

Quarters to Semesters Transition Team Meeting

November 7, 2008

113 Ellis Hall

Present: Adeyanju, Benton, Burnette (for Miles), Carpenter, Calcamuggio, Cheripko, Conry, Cornell, Day, Esmond-Kiger, Flaherty, Giesey, Lombardi, Noftz, Ruff, Scanlan, Sealover, Thomas, Tuck, Watts, Webster, Wickman

Tuck called the meeting together at 8:04 AM. He introduced Dr. Andrew (Andy) Jorgensen, the Q2S Coordinator from the University of Toledo. The University of Toledo converted to semesters in 1997 and Jorgensen was the coordinator there. Tuck then asked everyone to please go around the room and introduce themselves to Dr. Jorgensen.

Jorgensen then took over the meeting by introducing himself and telling a little about his experiences. He reiterated to the group that he was a resource to the group even after today's meeting and that they were welcome to contact him with any questions regarding the transition.

He started the conversation with asking the group how they wanted to dream. He explained that this is an opportunity to start from the beginning at Ohio University. He suggested talking with colleagues, community members, community colleges, etc. in the area about what they expect and what they would like to see. Jorgensen then shared that the University of Toledo used a very short timeline and from start to finish converted in 27 months. The university needed more time to work on its curriculum and specifically to dream a bit about creative ways to reform the curriculum. Thomas asked what the appropriate timeline should be, and Jorgensen responded that he thought that three years would be ideal for conversion and that communication is key. It is very important that the faculty, the students, and the community all know that the university is working for them and that they will be considered during all aspects of the planning.

The University of Toledo made guarantees in writing to the students and let them know that they are not going to be disadvantaged. They set up an appeals committee made up of students, advisors and faculty to address any student concerns or problems throughout the transition. Jorgensen was pleased to announce that they had no students who needed to use the appeals committee. Students were surveyed at the end of the transition to see what their thoughts were on the transition process. They conducted both mail and phone surveys and were satisfied overall with the results.

The students were guaranteed "no delay" in graduation and completing their degrees as long as they did their part. As an aid to students,, sequential courses (chemistry, calculus, foreign languages, etc.) were supplemented with special one-year transition courses to accommodate

students who partially completed a sequence on the quarter system. These transition courses were given different call numbers (by adding a 9 or 7 to the end of the course number). He noted that they moved from three-digit quarter course numbers to four-digit semester course numbers so that anyone who looked at a transcript would be able to identify the quarter from the semester hours. These courses were important for when a student needed a third quarter course in a series. The student would join the transition class after the first exam and then finish the remaining 2/3 of the course for the semester credit. It sounded complicated but really was not. The students were prepared ahead of time and planned well, so the transition courses did not affect a lot of students. This practice was only done for one year.

Jorgensen stressed that morale is essential to a successful transition. It is a big disruption to convert to semesters and it affects everyone. Everyone has to be a partner and so they brought in representatives from all areas under a “big tent” to discuss the process weekly. He shared his organizational chart with the group as well and explained the different areas. He stated that morale is definitely very important and stressed that everyone needs to feel as if she/he is a part of the transition.

At the University of Toledo, the faculty controlled the curriculum, which was voted on by the faculty senate. The department, the chair, the dean, the Faculty Senate, the University Curriculum Council, as well as the Provost all had a say in the curriculum. Each department was responsible for working out its conversion. He suggested that general education courses be determined first. He stated that the engineering college had the hardest time converting its hours. It converted to 2/3 and the minimum was 124. The engineering college was well over this minimum and had to compress its required hours. Jorgensen said he could share that information with anyone who would be interested.

QUESTION:

Conry: Did faculty have to do a lot of independent studies to help students or not?

ANSWER:

There were not a lot of independent studies needed. Jorgensen stated that they had a scheme for completing the courses. He stressed that good planning is very important and that students need to meet with their advisors on a regular basis.

QUESTION:

Scanlan: In regards to contracts and working on a short timeline, when is the appropriate time to talk to students about the conversion process?

ANSWER:

A full year before the implementation of the transition is sufficient time to inform the students. Students were warned prior to the change. As a result the year before the conversion was in effect, the graduation rates increased.

QUESTION:

Benton: Did you have a degree audit system in place? Did you re-encode?

ANSWER:

Yes, they had DARS and they also hired two full-time programmers to work with the departments. DARS handled the entire quarter to semester transition.

QUESTION:

Thomas: Can you tell us about the help book that you created for the students?

ANSWER:

Someone came up with the idea to keep all communication regarding the transition very uniform. It was all printed on the same yellow paper with the same blue ink, etc. They thought it was very important to keep it concise. The guide included deadlines, steps students could take, advice to make a plan, etc. They also sent out postcards with encouraging messages and reminders to the students.

QUESTION:

Tuck: When did students get the help book?

ANSWER: Jorgensen will check with the time frame and get back with the group. He suggested waiting until later in the game to give the book to the students—so that they are not intimidated. He thought that maybe waiting until spring 2011 would be ideal.

QUESTION:

Scanlan: Is there any advantage/emphasis to getting general education classes done before the transition?

ANSWER:

The general education courses are easy because they become three hour courses and the courses that are sequential are the important ones to focus on first.

QUESTION:

Thomas: What did you learn from working with Michigan State? What worked and what didn't?

ANSWER:

The key was the transition classes and training for advisors was also very important for them. Their advisors were mixed by college and mixed by major. Six advisors per college advise most students for the first year(s) in all majors. It was mostly faculty advisors but could be staff. They entertained the questions: Can your faculty teach this load? Do you want your average class size to change?

QUESTION:

Flaherty: In terms of space, did you have any issues?

ANSWER:

Toledo's scheduling was manual prior to the conversion so they had to move to a computerized system. You will need a space coordinator and software to schedule rooms. The rationale was to fill seats. Every department should have a prime room that they can have any time that they want and then also have a few secondary rooms. The department should also have a great relationship with facilities. Classroom space is critical. There is a lot of trade-off with space management: flexibility with time, day the course is offered, etc.

QUESTION:

Wickman: Are there a lot of problems with transitioning graduate programs either academically or professionally?

ANSWER:

It was much easier since it is all controlled in the departments. There is not a lot of mixing and matching with courses across departments. They added half-semester classes (August to October classes) and it didn't work very well. There was hesitancy for non-traditional students to sign up. Half-semester classes work better for undergraduate work. The University of Toledo does not have branch campuses so they must admit all state of Ohio graduates. Therefore, they have the option of compressing remedial math courses so that students can finish them sooner by offering half-semester classes.

Jorgensen stated that there are really only two options for converting education. The sequences that go 3:2 or 6:4 or a single class that meets 4 hours a week for ten weeks for forty lecture hours a quarter can be reduced to 3 semester hours a week for 15 weeks and you have just got 10% reduction. But you can't do that for every course. It has to be converted by $\frac{2}{3}$ credit hours.

QUESTION:

Giesey: Did you have a formal mechanism for working your problems out or was it just ad hoc?

ANSWER:

It was not ad hoc. There was a formal guideline/booklet to guide the transition.

QUESTION:

Sealover: I am from a regional campus and we offer a lot of associate degree programs and those programs take a one in a series of three classes. Do you have any incidences that you could share?

ANSWER:

We did not have any regional campuses but our community college was within walking distance. During the process, all the classes at the community college were equated the same as the ones on the main campus.

QUESTION:

Adeyanju: Looking at the summer of 2012 and for planning purposes, did the University of Toledo end their academic calendar earlier?

ANSWER:

There was a big controversy regarding the timeline. The issues were shorter summers and late start on summer jobs. They had a compressed summer schedule. They did not let out early in the spring, but started the fall slightly late. We started in early September instead of August. The summer had two six week sessions and one eight week session with one full summer session of a 12 week class.

QUESTION:

Esmond-Kiger: You talk about scheduling four hour semester courses. Can you explain how you schedule those?

ANSWER:

There was a very strict schedule. Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes or Tuesday/Thursday classes were the most typical. They required departments to have 3/5 of the classes on Monday/Wednesday/Friday and only 2/5 of the classes offered on Tuesday/Thursday. They did not allow the faculty to schedule based on their preferences. Room usage was most critical.

In conclusion, Jorgensen suggested celebrating the conversion to semesters at the end. The University of Toledo had the jazz band play and made a celebration of it all! He suggested gifts for making it to the end. He showed an example of an hour-glass with an inscription on it. He wanted to once again stress that morale is key.

As everyone was leaving, Benton distributed a handout that showed research from other institutions and their standard times, themes, recommendations, and the current policies that the institutions are using. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 AM.