

Unifas Advisory Committee Minutes for March 8, 2006

Attending: Emilio Bruna, Jeff Norcini, Betty Miller, Dorota Haman, Phyllis Gilreath, Bobbi Henken, Richard Miles, Glenn Israel, Bill Larsen (Unifas)

Glenn Israel called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. Israel briefly reviewed the information that was emailed to members prior to the meeting and encouraged members to share ideas for improving the system; Israel also noted that it is important for the advisory committee to consider both pro and con arguments before making recommendations for specific Unifas policies or software changes.

Emilio Bruna kicked off the discussion by asking "Why have a database?" Glenn Israel responded that Unifas produces three reports: T&P, Annual Report, and Plan of Work (All follow the format of the T&P report per request of the Administration); Israel added that Unifas is also used for reporting formula funding information for research and extension to the state and for reporting information for federal requirements. Bruna asked if the database could collect just the specific things for these uses and not the entire amount in Unifas; Israel replied that this could be a policy recommendation but the committee should address all the pros and cons

Jeff Norcini expressed concern about the accuracy for recording clientele contacts; He noted that everyone has different ways of reporting; Dorota Haman asked if contacts can report through the IFAS calendar; Haman suggested looking into automating the reporting for faculty; Phyllis Gilreath reported that faculty were having a hard time interpreting definitions consistently, as well as recording the information especially during busy seasons; Glenn Israel reported that Bryan Terry and he are working on a new fact sheet on how to count clientele contacts.

Jeff Norcini said the problem with training is that you need to use right away and continuously; Norcini said users must have more documentation, e.g., cursor over, to help people remember how to do things in the program; Norcini added that information on the definitions of publications, e.g., what is a lecture at professional meetings is needed, and how to report specialist talking with agents is needed; Norcini noted that consistency is a problem because some faculty enter presentations as lectures and others enter them as abstracts.

Phyllis Gilreath said what should be entered relies too much on individual interpretation and some was not the logical place to put information; She said there is much variation from county to county, while at the same time we need to recognize the need for one report that addresses both county and state requirements.

Emilio Bruna said that he was not convinced what we need to report in the first place; if the goal is for a T&P report versus for state and federal reporting; this could be a useful resource but don't know what its for; Bruna asked why spend my time; Israel reported that there is a need from most all of the data that is collected in Unifas. The data needs are driven by the T&P Guidelines, Administration requests, and legislative requirements; Phyllis Gilreath noted that reporting is used for three things; 1) justifying federal funding, 2) annual evaluations of faculty, and 3) Promotion packets.

Bobbi Henken said that the major concern in her department is the inaccuracy and incompleteness of the data that comes from other university source.

Dorota Haman said no way to find out who is working in the same area; way to much freedom in the system; all would benefit from having more structure; hope to have better system; Jeff Norcini expressed concerned about Extension Administration restructuring extension goals and focus areas and added that there is a need to revise Unifas to change with changes in structure; Dorota Haman said Byran Terry is working on searching but he can't do it all; too many programs by agents and specialists; system needs to put people together better;

Israel asked what members saw as the key issues to be addressed given the initial round of comments.

Emilio Bruna said data errors in Unifas need to be correctable; Bruna said reconsider the ways in which data are now being collected, e.g., DSR reports lump sum grants by single years over the duration of the grant and it might be better to report the lump sum. Bruna added that there is no true understanding of what faculty are being asked to report on, who gets this data, and what it is used for -- The key question should be: What is needed for funding purposes? It would be a good thing to explain why we report and what is needed.

Bobbi Henken: if we can't fix courses taught and course evaluations soon, then scrap it; Dorota Haman: reported that she did a T&P and her data was okay but some grants were missing; Unifas was helpful in getting the packet done quickly; the biggest problem was extension because there was nothing to start with.

Richard Miles said that he used to look forward to meeting with the department chair but last 5 years it has not been fun; Unifas must lessen frustration level and keep it simple since faculty are forced to use the system; Miles said there are too many categories, e.g., publications, so it is too complicated; Miles said faculty do a good job and its frustrating in not being able to report it; Betty Miller said that she sees progress made since last year and noted that Unifas can lead to a promotion packet.

Jeff Norcini said he wants much better documentation for the program.

Phyllis Gilreath said please don't start all over again; instead simplify the program and solve interpretations; Gilreath noted that there is no place to put marketing UF in Unifas; She added that programs in county are not going to be directed by Unifas -- we do what we have to do and fit it in Unifas -- that's not going to change; Gilreath added that the old FAS provided frequently used authors, which made entering publications easier; Dorota Haman said people don't know how to start entering conference papers by name, date, etc.; Jeff Norcini suggested including "fuzzy logic" for search in publications for the search; Israel said that some of the design principles might need to be revisited (see pre-meeting information).

Glenn Israel suggested that the committee needs to consider policy options for importing data from various sources, and whether faculty should be allowed to change

the data coming from external sources; Israel advocated thinking through the implications of the policy recommendations by the committee; Jeff Norcini also advocated fixing errors in the university databases; Norcini said it must be done in a timely manner and data owners need to cooperate; Bill Larsen noted that there is also some mis- or incomplete understanding about data among faculty; e.g. courses taught; Larsen noted that we also need to identify how data should be corrected; Bobbi Henken said faculty in her department had lots of errors in course data and cited an example where a number of faculty were listed at teaching Bob Cousin's course; Henken also noted that faculty didn't have courses taught at the health center in the Unifas database; Henken asserted that the data is useless unless it is fixed and there need to be more data quality checks; Dorota Haman suggested adding categories for other courses on campus in other teaching activities.

Glenn Israel summarized and noted that there are many data problems; Israel said this group needs to recommend a policy with regard to how to address these problems; There are pros and cons to allowing the faculty to correct what they consider to be mistakes in the data that have been loaded; There needs to be a better understanding of what is going into Unifas from the external sources; The system software needs to be streamlined and simplified for entering data.

Glenn Israel summarized the key issues identified during the discussion that should be addressed:

1. Clean up data
2. Simply and guide users
3. Explain purpose for Unifas
4. Extension – identify stuff to put in for extension; e.g., in-service training; symposium
5. Mixed messages for faculty – not sure of the commitment by administration to the system.

Dorota Haman noted that the focus area teams not working at all; Jeff Norcini noted that people are on too many teams of programs, e.g., 10 programs for one faculty member; Phyllis Gilreath said many drop-down menus don't fit what people are doing; Dorota Haman said there was much duplication in the extension menus; Haman said the focus areas and content need a total revision; Betty Miller said the focus teams need an opportunity to revise the menus; Bill Larsen suggested taking a look at topics/subjects list which has exploded; take a close look at the list and implications of discontinuing categories;