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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Tuesday, September 7, 2010

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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AAC Minutes – September 7, 2010

In attendance: Barry Levis (Chair), Alex Boguslawski, Rick Bommelje (Secretary), Gloria Cook, Chris Fuse, Sebastian Novak, Dawn Roe, Darren Stoub, Martina Vidovic, Deb Wellman

Guests in attendance: Sharon Lusk, Paul Stevenson

The meeting was called to order at 12:32 PM.

Minutes. The minutes of the August 31, 2010 meeting were approved.

Old Business

Maymester Questionnaire

Deb reviewed the draft questionnaire during the past week and commented that she believes it would be controversial. Barry asked for feedback on revisions. Chris asked Deb what rephrasing would be helpful to achieve the purpose. Deb stated those faculties who teach in the Maymester are required to submit the same forms as in the courses taught in the Fall and Spring terms. Darren indicated that the primary issue was to verify that the Gen Ed matrix had been completed. Deb identified that faculty teaching in the regular terms are not required to respond to a similar survey. Barry stated that AAC does not vet the Maymester courses and in questioning whether they are significantly different from those courses offered in the regular term edition of the courses. If 4 credits are being given for the course, it should not be any different from courses delivered in the regular term. Deb responded that they are meeting the required number of hours of seat time. Barry stated that for every hour in class there is a requirement for the student to do three hours outside of class. Rick asked where this policy was stipulated and Barry noted that it was passed by the faculty when the switch was made to four hours credit. Chris questioned how much a Maymester course has to differ from a semester course before it is a different course. Darren stated that from an educational development perspective, what is expected from a student in a 13 week course must be different from a 3 week course. The fundamental question is to determine what the professors are doing pedagogically that is fundamentally different. Deb stated that this is a good question and emphasized that the learning outcomes must be met for the Gen Eds. She added that the purpose of Maymester is for students to fulfill their Gen Ed requirements here rather than somewhere else. Darren indicated that for SACS purpose we need to systematically look at if the Gen Ed matrix is being completed. Barry questioned whether or not this is the best delivery method. Could it be better offered in a different format, such as a 6 week term in the Holt School? Barry stated that Laurie's objective has been financial. Deb responded that Laurie's objective is to keep A&S students in the A&S curriculum. Barry re-emphasized that if the courses are the same than he has no problem with the Maymester courses. But there is anecdotal evidence that there are some courses in which there are significant differences. Gloria stated that as a past member of AAC, if you change the course

content, it doesn't matter if it's the same title; it must go through new course subcommittee again. Deb felt that asking Maymester faculty to do this is much better than to send the survey. Darren asked for clarification on how the Maymester concept was approved. Barry stated that it has been through AAC twice and was approved on a trial basis. The intent of raising the issue now is get a head start on determining if this is the best way to do it. Chris asked if there was a reason for choosing a 3 week term versus a 5 week term. Sebastian stated that it was created this way for students who are doing summer internships. Paul Stevenson verified that this was accurate and it was convenient for students who had summer jobs. Chris expressed concern about the 3 week time frame, especially for the Gen Ed with the P requirement. Deb emphasized that Maymester is still a trial. Dawn asked if it were changed to a 5 week term would it make a difference for students. Deb responded that most students would do their Gen Eds at an institution in their hometown. There is also no requirement. She also stated that if they are here, they are living on campus and spreading the timeframe out would raise the cost. Rick brought the focus of the discussion back to the survey. Barry asked if there was concern with it by anyone. Chris stated that he can see where it could be contentious.

Deb asked if AAC could request that all Maymester courses come through the new course subcommittee. Chris stated that the new course subcommittee could then ask specific questions, if necessary. Barry indicated the new course form does not ask the types of questions regarding rigor that are found in the survey. Deb stated that the new course subcommittee does ask the necessary questions relating to the rigor and standards of the College. Chris confirmed that this is the case and also suggested that a question could be added to the form that if the course is a Maymester course or a shortened course, what will be done differently? Barry stated that the courses in Maymester are not new courses since they are Gen Eds. Dawn asked if the Maymester courses could be numbered differently. Martina noted that it also possible that a faculty member could teach the course only in the Maymester and not during the regular term and will not be able to make the comparison. Barry stated that based on the list of Maymester courses, this is not the case and faculty are taking their regular term courses that have already been approved and adapting them to the 3 week format.

Chris stated that he could add a different question to the new course proposal form and bring it forward to the Committee for review next week. Gloria emphasized that that biggest step is that a new course proposal form is required. Chris stated that it will be necessary to request the Maymester course proposals much earlier in the year. Darren asked the question about whose responsibility is it to assess the effectiveness of Maymester. Barry stated that it was AAC's responsibility. Deb indicated that Maymester faculty should not be singled out. Darren queried that since Maymester is an experimental program, how will we know if it effective or not? Deb stated that one way is to review the syllabi. Barry emphasized that last year Laurie refused to release the syllabi. Barry asked for a committee vote on obtaining the syllabi.

Chris made a motion to request from the Dean's office the syllabi for Maymester courses and the regular semester equivalent courses.
Gloria seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

The Maymester survey is tabled. Chris will bring a draft of the new course proposal form with the new question for review. Dawn asked if there is a relationship with a ce designation being placed on a course. Barry asked how Maymester courses were listed on the transcript and Deb stated that she thought the term is listed as Maymester. She will confirm this. Sharon stated that in the Banner system it is set up as its own term. Chris queried about the time frame of Maymester and whether it could be done in 5 weeks. Gloria asked if we are asking Maymester faculty to complete a new course proposal form. Deb stated that when a faculty member applies to teach a course, they will be required to complete the form. Gloria asked whether or not we should be voting on requiring Maymester faculty to complete the new course proposal form and Barry recommended that we wait until we review the revised form. Darren asked how the selection of faculty was done and Deb responded that it was based on need to fulfill the Gen Ed courses.

New Business

1. A request from the Biology Department to allow the AP Test Score 4 or 5 to substitute for the O-N General Education requirement

Paul Stevenson, representing the Biology Department prepared a written copy of the rationale and it was distributed. He stated that his department is proposing that incoming students who have completed the Biology AP test and scored 4 or 5 be awarded the O and N General Education requirement.

Rationale: Paul identified 4 points:

1. Students who take AP biology in High School participate in a yearlong course with lab. The Biology Dept. feels strongly that any student capable of earning a score of 4 or 5 on the AP exam has significant knowledge of the organic sciences and lab practice. Consider also that currently students at Rollins take a single semester lab course and if they earn even a minimal grade (D-) they are awarded the O/N general education credit. It is the opinion of the Biology Dept. that given the minimal requirements currently in place at Rollins, a student having earned an AP score of 4 or 5 is at least as qualified as a student who has taken a single semester course carrying the O/N Gen Ed. designation.
2. This standard (Biology AP score of 4 or 5) for awarding O/N credit is more rigorous than that already in place for our state educational institutions (who require only an AP score of 3). There is a precedent for this at Rollins @ W & Q.
3. The College is currently faced with a very large backlog of students needing to earn the Gen. Ed O/N credit. For a number of reasons the Biology Dept. is not in a position to offer enough courses to satisfy demand for O/N classes. Do not have the staffing capability. We anticipate that only a few students will enter the college with AP scores of 4/5, but at least this would slightly alleviate some demand for O/N classes.

4. Currently Biology majors (and BMB, and Marine Bio. Majors) who have AP scores of 5 are permitted to opt out of taking either Bio 120, or Bio 121. They are subsequently given major credit for the course that they skip.

Problems can arise for these students if they opt out of Bio 120 because that is the only course in the major sequence that carries the O/N designation. Students can find themselves in the odd situation of not having earned the O/N Gen Ed credits yet they have taken more natural science courses and labs than students in other non-science majors!

This policy would ensure that if a student skipped Bio 120, they would still be awarded the O/N general education credits.

Paul noted that the Biology Dept. is also submitting a proposal to have Biology 121 also carry the O/N designation (just to make doubly sure that our majors will have the O/N). This will be submitted to the new course subcommittee.

Deb asked why this was not happening in Genetics and other courses with the O/N and Paul responded that it could be done. Chris stated that you don't want non-science majors in upper level courses. Dawn asked if there were prerequisites and Paul confirmed that is the case. Chris also indicated that having the N on Bio 121 will be more of a catch all than awarding a score for a 4 or a 5. Paul stated that this would apply to majors and non-majors. Gloria noted that her children took AP Bio in high school and could see if applying for non-majors. She asked Paul if it would apply to majors too with the gap of two years and he confirmed yes.

Darren questioned whether or not we should allow any high school courses count for Gen Ed credit. Gloria stated that she did not have a problem with the non- science majors.

Darren pointed out that in relation to chemistry, there is not correlation with success on the AP chemistry exam 3, 4, and 5 with success in college level courses. Chris echoed this for Physics.

Darren queried if there is external evidence suggesting that a 4 and 5 means success in college level courses. He also pointed out that this is not done in chemistry because the lab skills they get in high school are nonexistent. Further, he stated that in the chemistry department, there is pressure because the Biology department accepts credit for AP 5 for credit in 120 and 121 whereas students must take Chem 120 and 121 even if they get a 3, 4 or 5. He asked if a department can make this assumption that a Gen Ed requirement can be satisfied this way or -should this be an institutional policy? Barry talked to Toni and she indicated we only give skills Gen Ed's a waiver on AP test because both the Q and the W are skills. We do not for the affective and cognitive courses. Barry expressed concern that if it is done in one area we would be obligated to do it for the D, S, C, V and all of the others. He is worried about singling out a requirement in one department rather than a campus wide policy. He is also concerned about a blanket exception here if we don't look at all the others. Barry contacted the Admissions Department to see how many students would be affected

and they indicated it would be very few who would qualify. It would only be a handful of students who want to take an O and an N or a P and an N. It seems like it's an exception for a very few number of students. Deb expressed that Toni is very worried about getting outside of the W and Q skills area. Sebastian stated that this would alleviate pressure for some students and that they could possibly advance their major faster. He believes it is a good idea and that most other schools award this. Chris stated that there could be non-science majors what take the O and the N and then switch later to a science major or minor. Gloria supported Chris' point and stated that she want students to have the chance to explore. To narrow the choice right away doesn't fit in the Liberal Arts ethos. Sebastian asked if more O & N courses will be offered and Paul stated he hope so and confirmed that the real backlog is the N.

Paul stated that if putting the O & N on Bio 121 will solve this issue, I don't' think the Biology department will object to this. The AP 4-5 will not be passed by AAC, but AAC was happy about Bio 120 getting the O and the N

Chris made a motion to deny the request. The motion was seconded by Darren. The motion passes with one nay vote.

Chris raised the fundamental question that the N always has a backlog. Barry recalls in the past, there more courses with the N being offered. Darren stated that due to the conditions in Bush Science Center, the Chemistry department has had to reduce the number of students in a lab course. This means that the number of lab courses must be doubled. Chris indicated that he taught a very large section of Physics because of the backlog of P. In order to free up backlog we would need to teach more overloads. Deb stated that there is no money to pay overloads we do not have money for overloads. Darren expressed that the Chemistry department has been asking for another faculty line for the past four years to help relieve the backlog. Gloria shared the department needs to be viewed as a service department to the rest of the College. Deb indicated that one of the possibilities expressed in the past was hiring an instructor level to teach the basic P, O and N courses. However, this has been rejected by the Dean's office. She also stated that with low enrollment it will be very difficult to hire new faculty. Chris asked what the backlog is for student needing the N and Deb responded that is 84 seniors. Deb stated that the real problem is if the courses are not offered and a student has tried repeatedly and been denied, a form must be signed stating they do not have to take the course because it was the College's fault.

Gloria asked if the Holt School could offer the courses and Deb indicated this was not possible.

Sharon stated that the Holt School offers lab courses and uses the P. There are a few seats available and Sharon also has asked Departments to consider cross listing courses in the Spring term. Labs meet two nights per week. Offering lab science courses has always been a

challenge for Holt. Barry emphasized that this is a serious problem that must be addressed. Deb wondered why having a large science course with lab breakout sessions held during the week could be a possible format. Darren stated that there is an ethos that we don't do large courses with an enrollment over 50 at Rollins. Darren questioned why we don't do morning labs and Chris echoes this. Deb: doesn't understand why the contact hours in the science courses are different from other departments. Barry stated that even if lab courses were available in the mornings, there is both a staffing issue and a student apathy about taking morning lab courses. He also stated that it depends on where it fits with the student's priority. Sebastian confirmed the difficulty to get into the courses. Barry suggested that perhaps the lab experience could be curtailed so that a student could get two labs in instead of one. Darren stated this is a much larger science education issue. To be creative, you need the full 4 hours. Chris confirmed that it is more of a discovery lab. Darren emphasized that it is defining what the purpose of the lab class is. Dawn asked if offering more morning courses would be beneficial. Darren stated that the question is quantity or quality. Chris queried why courses are offered 5 days a week rather than 3 or 4 days. Deb stated that from the big picture, we have to get 1700 students through the courses. Darren stated that this is a huge debate that has to happen.

2. Academic Appeals Committee member.

AAC needs to have another representative on the Academic Appeals Committee. It is scheduled to meet on Wednesdays at 10:00 am. Deb will find out if another time frame is possible.

3. Valedictorian Requirements.

Members reported on the information collected from the designated schools about requirements for Valedictorian. Barry stated that 7 of the 19 schools do not have a Valedictorian. Darren asked if the concept of valedictorian was a primarily for high school. Barry this could be one solution. He indicated that last year, the valedictorian was a transfer student and there was resentment because she did not have the freshmen year. Washington and Lee University only counts the last two years. This could be another solution. Gloria stated that at Davidson, they look at those who are summa cum laude and evaluate other factors such as community service and then pick first and second honors. Barry stated that this is the practice that the Holt School uses. The term that is used is 'outstanding student'. Sharon confirmed that the selection is made from students who graduate with honors as well as have community and institutional service. The selection is made by faculty review and vote. In the case of a tie, there are two outstanding students, as was the case last May. Deb shared that she liked the Davidson concept and Rick stated that perhaps A&S would actually benefit from something that the Holt School is doing. Barry indicated that this topic will be continued next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:53 PM.

Rick Bommelje
Secretary