

Meeting Notes

NCA Accreditation Advisory Committee

Thursday, December 6, 2012, 10:00 am, President's Conference Room, Suite 1900 IIT Tower

Participants: David Baker (External Affairs), Siva Balasubramanian (Chair, Stuart School of Business), Matt Bauer (College of Science & Letters), Russell Betts (College of Science & Letters), Alan Cramb (Provost), Carol Emmons (Staff Lead, Institutional Research), Mike Gosz (Undergraduate Affairs), Noreen Kozak (Provost's Office), Alan Mead (College of Psychology), Jamshid Mohammadi (Graduate College), Kristin Standaert (IIT Libraries), Ophir Trigalo (Office of Technology Services), Phil Troyk (Armour College of Engineering), Ray Trygstad (School of Applied Technology), Charles Uth (Galvin Library), John Twombly (Stuart School of Business), David Ulaszek (Office of Finance).

1. Introductory Remarks

Alan Cramb began the meeting by saying that he considers the Accreditation Advisory Committee to be one of the most important committees at IIT because failing to re-affirm IIT's North Central Association (NCA) accreditation is not an option. Alan also thanked Committee members for their service. He asked Committee members to alert him if they encountered a lack of cooperation from any department, noting that institutions fail accreditation because of their weakest link. In other words, institutions may fail at accreditation because of what they did not do, so the items they did well may not matter in such cases. He also cautioned Committee members not to be complacent about the NCA Accreditation because of IIT's many specialized accreditations, as specialized accreditation often relates to only a subset of the degree programs in a particular college. Finally, he noted that the criteria used by different accrediting organizations is converging over time, which should help the Committee be successful. He also reiterated his desire to meet with the Committee periodically to review its progress. Finally, Provost Cramb reiterated his willingness to fully support the Committee in any way he could to help the Committee accomplish its goals and objectives in a timely manner.

2. Summary of Subcommittee Work and Timelines

Siva Balasubramanian presented a chart (included on page 4 of this document) describing the main goals of each of the three standing subcommittees: Student Learning Assessment, Quality Improvement Initiative (QII), and Administrative Criteria. Siva noted that the chart mirrors successful practices at Pioneer universities that are pursuing NCA Accreditation under the revised accreditation criteria and Open Pathway. Each of the three subcommittees has met 2-3 times during the Fall 2012 semester, outside of the main Accreditation Advisory Committee meeting.

Siva noted that the QII subcommittee had administered a major campus-wide data collection effort ("My Perfect IIT Survey") last year to identify ideas for the Quality Improvement Initiative. As indicated in the chart, the Assessment Subcommittee aims to establish and monitor assessment activities (develop instruments/rubrics, data collection) for at least two years before the NCA visit in 2016. Siva then asked the subcommittee chairs to elaborate in detail on the progress made by each subcommittee.

3. Subcommittee Reports

Student Learning Assessment Subcommittee

Carol Emmons introduced the members of the Assessment Subcommittee, and summarized the Subcommittee's role, guiding principles, goals for the academic year, and accomplishments to date. (See meeting notes from October 25, 2012 for a description of the role, guiding principles, and goals of this subcommittee.) The Assessment Subcommittee has met twice during the Fall 2012 term. In addition to agreeing on the subcommittee's role, guiding principles and goals, the Assessment Subcommittee has

designed a process for monitoring student learning assessment activities across the university and is working on a communication plan.

Russell Betts noted that the Assessment Subcommittee should focus on graduate as well as undergraduate programs. Carol Emmons responded that Psychology and Business provide models for this, as these colleges are currently assessing student learning in their graduate programs. Siva Balasubramanian noted that the reaccreditation site visit for the Stuart School of Business occurred in Fall 2012. In addition, David Baker observed that specialized accreditation site visits in 2013 for Architecture and 2014 for Engineering should help the university prepare for the NCA site visit in 2016.

Alan Cramb reiterated his willingness to discuss the importance of student learning assessment at the various university forums. Alan is also willing to send emails to the Deans and faculty about student learning assessment. Finally, he asked members of NCA committee to help the University communicate effectively about all aspects of the committee's work.

Quality Improvement Initiative Subcommittee

Ray Trygstad reported that the Quality Improvement Initiative Subcommittee has received two proposals for Quality Improvement Initiatives. Charles Uth (who co-chairs the QII subcommittee with Ray Trygstad) described a proposal on Redefining the First Year Experience for undergraduates at IIT (see pages 5-6 of this document). Ray noted that the goal of the proposal is to make the first year undergraduate experience at IIT more of a "transitional" experience rather than the "sink or swim" experience it is now.

Mike Gosz presented the second proposal (pages 7-8 of this document) that is focused on improving IIT's six-year graduation rate by leveraging technology to allow students to create a customized 4-year plan. Mike noted that his proposal is closely related to the earlier proposal on the first-year experience, and provides another "lever" to use to improve student academic success at IIT. Mike added that in addition to retention and graduation rates, data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) can be used to measure improvement in students' academic experience at IIT.

Ophir Trigalo suggested that the Subcommittee consider using employment rates after graduation as a metric, offering his opinion that IIT should start preparing students for future employment from their very first day on campus. Russell Betts agreed with Ophir, admitting that the faculty and administration often lose sight of this and need to be reminded occasionally that they should structure all learning activities with students' future employability in mind. He suggested that our focus should be on relative national employment rates, rather than in absolute terms. Siva Balasubramanian observed that there is research evidence indicating a higher willingness to pay for higher education when there is documentation of better preparation of graduates for future careers. Phil Troyk mentioned the online portfolios that engineering students are now preparing as a step in this direction; these portfolios can be thought of as students' resumes. Phil thinks that IIT is the first school to be using portfolios in this way.

Alan Cramb suggested that the focus should be on goals or metrics over which the University had control. In other words, avoid "lock-in" on constructs that are outside the University's control. A good example where such control did not exist is the status of the economy that clearly influences the job prospects of our graduates.

David Baker asked Siva Balasubramanian to summarize the next steps for the Quality Improvement Initiative. Siva stated that the next steps are to have the Deans review the two proposals and give their recommendation to the Provost. The Provost will then give a recommendation to the President. Alan Cramb suggested that both of these steps could be completed by the end of January, 2013. There was general consensus that the sooner we get started on a Quality Improvement Initiative, the better. This approach would facilitate greater focus and oversight on the implementation of the QII proposals that are eventually presented to NCA.

Administrative Criteria Subcommittee

David Baker noted that the university's efforts to renew its Strategic Plan to run through 2017 go hand-in-hand with what IIT needs to be doing for the new administrative accreditation criteria. David reminded

Noreen Kozak to maintain an archive all strategic planning documents in pdf format to use as evidence for the NCA accreditation. Alan Cramb suggested going a step further and structuring these documents so they are easily searchable in terms of the NCA criteria. David Baker offered to present the new NCA criteria to the Strategic Planning Committee. David also noted that, thanks to the efforts of General Counsel Anthony D'Amato, and Associate Vice President for Finance David Ulaszek, we have made progress with respect to documenting what we have done to fulfill the new NCA criteria.

4. Next meeting

The next meeting of the IIT Accreditation Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, January 10, 2013 at 10 am.

Timeline of Activities toward NCA Accreditation					
Committee/Subcommittee	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Assessment Subcommittee	Establish a System to monitor Assessment Activities	Presentations on Student Learning Assessment at Departments/Schools, Campus Assessment Fest	Collect assessment evidence for Student Learning goals for each academic program in each academic unit		Integrate evidence into NCA report
Quality Improvement Initiative (QII) Subcommittee	Review themes from "My Perfect IIT Survey" and develop QII proposals	QII Proposals reviewed by Deans, and forwarded to NCA after approval by Provost and President	Implementation of QII Proposals presented to NCA, and integrate into NCA report		
Administrative Criteria Subcommittee	Focus on NCA's administrative criteria, implications of IIT's updated Strategic Plan	Integrate IIT's updated Strategic Plan, Compliance, Diversity and Community outreach efforts into NCA report			
NCA Advisory Committee	Discuss progress within each subcommittee, coordinate all communications with campus constituencies, and assure that resources needed to achieve critical goals for NCA accreditation are deployed in a timely and effective manner				

Quality Initiative Proposal

Redefining the First Year Experience

The proposed quality initiative is to redefine the first-year experience. This proposal addresses several themes from My Perfect IIT: creating a teaching and learning center, inviting guest speakers, and utilizing available technologies.

There are two completely new drivers of change that must be leveraged for IIT to excel in the 21st Century. The first impact is the demographic of the new student body. Their entire childhood through the high school level has been a world of the Internet including the recent capability of video, gifted minds accessing computers, cell phones and now within the last five years, iPhones and iPads. They have become digital savvy and are constantly connected to their friends and peers through social media. Almost all who come from top high schools have already experienced project- and inquiry-based learning and they expect the integration of course content. They find traditional materials and lecture-based classes boring and uninspiring. Where will these graduates find a university that will provide a continuity of their learning experiences and take education to the next advanced level? IIT is small and should be nimble enough to meet this demand.

The other new reason for change is the NCA accreditation process mandated by the Department of Education that is imposing a monitoring process to assure quality teaching, a concern for graduation rates, and an expected value of cost constraints in education. Of these, the strongest driver for quality learning is that, “each course has to identify its teaching objectives and then provide evidence that the teaching objectives have been achieved.”

The resources of this new student body identified with digital learning and the NCA mandates should be considered a gift of change for the future of IIT.

Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this initiative are:

- Increased first-year to second-year retention
- Improved 4-year and 6-year graduation rates
- Enhanced student learning
- Increased student satisfaction
- Enhanced school spirit

Proposed Method

- Do not require students to select a major until the second or third semester. This allows students to be exposed to a comprehensive overview of the professions during first year regardless of the area in which they choose to study.
- Move the initial IPRO course to the freshman year and incorporate the content of a general ITP (similar to the content of TECH 100, syllabus attached). This combination would provide a collaborative cross-disciplinary framework for students to learn the skills necessary for inquiry, investigation, and discovery and build a foundation for the student to analyze a problem and identify, develop, and communicate a solution. Perhaps a case study model would be appropriate because it would be a connection to the real world. More advanced IPRO's concentrating on new ideas and research could be sequenced throughout the curriculum. Subject major specific ITPs could be offered during the second or third semester after the student has selected a major.
- Enable the development of formal or informal student learning communities in freshman year. Such communities are important because they often continue to thrive beyond the freshman year in University. Students who work together in the freshman IPRO may still continue to interact even after they move into their disciplines, and once they graduate, these communities often provide the necessary networks that students use to build their career and progress in life.
- Guest speakers from industry, government, and academia could be invited to speak with the IPRO cohorts about their fields, current trends, etc.
- The balance of the freshman year could involve project-based learning wherever possible, with a broad coverage of material focused on potential career paths. Available options could reflect student consensus. "Course flipping" making use of classroom technologies and widely available academic Internet resources should be implemented in those courses that lend themselves to discussion. The IIT course would then be a class meeting of 15-20 students to discuss the material and perhaps apply it in project formats. This becomes iPad 101 and IIT has a long legacy now of iPad distribution which are now the medium for IIT education.
- To assure a structured sequence of courses dedicated to a four-year graduation, each student should be assigned an "academic coach" to both advise and track their academic progress. It would then be possible for the university to develop a matrix that could anticipate all course requirements for each academic year.
- To reinforce the vitality of the project learning format, it may be appropriate to have academic content modules that would be one-half semester. This would permit a math module to be used on one project team during the first half of the semester and the second module to be used on another project for the last half of the semester.
- The effectiveness of this program will be gauged by:
 - Degree of implementation of the program, first to second year retention rates, overall four- and five-year graduation rates
 - Student achievement, such as team/peer evaluations, short papers, "publishability" of student results and projects, and exams.

Quality Initiative Proposal

Increase 6-year graduation rate

The proposed quality initiative is to improve IIT’s 6-year graduation rate. IIT’s 6-year graduation rate has historically been significantly lower than our peer AITU schools and lower than expected based on the quality of the incoming IIT first-year student. The goal of this quality initiative is to increase IIT’s 6-year graduation rate to 85% within 5 years.

Historical graduation rates have been hovering around 65% for quite some time. The latest data point for IIT for Fall 2012 is based on what happened to the class that came to IIT in Fall 2005 (fall 2005 cohort). Our first-to-second year retention rate that year was 85%. 6-year graduation rates are strongly correlated to the first-to second year retention rate.

Since Fall 2005, the university has made steady improvements in our first-to-second year retention rate that has reached a high of 95% in fall 2011.

The most recent data point for 6-year graduation rate will come out soon and is expected to be 68%, a four percent increase over the previous cohort. This increase is partly due to the efforts of the retention task force that was formed that year by the university, and also due to a more forgiving policy was initiated on the annual renewal of student merit-based scholarships.

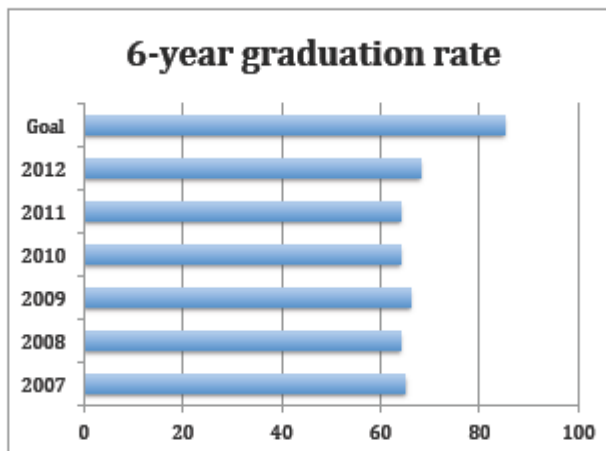


Figure 1. Historical 6-year graduation rates at IIT (%).

Based on recent trends in first-to-second year retention, it is reasonable to expect that we can and should reach a goal of 85% within five years. Due to this, however will require hard work and a concerted effort by the entire university community. Resources will also be necessary to accomplish this goal.

The expected outcomes of this initiative are:

- Increase student satisfaction
- Improve learning outcomes
- Improve University National Ranking
- Lower cost of attendance
- Lower student debt levels upon graduation
- Increase alumni engagement
- Better classroom utilization
- Class schedules and sizes are determined by educational pedagogy and not driven by unforeseen demand
- Increase summer session enrollment
- Reduce variability in semester student credit-hour load

Proposed Method:

The task of increasing our 6-year graduation rate will require a concerted effort by the entire IIT community (faculty, staff, students, administration, alumni).

An essential step toward achieving this goal is to simply require incoming students to create a plan in the student degree-audit system, "DegreeWorks." DegreeWorks will ensure that the student plan leads to a degree within a specified time frame at IIT. Faculty advisors can assist students with creating a plan, and central support by Academic Undergraduate Affairs will ensure that DegreeWorks results are accurate and up to date. The student plan data will reside in the central University database (Operational Data Store).

The data will be used to:

- Project demand for courses that are offered in the future terms
- Tailor class sizes based on pedagogy and not unforeseen demand
- Assist course schedulers in all academic units
- Make sure that the right mix of courses are offered in the right place at the right time

The basic premise of the proposed method is that students with a plan will do better and graduate faster than students without a plan.