Hi, Paul!

The retreat sounds as though it was chock full of information.  I am so sorry to have missed it.  Thank you for the minutes.  They are very helpful to those of us who could not be there.

I have no changes to make to the minutes, of course, but I do have a couple of comments/suggestions that you and Sylvia may want to consider:

#1.  AFT has put together a website called "Share My Lesson," which has all sorts of information and techniques to help PreK-12 adjust to and make as solid as possible the new **Common Core standards**.  If our teachers benefit from this information, so will our colleges and universities.  It may do us well to help make sure teachers we know are aware of this resource.

#2.  **College Completion**.  I hope we stay aware that part of the reason it has been more difficult for students to complete college in a reasonable time frame is reduced state funding that has been steadily cut for at least 15 years.  Reduced funding has resulted in not enough classes being offered in a timely manner to allow students to fulfill their requirements within a four-year period, particularly if students change majors.  Some classes in majors are offered only once a year or once every two years.  In order to cut costs, we know, more and more adjuncts do the teaching that used to be done by full-time, tenured faculty. Classes that might have been taught to 20-25 students previously are now taught to 60 or even 100. I have difficulty believing class size does not compromise quality. Moreover, because of reduced funding, the cost of college now falls on the backs of the institutions and students.  As a result, our students are working longer and longer hours in order to afford to attend college.  Asking us to increase our graduation rates adds insult to injury and carries with it the potential of compromises in the quality of education our students receive. I hope we will continually remind HEPC and legislators that teachers and professors have been performing miracles.  Unsatisfactory graduation rates are the result of many forces, including economic pressures on our students that could be relieved by federal and state legislative decisions to support our educational system and our young people.  Don't even mention Pell grants.  Or the reduction in Promise. Are the threats to student loans being taken into account, by the way?  If students can no longer borrow money at rates they need, if institutions lose student population as a result, will required rates of graduation also be adjusted downward?

It just seems very simplistic to me to imagine that forcing institutions to reduce hours required will improve education, increase graduation rates, and somehow solve all the problems associated with inadequate "graduation rates."

I'm sorry to rant.  Simply, let's not allow the conversation to go forward on the assumption that institutions alone determine graduation rates and that this one tweak will make everything OK.  Certainly HEPC must understand that if this one aspect of education is emphasized and rewarded, there will indeed be higher graduation rates.  I wonder at what cost.

All best,

Susan Kelley

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