Experience 1: Enrollment Retention Management Committee Meeting

This past week I attended an Enrollment Retention Management Committee meeting with Debora Haring. Since I was working on a graduate student retention report and using Cognos, I thought it would be beneficial to see what goes on behind the scenes of an enrollment and retention committee. This committee was formed last year to bring offices together to plan for enrollment growth and improving our retention efforts. According to Gross, Hossler, & Ziskin (2009), “Institutions need careful and ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of their efforts to improve the student outcomes of persistence and graduation. Students who do not persist, especially if they leave for reasons an institution can control, are cheated of important opportunities to learn in college and to reap the benefits of that learning after graduation. (Gross, Hossler, & Ziskin, 2009, p.2)”

Before this particular meeting I attended, the committee was never tasked with anything, so they had started their own initiatives such as the Enrollment Growth Impact survey that examines resource needs of departments as we continue to grow. However, at this meeting, the Provost tasked the committee with bringing him retention data on the university. So, my Cognos report became priority as the Provost has a strict deadline. He also wants to see an enrollment growth plan every year we have a new strategic plan, so every 5 years. This plan will predict the growth and resources needed for the next 5 years. Gross, Hossler, & Ziskin research showed that consistency in tracking persistence and graduation rates as well as assessing intervention programs shows an institution’s commitment to improving student retention. “In regard to consistency in tracking persistence, almost all of the institutions that participated in our survey reported that they analyze retention and graduation data annually. Most look at the data by class year, race and ethnicity, and student major. This widespread examination of data is an encouraging sign; however, tracking of retention and graduation rates does not necessarily mean that institutions are using these data to assess the effectiveness of their retention efforts. (Gross, Hossler, & Ziskin 2009, p.7)”

It was interesting watching various department heads brainstorm and throw ideas around. You would hear the “management” side say they wanted to see some type of data, and then the “technical” side would say it wasn’t feasible, but they could do it this other way. I believe it is important to have committees like this because the key players are able to meet and discuss what they want and see if it can realistically be done.

Standards: Standard 6: Diversity & Standard 5: Decision Making Strategies

Standard 6 is reflected in this activity because the committee is looking at how diversity plays into enrollment growth. The Provost and BOG wants to know if minority groups are being represented in our student body. This is important to us because as part of our mission, we want to recruit and retain minority students.
Standard 5 is reflected in this activity because the objective of the committee is to make good decisions about how to track enrollment and retention and eventually what we can do about it. These decisions are best made collaboratively with the main departments involved.

**Experience 2: Graduate Studies Newsletter**

We brainstormed ideas for articles for the brand new newsletter we will be implementing and presented it at the staff meeting on Monday. Because of our lack of staff and resources, we have decided to only do a 2 page newsletter. This newsletter will be very beneficial to our office so we can connect with the school community and let them know what is going on, as well as connect with prospective students to show them we are constantly communicating with our graduate students and the community around us. The newsletter will feature programs, professors, upcoming events, graduate student resources such as graduate research at the library, etc. It will be distributed quarterly and each newsletter will have a “theme”.

**Standards:** Standard 3: Managing the Learning Environment

Standard 3 is reflected in this activity because we are using our resources to best service our students. We may not have the time, staff, or resources for an elaborate newsletter, but getting communication out to graduate students and the community will let them know we are here for them.

**Experience 3: Web site Administration Training**

On Wednesday, my mentor, Dave, trained me as an administrator on our website design software, RedDot. According to Powell (2009), “A Web site is a moving target. It is never done. Determining the best navigation, getting approvals for copy, sorting through the implications of design decisions (from headline size to column widths), working out technical bugs, and writing student and alumni profiles take careful deliberation, lots of time, and many people. (Powell, 2009, p. A37)” I am already trained on the content manager side of RedDot, but the admin side will allow me to set up our new Graduate Studies website in the new, wider interface. It is a pretty tedious process to sit in front of the computer for hours repeating commands. I have had some experience with Dreamweaver, another website design software product, so this wasn’t too difficult, but it is a whole new program to learn and the only other people who do what I am doing have been doing it for years. I will have to say it was good for me to really understand what goes into website design and how it is a continuous process. Powell (2009) stated, “A Web site, and the technology that supports it, is not a destination. It is a continually evolving enterprise. Today’s best practice must continually be refined and re-examined. We need to keep pace and match the Web’s agility in our own thinking about how best to use it. (Powell, 2009, p. A39)”

**Standards:** Standard 7: Technology

Standard 7 is reflected in this activity because we are using RedDot, the website design software, to set up the new website according to the new interface. Technology is a big part of my internship and it is a vital part of keeping the university dynamic and up-to-date in our ever-changing world.
References
