of Middle States' concerns is the relationship between institutional decision-making and budget making, and how data inform these discussions. Two questions related to this topic were presented, and both were marked as tentative at this point in light of the development of the new strategic plan. A third question on process for planning was suggested as well. The need for strategic indicators for the new plan was raised, as well as assessments to track these indicators through the new strategic plan. John Keenan moved on to present the questions for Standard 3, Institutional Resources, with an emphasis on taking a critical look at what we have and what we do with what we have, then turning to what we need and what we should do to get to what we need. Additional questions address strategic planning and challenges, and how we plan to address challenges. The questions ended with a forward-looking approach to what we need to do, and which resources we need to do that. Members were asked to use the rubric after the meeting to evaluate the questions. Copies of the rubric and the past strategic plan would be sent out electronically after the meeting. It was noted that although NDMU was developing a new strategic plan, the institution would still be held accountable for assessing and evaluating the previous plan.

The next set of questions turned to Standards 4, 5, and 6. Anne Lin presented the questions on Leadership and Governance, with a focus on looking at organizational structure, reporting lines, and the functions, policies and procedures of the Board of Trustees. Questions for Standard 4 addressed process, appointments, succession, assessment and evaluation of Board members relative to the functioning of the University. Subsequent questions addressed transition and stability in leadership, reasons for transitions, and how the University handled the transitions. Faculty governance was also on the list of questions for Standard 4, noting the change in faculty governance, the process for shared governance and which processes are in place for review and revision. Student perspectives on governance and processes and procedures for approval of programs, budgets, and financial management rounded out the set of questions for Standard 4. Sister Mary Fitzgerald then reviewed the questions for Standard 5, Administration, emphasizing process, flow, communication, and organization. The questions addressed the effectiveness of the communication process from the leadership team to enhance and reinforce a shared vision for the university; how diverse groups in the university are communicated with and represented; how administration is evaluated and improved; which resources are available to support effective administration; and the extent to which the administrative structure supported the mission of NDMU. Each of these questions related to the description of the standard with respect to the ways in which the administration supports the work and the mission of the institution. Susan Repko then presented on questions for Standard 6, Integrity, emphasizing adherence to ethical standards, stated policies, and support for academic and intellectual freedom, as well as the way diversity and differences are supported and how the university ensures that diverse points of views and perspectives are acknowledged and supported. These questions also explored the issue of variances across academic areas as well as streamline processes for greater clarity and transparencies. Some discussion followed about the importance and complexity of these standards.

The third set of standards was then reviewed, although 7 and 8 were placed on hold due to absence of the Standard Chairs. Natalie Gillard presented the questions for Standard 9, Student Support Services, which emphasized supports for students of concern, as well as all students, and looked at how effective are programs and services that support student learning and success across campus. Recommendations would be to evaluate the effectiveness of these services, looking at what we are offering, what we are improving, and what we still needed to do to most fully support students. The final question most specifically focused on student athletes due to their higher levels of success and retention at the institution, and at which supports impact their success and retention at NDMU.

Discussion then turned to Standards 10, 11, and 12. Katie Cook presented the questions on Standard 10, Faculty, looking at changes in faculty responsibilities and expectations, committee and structure changes, governance changes, resources, development opportunities, and transparency of resources, processes and policies. Questions also looked at changes in full and part time faculty, as well as the impact on student learning from these numbers. It was noted that although student learning was a more optional area for this standard, it was nonetheless critical for a full review of Standard 10. Jim Culhane then presented on Standard 11, Educational Offerings. Development of these questions

focused on the transition of the institution from college to university with 4 schools, and whether there are institutional outcomes that link the four schools together, the extent to which institutional level outcomes are linked across the programs and departments, the extent of student knowledge of learning outcomes, the sharing of outcomes evidence and results, the ways in which information literacy and technology are addressed in programs and majors across campus, whether there are sufficient full time faculty to address student and program needs, and the extent to which resources adequately support student learning and success. Discussion followed and additional questions related to the support of students in online courses and at off site locations, and how we assess the impact of student support services. It was also recommended that a question be added related to the changes in the promotion and tenure process, as well as evaluation and review of the faculty through processes and policies, and the increased focus on research requirements and service expectations. It was also noted that it would be important to determine where particular areas would be addressed in each overlapping standard, so they were not duplicated within the report.

A review of the questions for Standard 12 with Anne Henderson recommending questions that looked at Gen Ed offerings and curricula, as well as student learning outcomes. Four areas were identified to highlight: 1) how do academic programs ensure that gen ed skills and abilities are applied and enhanced; 2) how do we address gen ed proficiencies that we currently do not require (technological competency; 3) how do students and faculty understand and engage in the general education program, with respect to mission, key learning outcomes, and student success; and 4) how do we evaluate and assess the effectiveness of our gen ed program, how we articulate outcomes, how do we collect data, and how do we use results for improvement. Erin Foley then presented the questions on Standard 13, Related Educational Activities, with an emphasis on programs that address specific groups of students on campus, such as the Trailblazers program, or the supported English/Math programs, as well as how we measure job placement and career programs and experiential education programs, how we evaluate off site locations and student success at those locations, how we demonstrate that off site locations do not diminish or detract from institutional resources and outcomes, and how the university remains consistent in its assessment of related educational outcomes. It was noted in the discussion that most experiential learning programs were required as part of the Pharmacy, Nursing, and Education programs. An additional question on contractual relationships and affiliated providers was also recommended, although it was noted that having the documents available for self-study was one thing but including all information in the questions may not be necessary.

Discussion then turned to Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning. Sabita Persaud presented these questions but noted that lack of a common vocabulary for assessment was a concern from the start. Questions for this Standard related to how the university assesses student learning, how we demonstrate through evidence and documentation that we are assessing and students are achieving outcomes and learning goals, what are the opportunities that we provide to students to meet learning goals and outcomes, and how the results of assessment inform curriculum and budget/resource allocation. A final question addressed how we communicate and share the results of assessments, and how

the university is engaged in the overall assessment of student learning. In the absence of a Standard 7 chair, Kathy Doherty presented draft Standard 14 questions to the group. These questions centered around the overall institution-wide assessment of processes and procedures in all areas of the institution, the extent to which assessment informed decision-making and resource allocation, and the ways in which the assessment of student learning outcomes was reflected in institutional assessment.

When the questions for each standard had been presented by Work Group Chairs, committee members were asked to review the questions, to use the rubric to evaluate the questions, and to provide feedback to the co-chairs by January 14, 2015.

The agenda then moved on to a review of the work group membership to finalize each Work Group composition. Any recommended changes would be given to Kathy Doherty for notification. An overview of the Faculty Institute followed, and members were advised that the afternoon session on January 22 would be dedicated to Middle States. The sessions would start at 12:30 PM with a charge and introduction from Sister Sharon and Sister Margaret-Ellen, an overview of the self-study process by Kathy Doherty, and introduction to the Share Point site by Warren Szelkowski. This would be followed by work group break out sessions. These sessions would involve an introduction by each chair, a review of the charge and the process, and discussion about the self-study questions for each standard. Regular meeting times and dates would also be established at this time for each work group.

The agenda closed with a review of the self-study design timeline, backing up from the late April visit of the Middle States liaison. The self-study design would need to be finished by early March and submitted by the end of March to Middle States for review and approval. Finalized questions would be submitted to the co-chairs, and each group would work with Bill Davis, who would produce the final written self-study design document in collaboration with the Steering Committee.

Members were reminded that they would meet next on January 22, followed by a regular monthly meeting at 3:00 PM on February 4. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Doherty
Recorder