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Wednesday Communiqué, 11/21/2012

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WEDNESDAY COMMUNIQUE

November 21, 2012

Happy Thanksgiving!

Quick Strategic Decisions: The landscape of higher education is changing rapidly. From financial and regulatory pressures, to new teaching and learning models, to new mission and tasks, we need to become more dynamic and fast paced. Actually, we need to start making strategic decisions faster. As one of my mentors recently told me, you only need to be exact in tactics, while strategy can always be refined as more data become available. It is no longer acceptable to take 2 years to add or remove a course, when the world is creating universities and others are designing new course delivery models in less than half that time. If nothing else, the founding fathers point the way. It took them less than 4 months to construct the US constitution, a document that has since been amended multiple times but survived largely intact as the best strategic plan for any country!

Decision-Based Evidence Making: How do we become better at making decisions? Many of us pride ourselves at gathering evidence and data before making our decisions. I read recently, however, that we sometimes do it in reverse, and try to gather evidence in order to justify our decisions. <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/the-magazine/2010-summer/51419/is-decision-based-evidence-making-necessarily-bad/>. An interesting question is whether decision-based evidence making is bad?

Teaching Innovations Lecture: Dr. John Booske, Bluemke Professor of Engineering at UW-Madison, and Director of the Wisconsin Collaboratory for Enhanced Learning, will present a public lecture titled "Back to the Future: 21st Century Instruction Innovations in Higher Education" on Monday, November 26 at 3:30 p.m. in the Centennial Engineering Center auditorium. Since 2009, Professor Booske has led an effort to establish 21st century learning spaces that maximize the benefits to be gained from research-proven methods of improved instruction and learning in many campus courses. This has culminated in WisCEL (www.wiscel.wisc.edu) and coincides with an exciting, rapid growth of campus commitment to innovation and improvement of student learning.

The Student Engagement Survey: The report http://nsse.iub.edu/html/annual_results.cfm details results from a 2012 survey of 285,000 first year students and seniors attending 546 U.S. colleges and universities. "Some findings from the 2012 survey and its companion surveys, the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), include: 1) First-year students spent an average of 15 hours per week preparing for class, and seniors averaged one half-hour more. Those earning grades of A or A- studied about four more hours per week than their first-year peers with grades of C+ or lower. 2) In most fields, full-time seniors devoted about one to two hours less to class preparation than faculty expected. Engineering majors studied more than faculty expected. But when asked how much they believe students actually study, faculty estimates in all fields fell short of student accounts by five to eight hours per week. 3) On average, distance education students spent about one hour more per week preparing for class than their on-campus counterparts. 4) Support for learning in college was beneficial regardless of how engaged students had been in high school. Although high school engagement was related to subsequent engagement in college, on average, students who experienced a more supportive campus environment evidenced higher levels of engagement. 5) Job opportunities were cited by the majority of seniors among the factors motivating their choice of major, but this varied by racial/ethnic background and field of study. Students of color were generally more concerned than white students about their ability to find a job. Seniors majoring in science, technology, engineering, and math were more likely than others to cite job opportunities as a motivating factor."

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