

MEMORANDUM

To: J. Craig Clarke, President, Faculty Senate
From: Long Range Academic Planning Committee
Re: Salisbury University/Wor-Wic proposal
Date: May 10, 2010

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We recognize that the Senate is holding its final meeting for the academic year this week. However, this is our earliest opportunity to respond to the Wor-Wic proposal.

This committee has examined the proposal, met with several SU administrators, met with the Admissions/Readmissions Committee, and gathered some additional information. We would like to address several items in this summary of our deliberations. Some members of our committee are outright opposed to this program; others are skeptical and feel that it is being rapidly pushed into place. In any case, we have concerns regarding process, ethics, product, and faculty lines.

Process

We believe that the Long Range Planning Committee should have been involved in the process of planning a proposal such as this, rather than placed in the position of reacting to it after it is fully developed. We are not convinced that this decision is being made on its academic merits or its impact on the quality of SU's educational outputs. Rather, it appears to be driven by concerns about SU's recruitment and admissions goals.

Ethics

We have an ethical obligation to devote every possible resource that we have to help students admitted to SU to succeed. Every student SU hosts for this program, even if paying money for the privilege, would be taking student affairs resources away from enrolled SU students. (We assume that campus resources (human and physical), such as library resources, classroom resources, gym space, advising, are finite.) To use just two examples:

1. Although incoming SU freshmen would not be displaced from the dorms, transfer students would be. (Housing has indicated that they use transfer students to fill out any of the few empty beds that they still have by early summer.)
2. Second, even if a graduate assistant were hired for the CSA, it would still strain the human and physical capacity of that grievously under-funded resource center to have 50 (or more!) students regularly visiting the CSA – how could it not reduce the availability of the center for regular SU students?

Product

We believe that on the whole our courses (taught by SU faculty, conforming to SU curricular standards) are superior to those that are offered by community colleges. If we do have space for these students in our dorms, classrooms, and campus, is there anybody who would argue that Wor-Wic would do a better job of providing these students appropriate educational opportunities, versus SU faculty? Individual exceptions notwithstanding, SU faculty are in general terms more qualified, and students get a better course here, than what they might

have at a community college. If we don't think our courses are better, then we should be doing something about this. Thus, is there any ethical argument for not allowing these students, if they're already on campus, and if we value what they bring to campus enough to admit them, to take superior SU courses? Improving our freshman statistical profile for ranking services is not a sufficient rationale.

Faculty Lines

Another significant area of concern related to the SU/Wor-Wic Freshman Transition Program involves the number of courses taught by Wor-Wic faculty and the implications for SU tenure-line searches. While the current pilot project includes 50-60 students, if the number were to increase to 150, 200, or 300 students it would mean a notable increase in Wor-Wic courses. This directly impacts each department that has courses in the freshman transition program (e.g., psychology, biology, history). When individual departments seek out a new tenure-track position they have to prepare a proposal for their deans. A key piece of information in these proposals is clear evidence of course demand or an unmet need at the university. If multiple Wor-Wic faculty teach high-demand courses, these departments will see a decrease in overall student demand for seats in SU courses. In effect, for every three courses offered by Wor-Wic faculty in a department, one full-time faculty line becomes unnecessary. Therefore, this SU/Wor-Wic Freshman Transition Program has clear implications for faculty hiring at Salisbury University, particularly if the program increases in size and scope (50 students to 200 students). In turn, a decline in faculty hiring at SU would further erode our ability to offer freshmen level general education courses in these departments, and make the outsourcing of teaching responsibilities to the SU/Wor-Wic Transition Program even more necessary. In a political/budgetary climate that already threatens to deskill the faculty workforce with an increased reliance upon part-time, contractual, and community college faculty, with attendant negative impacts on student education, is this wise?

It seems likely that, regardless of faculty response to this proposal, it will be piloted this fall. If so, we would like to make the following recommendations.

- The Wor-Wic students should be admitted to SU only if they have achieved a 3.0 or better GPA after the fall semester. If one of the major reasons for this program is to ensure that SU admit a stronger set of students in the spring semester, we should set the bar high. Towson requires a 3.0 after 12 credits for its program.
- The diversity measures that are in place regarding recruitment and admission should also be employed for the selection of this group.
- The pilot program should be evaluated carefully. To this end, we would like to know:
 - How many of the 50 pilot students actually enroll in SU in the spring semester?
 - Do these students attend SU in their sophomore year?
 - How do these students compare to the other spring admits regarding GPA, retention, and other available data?
 - What is the impact of these students on SU services during the pilot program? For example, how many hours of service do they receive at the Center for Student Achievement?

- The policies regarding this pilot should be made public. Perhaps this effort could be modeled after Towson's website regarding their transitional program.

We recommend that the Senate examine the SU/Wor-Wic pilot proposal and vote on whether it should be implemented. As a committee, we recommend at the very least that the proposal be discussed further prior to implementation. If the proposal is implemented this summer and fall, without full faculty input, we recommend that it be thoroughly evaluated through tracking of pilot students during the year following implementation. This detailed evaluation should take place prior to any expansion of the program.