

4-19-2010

## Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Monday, April 19, 2010

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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*Minutes approved at the meeting of 4/26/2010*

AAC Minutes – April 19, 2010

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

Guests in attendance: Mario D’Amato, Dick James

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 a.m.

**Minutes.** The minutes of April 12 were approved with minor corrections.

**Announcements.** Steve announce that the Social Sciences Division had elected Phil Kozel to the Curriculum Renewal Committee Phase 2. Jim noted that the committee was now set: Martha Chang, David Charles, Phil Kozel, Fiona Harper, Rachel Simmons, Paul Stephenson, and Sebastian Novak (student representative).

**New Business.**

Computer Science Major

Dick James presented the proposed changes to the computer sciences major. He stated that a major goal was to synchronize the A&S and Holt School majors where possible. The curricula had a number of courses that substantially overlapped (both in content and faculty), so course numbers and titles were adjusted where possible. One other change was eliminating the 2-credit CMS 485 (Senior Seminar) as the goals of that class could be incorporated into CMS 484 (Capstone). This change also relieves the scheduling difficulties inherent in a 2-credit course. The department also chose to eliminate CMS 495, a Special Topics designation that was rarely used and was duplicated by CMS 395.

Laurie asked if the department consulted national guidelines or computer science majors at peer and aspirant schools as part of the process that led to these proposals. Does this new major map better prepare computer science majors? Also, is the reduction in hours to 57 consistent with peer schools? Dick said that the major does conform to “ACM guidelines”. He noted that the computer science department does not offer as broad a range of courses as some other places, and that how best to serve students in the major is a constant conversation. The number of hours is under national recommendations.

The committee discussed the problem that computer science and other departments have had given that Holt and A&S Gen Eds don’t completely align. Laurie noted that this is an issue that the faculty has in their power to correct. Barry noted that the Gen Eds have remained imperfectly aligned because of some inherent limitations in course delivery in Holt. For example, Holt has no foreign language requirement because of the inability to deliver a course every day of the week as in the day school. Also, because some departments have little presence in Holt (he gave Political Science as an example), some Gen Ed courses seen in the day

school would rarely be taught in the evening. Jim noted that an RP type Gen Ed curriculum would be “impossible” in Holt, should that be adopted in A&S.

Laurie asked if this lack of certain requirements – foreign language, for example – was acceptable from an educational perspective? Alex raised the impossibility of effectively delivering foreign language once or twice a week. He suggested that blended learning paradigms might provide an opportunity to do this in the future, however. Wendy mentioned a New York Times article that recently described new software that promised to improve foreign language experience in such a paradigm. Don noted that many Holt students came in with AA’s with Gen Eds covered. Laurie reported that there was also a large number of A&S students in the same circumstance.

Laurie asked Dick if Jim Eck was supportive of the changes to the Holt School computer science program. Dick was uncertain, but noted that Sharon Lusk was aware of these changes and that Jim has been supportive of increased A&S and Holt alignment of majors in general.

Barry asked about the appropriateness of computer science at a liberal arts school, and whether the changes were consistent with delivery of such a major at a liberal arts school. Dick responded that the department has received positive feedback from employers that graduates from our program compare favorably to graduates from more technically oriented programs. He noted that there was a dearth of computer science graduates nationally. He noted that there national organizations encouraging liberal arts perspectives in computer science, and described the role of computer science in the liberal arts as teaching “computational thinking”.

The committee next discussed efforts on the part of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science in recruiting more computer science majors. Dick noted that the robots RCC course was one effort to alert students to the possibility of a computer science major, and also noted that the robots course carried a P Gen Ed. Freshmen are placed into CMS 167.

Wendy moved to accept the changes, and Alex seconded. The motion carried without objection.

#### RCC goals

Mario D’Amato provided a clarified description of the RCC goals. His RCC Advisory committee studied the old goals and noted some redundancies. The new document was organized into two main points – Engaged Learning and Integrated Learning. One of the major changes was to give guidance to making workload across RCC offerings more uniform, adopting the standard that “content and workload commensurate with introductory-level course in relevant discipline”. A second addition was specifying that “activities focused around key dimensions of Personal and Social Responsibility (from AAC&U LEAP Learning Outcomes)”, thus linking the activities led by peer mentors to a recommended goal for all graduates.

Mario noted that in his first year as RCC director, Fox Fridays were altered so that activities occur once a week, but not necessarily on Friday (up to the discretion of the instructor). This would allow RCC activities to take advantage of activities scheduled around campus.

Barry asked if the new RCC goals would be incorporated into the syllabus of all RCC classes. Chris seconded this suggestion. Mario said he had been reluctant to insist how professors design their syllabi, but agreed that this might help communicate to students the rationale for RCC activities.

Mario asked for advice on the massive scheduling dilemma faced each year with incoming freshman. With a class of about 450 taking about 4 courses, nearly 2000 seats had to be reserved for incoming freshman. His strategy was to first, place student in an RCC, second, place student in a "linked" course, third, place in English 140 or language course, and fourth, place in one other Gen Ed bearing course in a Division based on student preference.

Some on AAC were in favor of the notion of linked courses, others more skeptical. Laurie noted that linked courses were essentially a scheduling convenience, and might be thought of as "co-enrolled courses" rather than "linked courses". Barry argued for the educational benefits of truly "linked" courses, in which an instructor was aware of and sensitive to content the students would be getting in the linked course. There was also an advantage to students in being with the same people. Annie raised potential negatives of this arrangement, though, in that students would be restricted in sampling the diversity of the college – both in terms of course work and in terms of meeting other classmates. Overall, she felt that the strong linking concept was a negative.

Mario stated that his view was to accommodate professors who wanted to link courses, but to schedule the rest of the students however proved convenient. He noted that journal articles on "living learning communities" reported more positive outcomes when students took linked courses, but that the outcomes did not differ between strong linking (i.e., living together and taking all of the same classes) relative to weak linking (i.e., co-enrollment of one other course).

Wendy moved to adopt the new document "Goals for Rollins College Conference Courses". Motion was seconded and approved.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:49.