

Fall 2005 Academic Update

Retirements

Dr. William (Bill) Thackeray announced his retirement effective spring semester 2006. He has been an excellent member of the faculty at Northern for over 40 years, and we wish him the best. Dr. Thackeray will continue to teach a few courses for Northern on a post-retirement contract.

Dr. Reno Parker announced his retirement effective fall semester 2005. Dr. Parker was also an excellent member of the faculty at Northern for over 17 years. We hope Dr. Parker is enjoying retirement--be sure to ask him! He is back on campus during spring semester 2006 teaching part-time on a post-retirement contract.

Academic Plan

The completion of a five-year Academic Plan was one of the major accomplishments of fall semester 2005. The plan is posted on the Provost's web page at <http://www.msun.edu/admin/provost/Reports/academicplan2.pdf> and provides clear direction for academics at MSU-Northern. We will assess our progress on the plan on a yearly basis.

Curriculum News

We continue to implement our new 33-credit general education core. The General Education Committee (Greg Clouse, Chair) has been charged with examining and defining outcomes for the core. We are looking forward to a progress report from the committee in April 2006.

The Board of Regents approved our AAS degree in Electrical Technology. We advertised the faculty position, and Jim Potter is busy creating a variety of radio, television, and newspaper advertisements for the program. We hope for a healthy enrollment in this program fall semester 2006.

Carol Reifschneider attended a fund raiser in November for students at UM-Western who will be going to China as part of their honors program. Carol came back to Northern with some new ideas on how an honors program might be structured at a small institution. She will be putting together a small (but active) committee who will put together a proposal on how we might reinvigorate an honors program on our campus.

The math faculty are putting forward an applied math curriculum for both education and non-education majors. The proposal is currently before Curriculum Committee.

The social science faculty are busy assessing the current configuration of the Social Science – Broadfield 5-12 degree. You should see some changes being brought forward in that degree in the near future.

All curriculum proposals to be considered for the 2006-07 catalogs had to be submitted to Academic Senate by December 31, 2005. However, curriculum review should be ongoing and spring semesters are an excellent time to begin consideration of new or modified curricula for the 2007-08 catalogs.

We are beginning to assess interest in starting a new graduate cohort in Learning Development for the Great Falls area. If there is enough student interest, a new cohort will begin in Great Falls at the beginning of fall semester 2006.

Transfer Survey

During fall semester, Bill Lanier and Julie Strobel completed our annual survey of all transfer students. The results of the survey have been forwarded to the Commissioner's Office. The results are posted on the Provost's web page.

We are continuing to make progress on implementing the new transfer policies adopted by the Board of Regents (BOR). During the March 2006 BOR meeting, we should see more specific language for policies 301.5 and 301.5.1.

Partnerships

Northern (along with MSU-Billings College of Technology, the University of Montana College of Technology-Missoula, and Montana Tech of The University of Montana) were awarded of a three-year \$1.98 million Department of Labor grant for the development of a construction trades degree program at each of the schools. Dean Kegel, Chair Strizich, and the COTS faculty will be working on development of this degree during spring semester 2006.

Fort Peck Community College

We continue to offer the 300- and 400-level courses in Business Technology at Fort Peck Community College. We are delivering the courses, but we need to continue to assess and improve how we are delivering student services to the same.

Fort Peck also provided financial assistance that allowed us to deliver 300- and 400-level elementary education courses. The grant funding for this project terminates at the end of spring semester 2006.

Civil Engineering Technology (CET) with Great Falls COT

We continue to work on finalizing an agreement with the Great Falls COT concerning offering the bachelors degree in CET in Great Falls. The Great Falls COT will offer the majority of the lower division courses; Northern will offer the CET courses; we continue to work on the articulation agreement. More good news: We taking the Bachelors degree in CET out of moratorium for the Havre campus effective spring semester 2006.

Medicine Hat College

We continue to work on a formal articulation agreement with Medicine Hat College in elementary education. Dean Rawn, Chair Reifschneider, and I will return to Medicine Hat in spring 2006 to try to formalize the agreement.

Browning Public School

The graduate cohort in Browning has completed 18 of the 36 credits required for the degree. We anticipate that 13 students will successfully complete the degree by the end of fall semester 2006.

Fort Belknap Community College

Fort Belknap announced the receipt of funding to assist students who wanted to pursue a degree in education. Fort Belknap accepted applications into the program and soon discovered that the majority of the applicants are interested in secondary education programs. Recruitment of students by Fort Belknap into this program continues.

Northern Montana Health Care

At the end of December, Northern Montana Health Care (NMHC) asked us to partner in submitting a grant that would provide funding to increase the number of students and increase retention in the nursing program. We readily agreed. A special thanks goes to Christen Obresley (NMHC), Lisa Scheresky-O'Neil, Mary Pappas and Julie Strobel for assisting with this project. We should hear "yea or nay" on the grant sometime in April.

Northern's Online University

We continue to make progress on implementation of Northern's Online University. This fall, ten individuals including Deanna Curtis Deming, Judy Hembd, Rose Hoogendam, Stephen Lockwood, Mary Pappas, Theresa Petersen, Charles Pollington, Lisa Scheresky-O'Neil, Curtis Smeby and Mary Verploegen completed the course. As a result, these individuals can now be referred to as *Northern's WebCT Gurus*. Special thanks go to each of them for making the commitment to develop and to improve their ability to provide online course work.

Our priority for 2006 will be to fully develop and implement the BSN online program. We are in the process of converting all upper division nursing courses to the WebCT platform and providing training for faculty on developing and improving online courses. By spring 2007, our plan is to develop at least one course for each category in the general education core for online instruction.

One question I frequently get is, "what is the difference between an online course and a hybrid online course?" Online courses have no face-to-face contact with the instructor and leverages the advantage of asynchronous learning (any time, any place), while still maintaining quality faculty-student interaction. Our BSN program is an online degree.

However, once faculty becomes trained on how to use the WebCT platform, they often decide to use the hybrid online model to enhance their instruction, especially in the area of course management. Therefore, if you (the faculty) have not yet taken advantage of training and development in using the WebCT platform, I would encourage you to do so.

As most of you know, Bill Leith left Northern to pursue his doctorate at North Dakota State University. We will miss Bill; however, you need to be aware that two individuals

(Andy Morris and Randy Bachmeier) have stepped up and spent many hours getting ready to help the institution provide course work using the web and ITV.

Andy Morris will be providing technical assistance for NorthNet; Randy will be providing training and technical assistance for WebCT. Randy spent many hours learning and getting trained on using WebCT over the holiday break. In addition, he and Jan Brady have been very busy developing a student handbook for online courses. Be sure to check out our web site (in progress) for online courses at <http://extended.msun.edu/distance/online.html>.

Accreditation

We continue to put steering committees together for our Northwest accreditation review during fall 2007. Currently, the team leaders are reviewing their standards to assess our strengths and weaknesses in meeting the standard(s). The task force will continue to meet on a monthly basis during 2006. Five individuals (Will Rawn, Greg Kegel, Carol Reifschneider, Virgil Hawkinson, and Bob Johnke) will be going to Seattle in February to attend study team training.

The Assessment Committee will be reviewing and providing suggestions on program outcomes and assessment plans this semester. Programs that have not submitted their outcomes and assessment plans will be asked for written updates.

A common syllabi area has been created on our intranet. Beginning spring semester 2006, all syllabi will be posted in this area. After reviewing files, we noticed that we are missing several syllabi from different years. Using a digital centralized storage area should eliminate this problem.

During spring 2006, we will be asking two individuals (one from MSU-Billings and one from The University of Montana) to assess our progress towards NCATE and state accreditation in Education. The faculty in Education requested that we have this assessment be completed; the Chancellor agreed to this request.

Recruitment of Faculty and Administration

During spring semester 2006, we will advertise for the following faculty positions:

- Tenure-track position in electrical technology
- Tenure-track position in health and physical education
- Tenure-track position in history and Native American studies

Two tenure-track positions in nursing continue to remain unfilled due to lack of applications. The interim Dean position in Education, Arts and Sciences and Nursing will also be permanently filled beginning July 1, 2006. The announcement is posted on the web; review of applications begins February 1. Deans Brady and Jamruszka are chairing this search.

ATC Building

Progress on the ATC Building continues. Equipment continues to arrive and the faculty in COTS are spending many hours setting up and learning to use the new equipment. We anticipate that the building (and the equipment) will be fully functional by the end of spring semester 2006.

Some Next Steps

- Continue to review how we deliver and assess graduate programs. We are moving towards making a stronger, more inclusive Graduate Council. Hopefully, we will come to consensus this spring on the bylaws for the Council. With the advent of the new bylaws of Academic Senate, you should anticipate that Graduate Council will come under the umbrella of Academic Senate.
- Development of a Diversity Plan. A small working committee has been formed and Ellen Swaney from the Commissioner's Office will be meeting with the committee the end of January. You should anticipate seeing a draft of the plan by the end of spring semester 2006.

Due to the hard work and diligence of the faculty and staff, we are continuing to make measured progress in the academic arena. Let's continue this progress and have a great year in 2006!

Cheri