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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Monday, March 22, 2010

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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Minutes approved at the meeting of April 5, 2010

AAC Minutes – March 22, 2010

In attendance: Jim Small (Chair), Alex Boguslawski, Wendy Brandon, Chris Fuse, Annie Hilb, Laurie Joyner, Barry Levis, Tocarra Mallard, Sebastian Novak, Dawn Roe, Don Rogers, Steven St. John (Secretary), Lito Valdivia

Guests in attendance: Bob Moore, Ilan Alon

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 a.m.

Minutes. The minutes of March 15 were approved.

Announcements. Jim reported that EC approved the changes AAC recommended to the Internship and Credit/No Credit catalog copy. Jim will send the final document to Toni Holbrook.

Old Business.

Asian Studies Major

Jim reported that he had received “impact statements” from all departments whose courses form the Asian Studies major except Modern Languages. In general, the affected departments were supportive, although Political Science expressed concerns about the ability of their courses to take on additional students.

Barry summarized that the felt that the two main issues for AAC was the implication that a new line would be required (conversion of a visiting line to a tenure track line) and the concerns expressed by Political Science.

Bob pointed out that the minor has been in existence for some time, that the Shanghai program has 24 students and the Japan program is recruiting students. He noted that the interest in Asian Studies is only going to increase, and that the program seemed “a natural” to add to the Rollins curriculum. Ilan added that Rollins was likely to begin an India program.

Laurie put in that she recognized the current strains on Political Science, but that those issues were independent of the Asian Studies major. She also wondered if it would be possible for Asian Studies majors to bypass the prerequisite requirement for ECO 203 and whether the prerequisites for a course might, in general, vary by major. Barry felt that the prerequisites had to be determined by the course professor, since the professor would be assuming the student had certain knowledge and teach accordingly.

Don felt that ECO 202, the prerequisite for ECO 203, sets up a perspective of economics in the liberal arts, which he viewed as atypical in the economics field, and thus was more relevant for economics majors than Asian Studies majors.

Jim summarized that AAC had before it a program for which there was a general consensus that the program had academic merit. He advised that, as a new major, AAC would send its recommendation to Executive Committee who would need to bring it before the full faculty.

Don made a motion to recommend Asian Studies to Executive Committee. Alex gave a second.

Barry iterated that AAC was recommending the documents as written, and thus regardless of the previous conversation about ECO 202/203, Asian Studies majors would be assumed to have to take both courses.

The motion carried without objection.

New Business.

Changes to the History Major

Barry summarized documents provided by the Department of History that represented a change to their major requirements. Specifically, the Department was introducing a new first year experience, a course approved by New Course Subcommittee entitled "Decade of Decision". The rationale for this course was that by reducing the content to a single decade, it would be possible to provide History majors with a solid foundation in the methodology of historians. The history department is concerned that incoming students have a false notion that history is the learning of encyclopedic facts about the past (dates, names, events) rather than as a research endeavor that views events through cultural, economic, political, military, intellectual, religious, gender etc. perspectives. (The specific historical decade chosen will vary to match the expertise of the instructor.) The history department feels that this course will better ground their students for the other 100-level courses that survey broader sweeps of history. The addition of this class will not raise the total number of required courses – the department is also proposing lowering the required number of 300-level courses from 4 to 3.

Alex raised the question of whether we want students to know what History is (the academic endeavor) or do we want our students to know history. (This change seems to favor the former over the latter.)

Don agreed with Barry that a course that teaches students how to think about history was indeed a valuable experience, and one that could generalize to other domains.

Annie asked if the new Decade course would be offered as a GenEd, and Barry pointed out that it would and that the history department viewed the course as serving majors and non-majors alike.

Sebastian asked about the philosophy of exchanging a 100-level requirement for a 300-level requirement.

Barry responded that students were still required to take 3 of the 300-level electives and the department felt that maintaining the requirement for the 200-level course was also important.

Annie asked if students would get used to a certain level of information in the Decade course and then might be unprepared for the greater level of information they would have to master in the other courses. Barry said that the Decade course was specifically designed to prepare students for those more intense courses. The Decade course was a response to the lack of preparation some majors had for more intense courses.

Chris asked if these changes would be viewed negatively by graduate school admissions boards. Barry did not feel that was a major concern. He pointed out that students would still be taking 5 upper level courses.

Don moved that AAC approve the changes and Alex seconded. The motion carried without objection. Jim advised Barry to provide Toni Holbrook with the new catalog copy.

Anthropology Major Changes

The Department of Anthropology provided documents to AAC representing proposed changes to the Anthropology major.

Don noticed that the major map requires that all core courses must be taken at Rollins College. (This does not appear to be a change from the current major map.) Laurie also wondered what problem this was attempting to address, since it can be difficult for students to get courses they need and since Rollins does not have an archaeologist, the natural expertise for one of the core courses.

Alex wondered if the department was defending their enrollments, but Wendy felt Anthropology had plenty of majors. She suspected instead that the department was concerned that students would take courses somewhere that used a synoptic text and therefore would not prepare them well for Anthropology-as-research. Laurie noted that most departments review syllabi before granting credit for major requirements, so this needn't be a reason to deny credit for all non-Rollins courses.

Don agreed that this was probably the explanation, but favored having a member of the department to advise us in person. (Bob Moore had to depart after consideration of the Asian Studies major and was no longer present.) Jim suggested that AAC table consideration of the changes so that he could invite a member of the department for next week's meeting.

Psychology Major Changes

The Department of Psychology provided an extensive document detailing proposed changes to the Psychology curriculum. Steve summarized the document. Psychology has been engaged in discussions about the major for some time, mindful of the fact that the department has grown and added better coverage of the breadth of the field in recent years. The department also participated in an external peer review two years ago, in which three experts in the field visited

Rollins and interviewed every member of the department. The department developed a new Mission statement, examined peer institutions, the results of the external review, and guidelines developed by the American Psychological Association, and voted to approve a new major map and several new courses.

The first year experience now features two courses called Perspectives In Psychology that provides more emphasis on history, theory, and methodology than the survey course Introduction To Psychology, which will no longer be a major course. In addition to Perspectives, students take two courses on Statistics and Research Methods which are prerequisites for laboratory courses. Students then take 7 300-level electives grouped into 5 “domains” that cover the breadth of the field. Students take at least one course from each domain and must take 3 laboratory courses. In the senior year, students take a “Senior Seminar” capstone course which features an intensive experience asking students to draw on skills learned throughout the major. The Perspectives and Senior Seminar are the only new courses (already approved), but by grouping the 300-level courses into domains, students have a greater freedom of choice in course selections.

Alex asked how large the Senior Seminars would be, and Steve answered 12 students. Laurie was concerned that the low caps and the team teaching of the Perspectives course would not be feasible from a staffing and equity perspective. Steve responded that the Perspectives courses was not team taught in the sense that professors would share a single course – each Perspective course would be taught in 3 simultaneous sections and 3 professors would rotate through the three sections during the course of a semester. Thus, 3 professors would direct 3 sections. As to the caps, Steve responded that this was pedagogically important, but also that the caps should distribute students more evenly into 400-level courses. In the current major, students must take one 400-level course, and some are routinely enrolled at 24 and others at around 6-8. The caps would provide a more uniform senior experience for all students.

Barry asked if Psychology faculty would be spread so thin in these major courses that they would not be able to contribute to the Honors program, etc. Steve said that one of the goals in designing the new major was to get away from having certain courses required and allow all courses to count toward the major. This design actually frees up faculty to teach courses outside the major.

Laurie asked if the department had prepared a staffing plan. Steve said that he would return with a staffing plan at the next meeting. She also wondered if the department had thought about whether the new major would address the LEAP learning outcomes.

Jim asked about the status of Introduction to Psychology. He noted that pre-Health programs often list this course as a desired class. Steve responded that the department was committed to offering this course for non-majors, and also that non-majors could take the Perspectives course, which might be viewed as equivalent to Intro.

In consideration of time, the discussion was suspended and the meeting adjourned at 8:39 a.m.

