Natural Sciences Chairs Council

August 7, 2020

ZOOM Mini-Retreat

In Attendance: S. Pantula, S. McGill, M. Chao, K. Cousins, T. Burch, B. Haddock, J. Torner, L. Mian, M. Jetter, D. Maynard, T. Valencia, L. Guzman, D. Rinebolt, R. Hernandez, M. Martinez, L. Stiff, A. Morales, M. Montejano, C. Alvarez, A. Torres, J. McCormick, N. Hall, B. Hampton, J. Carhart

Morning Session: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

The meeting began with Dr Pantula introducing Mrs. Treesje Thomas, a school psychologist, who serves students with disabilities and advocating for mental health awareness in the public schools. She is also a SpokenWord artist. She shared a poem that she had written entitled, Lighthouse.

Dr. Pantula spoke briefly on the importance of assisting our students in achieving success in their time at CSUSB. Mr. Hernandez then played a clip from a movie, Unlikely, where different students spoke about the challenges they faced being successful as a college student.

After viewing the film clip, Dr. Pantula introduced Marisol Montejano, a CSUSB student, who detailed the struggles she faced as an undocumented student unable to acquire financial assistance to attend college even though she was an outstanding student and had a powerful desire to attend college, but who was forced to drop out of college for financial reasons. Later she attempted to acquire an education again, this time as a single mother attending college and she spoke of the difficulties she encountered then. She persevered however and is now working on getting her credentials to become a math teacher.

Dr. Pantula then asked the advisors and the chairs to have a time of discussion on ideas they have to better support each other and help our students be successful here at CSUSB.

Dr. Guzman closed the time with a summary of ideas that were shared.

Afternoon Session 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

In Attendance: S. Pantula, S. McGill, M. Chao, K. Cousins, D. Maynard, L. Mian, B. Haddock, M. Jetter, T. Burch, J. Torner, L. Guzman, T. Valencia, D. Rinebolt, R. Hernandez

The meeting began with Treesje Thomas sharing of another one of her poems, Oxymoron.

Dr. Pantula began this part of the meeting with a discussion of **student success**. He shared information about a survey that had been taken regarding the student’s sense of belonging. Our college scored below the university average. He asked for discussion on ideas to improve the sense of belonging.

Dr. Guzman reported that the advising center is scheduling Touchpoint sessions to connect with students and help them navigate their way through planning their class schedule. Dr. Torner suggested that students be required to meet with a faculty member for advising as well. He also suggested informal meetings between faculty and students. Dr. Chao mentioned that communicating with students is a major challenge. The majority of students do not read their CSUSB email. His question was, “how do we get around that?”

After the discussion on a sense of belonging the discussion turned to DFWI rates. Dr. Pantula reported that there is still work to be done on improving the DFWI rates on some of our classes. He asked for thoughts on how this could be improved.

Next the discussion was about graduation rates. The 4 year graduation rate has declined. Discussion ensued. Overall consensus was that 4 years is not a realistic possibility for many of our students. For a student to graduate in 4 years, it would be necessary for him/her to take 15 units per semester. For students in our majors, this would equate to a very heavy workload. The majority of our students also work part-time which only further complicates their successful completion of classes in 4 years.

The final discussion item in the student success category is student retention. 2/3rds of our majors transfer out to other majors outside our college. Discussion ensued on possible reasons for this happening and ways to better inform students on their choice of majors.

Dr. Pantula then asked the chairs to think about one thing they would like to see funded. Dr. Guzman suggested more advising counselors. Dr. Haddock expressed the fear that throwing money at something wouldn’t necessarily make it better. Students are in need of better advising about their majors. Dr. Haddock expressed his frustration that many of the kinesiology majors choose the wrong concentration for what they want to do as a career.

The next area of discussion centered on **faculty success**. Dr. Pantula reported that our 22 newly hired faculty members seem to be doing real well. They are communicating amongst themselves.

Discussion then took place on the financial situations that we will be facing over the next couple of years and its impact on the teaching load. Dr. Pantula pointed out that we must use our tenure-track faculty wisely. Hiring part-time faculty increases our expenses especially if it puts them in the position of receiving benefits.

The next discussion centered on **staff success**. There are currently 3 staff openings in our college which we will not be able to hire a replacement for. Ms. Valencia spoke first of her interactions with the department ASCs and the issues they have faced. The overall consensus is that working from home involves a lot more time and energy than working from the office.

The final discussion of the meeting was about **Department Chair issues**. Dr. Pantula asked the chairs how he could help them reduce their stress level this year. Dr. Torner expressed his appreciation for Dr. Pantula’s transparency. He encouraged him to continue his strong communication efforts with the chairs. Dr. Haddock mentioned that this year has been unbelievably stressful. First the move from quarters to semesters and the overwhelming amount of work equated with that and now Covid-19 and all of the problems associated with it.

The meeting ended with a presentation by R.J. Abesamis, a student at CSU Fullerton who sang In My Life by the Beatles and Heal the World by Michael Jackson. She ended the presentation with a SpokenWord piece entitled, Be Thankful.