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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee Meeting, Thursday, January 21, 2010

Arts & Sciences Professional Standards Committee

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Professional Standard Committee
Draft Minutes—January 21, 2010
4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Bush 105

The meeting was convened at 4pm by Thomas Moore. Faculty members present were Joshua Almond, Erich Blossey, Emily Russell, and Claire Strom. Associate Dean Don Davison and Billy Kennedy were also present.

- 1) Announcements—The directors of the Holt graduate programs are coming to our February 25 meeting to discuss CIEs. Our January 28 meeting will be held in the President’s Dining Room for review of grant applications. The executive committee has approved members of PSC to talk with administrators regarding developing the instrument for feedback to administrators.
- 2) Old Business
 - a) H. Kypraios addressed the committee regarding funding policies and changes in institutional practice without forewarning. He identified the fundamental issue as the need for a grandfathering clause in rule changes and asked the committee to take into account the co-existence of effective rules (or institutional practice) and nominal rules. T. Moore agreed that, yes, the rule prohibiting further funding without past progress reports has been applied unevenly; he added, however, that this year’s calls for grant applications made explicit that the rules would be enforced. H Kypraios asked, does this committee believe in grandfathering? E. Russell responded that in this case, the problem was exactly the distinction Kypraios described between nominal rules and practice; as a committee we were enforcing, not changing rules, and grandfathering did not seem appropriate. The rule change we proposed, in fact, moved to a less stringent application of policy to allow for future funding.
 - b) Evaluation of teaching (Blossey/Strom): Our conversation centered on three central questions: 1) Unevenness of evaluations across of departments and, more specifically, the lack of a standardized model for Departmental Evaluation Committees (DECs); 2) How often should teaching be evaluated, and by whom; and 3) How do we quantify teaching success as a college? We agreed that the answer to the last question is the immediate goal of the committee. E. Blossey also distributed two handouts: “Some Questions and Possible Answers” and a draft of an evaluation instrument (see attached).
1. E. Blossey began by noting that we have no standardized model for Departmental Evaluation Committees and asked, should we change bylaws to make these committees? The central question in this regard seems to be: should untenured colleagues sit on DECs? In addressing departments who don’t have enough tenured faculty to sit on DECs, we could include outside members. E. Blossey suggested that it might also be valuable to return to a model where outside-division faculty sat on DECs. E. Russell noted the previous PSC conversations on this issue, suggesting that there was little faculty consensus on changing the policy. She also recalled L. Joyner’s comments on the responsibility of junior faculty to shift the culture of the institution and added that there’s a clear value of junior voices in

supporting colleagues whose scholarship and teaching reflect disciplinary shifts in the academy. E. Blossey described the perception of unevenness in evaluations across campus and argued that more explicit criteria for evaluation would address concerns about inconsistent standards across departments. The Department would maintain written evaluations of teaching observations and the teaching portfolio. When departments establish their own criteria, the door is open for uneven standards across departments. E. Russell asked, doesn't the FEC review departmental criteria for review? D. Davison responded that this review only occurs when there's a change in criteria or when a department applies for a faculty line.

2. How often and by whom? We cited the need for coordination of the promotion and tenure 3-year cycle and the merit pay (possibly) annual cycle. D. Davison argued that in merit pay criteria, the allowance for a 3-year gap addresses natural ebbs and flows of research process; a similar gap in teaching doesn't appropriately allow for the developmental goals of the review process. He also added that an extending individuals to a 3 year cycle for merit pay runs into the practical realities of our inability to predict the budget looking out several years. D. Davison also added that the Faculty Salary Council felt similarly uneasy with how we evaluate teaching and that greater clarity and standards would be both welcome and valuable.

3. How do we define teaching success as a college? We opened with the suggestion that a teaching portfolio might include: classroom observation, syllabus, sample assignments; and sample handouts. C. Strom asked about the problem of measuring student outcomes and asked whether we currently have assessment policies linked to our accreditation procedures. D. Davison responded that accreditation is linked to institutional assessment of departments/programs (including GE courses) but that individual courses are not measured in this way in any standardized format. He suggested that in defining these standards we can tie our guidelines to the LEAP learning outcomes already reviewed and approved by the faculty for our general education revision. C. Strom suggested a teaching portfolio should include: what are the intended outcomes of the course and how are they measured? A. Voicu suggested that the course syllabus should include outcomes for the course. E. Russell noted the difference between faculty offering a description of their assessment methodology in teaching statement as opposed to having the CEC actually measure the success of learning outcomes themselves. She cited the desire to minimize the amount of paperwork passed on to evaluation committees. E. Blossey suggested we might track students across courses to see how their success changes and if they are consistently successful or improving. T. Moore concluded the discussion by looking ahead to next steps: we will work toward a concrete statement outlining what teaching evaluation at Rollins should look like.

The meeting was adjourned by T. Moore at 5pm.

Respectfully submitted by Emily Russell.

Attachments: 2

Evaluation of Teaching

Examination of our faculty governance archives reveals that we passed the following proposal (1999-2000 academic year).

In the fall of 1999, the Christian A. Johnson Institute for Effective Teaching initiated a program of mini-grants to encourage Rollins College Arts & Sciences faculty to conduct Scholarship of Teaching projects within their classes. The model for this came from the American Association for Higher Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in a national effort that included hundreds of colleges and universities across the nation. The purpose of the national effort was to form an association of Carnegie Academies that would progress through several stages of advancement in research on teaching. By formulating and approving a campus definition of Scholarly Teaching (what we do in our daily teaching) and Scholarship of Teaching (special projects), the Rollins faculty began the first phase of the Carnegie project.

This proposal was created by a faculty committee and approved by faculty vote in a regular faculty meeting.

The adopted definitions are:

"SCHOLARLY TEACHING AT ROLLINS COLLEGE is student focused, outcome-oriented, informed, interactive, relevant, challenging, and collaborative. Through active environments, reflection, experimentation, and modeling; students learn to construct knowledge, skills, and attitudes; employ critical thinking and problem-solving processes; and collaborate with others in preparation for citizenship in a global society." Beyond scholarly teaching,

"SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AT ROLLINS COLLEGE addresses issues of teaching and learning through a cycle of reflection, experimentation, assessment, application, and communication. Faculty engaged in Scholarship of Teaching focus on specific goals; use recognized and appropriate methods of experimentation, analysis and integration; and make their results available for peer review and collaboration."

While the scholarship of teaching is very important in the production of outstanding instruction and is modeled by many professors on our campus, this facet of teaching is not the major component of evaluation. The faculty definition of scholarly teaching above provides us with the elements of what should be evaluated:

- Focus on student outcomes (currently CIE has **no** component of student outcomes).
- Relevant delivery of instruction.
- Instructor must be challenging and provides academic rigor.
- Students must learn to apply critical thinking, problem solving, and attainment of new attitudes in their preparation for citizenship in a global society.
-

How to implement an evaluation program? I offer some steps and items for inclusion:

1. Syllabus must contain the measurable learning goals and course activities. The students must be able to understand and implement these goals. This type of syllabus has been a stated expectation of the Office of the Dean of Faculty since

2000. The C. A. Johnson Institute created a syllabus template that was used throughout the campus.

2. A rubric: What are the characteristics of good teaching? They could be defined from the elements of scholarly teaching noted above. The national literature on the subject suggests two major contributions to develop lists and assemble a matrix for evaluation.

I. “Seven Principles of Effective Teaching” by Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson.

- i. Encourages contact between student and faculty.
- ii. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students
- iii. Develops *active learning*.
- iv. Provides prompt feedback and assessments.
- v. Emphasis placed on “time to task”- the effective and efficient use of time – with institutional definition of those expectations.
- vi. Instructor communicates high expectations.
- vii. Instructor is respectful of diverse student talents and ways of learning.

II. “A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning”, by Dee Fink. He describes Four Fundamental Tasks:

1. **Knowledge of subject matter**, i. e., all good instructors have some advanced knowledge of the subject.
2. **Designing the learning experience** –Instructor plans prior to actual instruction what the learning experience will take place, field experience, delivery format of the course (active learning, lecture, small group discussion, and other activities), and how will the students be assessed.
3. **Interaction with Students**- What format will be most effective for this course to maximize the learning experience: classroom instruction in small groups, electronic interaction (Blackboard, etc), problem solving sessions, interaction with students in faculty member’s office, etc.
4. **Course Management**- Instructor is responsible for the management of enrollment, assessment documents, and classroom performance.

3. **A Possible Evaluative Matrix** (I have some suggestions to follow):

Teaching Principle Or Standard	Behaviors Observed by Evaluator	Principle Lacking (Below average, no points)	Good Teaching –Meets Expectations (5 points)	Scholarly Teaching- Exceeds Expectations (10 points)

Some suggestions for observations section of the above matrix:

1. Classroom observations by evaluator:
 - a. How is the material delivered, i.e., format: lecture, lecture-discussion, active learning with PRS (clickers), small group discussion, problem-solving, etc.
 - b. Clarity of expectations
 - c. Are the students engaged?
 - d. To what degree do students participate?
2. Course Materials:
 - a. Syllabus
 - i. Does it have clearly stated objectives and goals?
 - ii. Are the course assignments stated as to number, time and required pertinent information: quizzes, examinations, final examination, writing assignments, oral presentations, interaction of students with students?
3. Outcomes
 - i. Demonstrable examples of student outcomes- what type and kind of assessment materials will be used?
 - ii. Does the instructor make comparison of a given course with others, compare with some national or discipline standards?

- iii. Possible and only occasional survey of alumni concerning their opinion of the instructor?
- 3. Content of Instructor's Teaching Portfolio (the "stuff" normally contained in the portfolio submitted for P&T, promotion, post-tenure review).
 - i. The statement: Philosophy of Education (or Teaching).
 - ii. Previous CIEs
 - iii. Other teaching documents, course materials, etc.

Who does the evaluation?

We have in place a standing departmental evaluation committee (DEC). For greater campus-wide representation and better input, we should return to a previous composition of the DEC with an outside the department member. This member could be from the same division as the department or, for greater inclusion, from an outside division.

When does this evaluation take place?

- 1. Merit pay: a yearly evaluation is too time consuming and too costly in faculty time. Therefore it is suggested that the merit pay evaluation would take place every three (3) years. This evaluation should be coordinated and concurrent with P&T, promotion, and post-tenure review evaluations. This would further diminish the time and cost element.
- 2. If such a plan of teaching evaluation were adopted, it would require revisions to the Faculty Bylaws- adding greater degree of explanation and expectations to that currently found there.

Peer Review: Some Questions for Thom Moore and Possible Answers:

How do we handle the DEC issue? Since there is no College-wide model for a DEC, some have non-tenured faculty and some don't.

DEC shouldn't be "standardized" across all eval committees? Are issues with non-tenured members of a department having access to "privileged" information important or should all DEC's have similar composition and access?

Since the DEC changes annually, how do we make sure that there is some continuity. There should be some degree of continuity in composition in membership plus there will be written files containing classroom observations and examination of portfolios.

- How many times should a person be observed in the classroom and by whom? My thought would be annually or even once a semester by everyone in the department. This could serve two purposes: 1) evaluation, 2) we could learn teaching methods from each other. AND: The 3-year cycle seems to be a good idea, but right now the new merit pay committee is still thinking in terms of an annual cycle. What do we do if we stick with an annual merit pay cycle?

The number of reviews per year or other periods of time between evaluations may require initially reviewing everybody for purposes of merit pay. Then, begin to do reviews every three (or some number) years with some concurrence with P&T, promotion, and post-tenure review.

I like your idea of going back to an outside member on the DEC.

- I think the teaching portfolio is a great idea that we should implement ASAP.

- - I see some issues with implementation in small departments. What do you think?

There are many disadvantages that accrue to small departments. However the DEC must be in place currently for P&T, promotion, and post-tenure review.

- What role do you think the new person in the Johnson Institute should play? Should that person observe every faculty member on campus and have input?

In the past, the director of C. A. Johnson Institute did a lot of classroom observations and discussion of teaching skills with new and "seasoned" faculty. That person could also help with the problem of CIEs that have no component of student outcomes. The director could also help with the problem of a proper syllabus and related teaching portfolio (the past director actually examined the syllabus for each course).

- I am concerned about even evaluation across campus. There are significant departmental differences in the expectations for teaching, and how do we account for those who teach the "difficult" students (e.g., the pre-meds who as a group are focused on grades more than learning).

I think there is a vast difference in faculty evaluation across the campus. This was a strong point made by the president and provost in a meeting over two years ago. I think this stems from a lack of sufficient details in our evaluation process that apparently does not permit

FEC to reject certain DEC evaluations. We all know that large variation in a database is a reflection of very loose criteria for inclusion. This is exactly what we have now on our campus.

Difficult students (read pre-meds) do produce “difficult” evaluations. This aspect goes to the question of an instructor’s demands and rigor with the student giving poor evaluations to those that demand too much relative to the rest of the campus. There are a number of studies on this issue nationally and some degree of correlation. Instructors who are “gatekeepers” (in pre-med courses) invite poor CIEs if they have high demands made in their courses and don’t give everybody As and Bs.

- Does average GPA belong in the evaluation?

Previous versions of course evaluations by students did contain a self-provided GPA. There is also correlation of GPA and evaluation nationally.