

Governance and Personnel Policy Committee of Faculty Senate
Tuesday, October 24, 2017
Faculty Collaborative Conference Room, D.H. Hill

Attendees: Alton Banks, Karen Bullock, Paul Huffman, Doug Pearce, Phil Sannes

Guests: Dr. Mary Lelik, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Strategy and Resource Management

Discussion: Academic Analytics

As a follow-up to the second committee meeting of the year, the Academic Analytics (AA) service was the topic. Dr. Mary Lelik provided relevant materials that served as the basis for discussion.

- This effort is particularly relevant since the current service contract is considered a trial period and remains in an evaluation stage. Hence, our input is of particular interest to the management team in charge.
- In overview, the data available from this service is aggregate and mostly relevant to multiple peer groups. Its chief purpose is for inter peer group comparison. For NSCU, it would serve as a potentially useful self-assessment tool and “reality check”. It could help identify programmatic growth areas and improved reputation. In that regard, NCSU looks good overall compared to other land grant institutions.
- AA is an offshoot of a data collection effort some years ago by the NRC, and marketed as planning tool for academic institutions, principally for department heads/chairs and above. It is currently not accessible to individual faculty. The Provost has made it clear that administration has no interest in its use for RPT decisions. The current service covers only aggregate data and cost \$90k; more detailed, complete data is available for \$170k.
- Concerns were raised about the complete focus on quantitative data at the expense of more qualitative measures, and whether it is a resolvable issue. Worries remain about programmatic as well as personal impacts on the flow of dollars tied to budgets, including salaries. Further, serious limitations were noted on how current the data is, especially with regard to grant information, which it seemed to be more federal agency focused. Were member institutions “favored” in coverage and detail? This gave the impression being more reactive than proactive, and data driven rather than data informed.
- The potential seems to be there, but how to use such an instrument in the future? It will be important to develop guidelines for its application, and faculty input will be critical, as will feedback from colleges, deans, and department heads.

- There a possibility it could have utility to individual faculty for tracking activity, possibly retention issues, and perhaps even RPT. Again, this raised the issue the accuracy and reliability of the data itself. As an example, half the awarded grants were missing in some spot checks of the instrument, and only PIs were listed. Of course, dollar amounts were not accurate.
- One of the key limitations, however, is that the AA instrument is almost completely directed at STEM disciplines. Where's the balance? Is there too much emphasis on money streams that fit preconceived notions about what NCSU represents to the outside world, and even ourselves? What about the social sciences and other programs that also thrive here? How should they best "measured"? They should not be ignored in future discussions.
- In summary, the management team is very interested in partnering with us to develop problems to be solved by the AA instrument, and perhaps not only make it better but how it might be used more efficiently and effectively. This is more the beginning of a process rather than an end point. There is much work to be done.