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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Wednesday, October 7, 2009

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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AAC Minutes – October 7, 2009

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

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

Minutes. The minutes of the 9/30 meeting were unanimously approved pending one change (AAC will be considering changes to the LACS major in Arts and Sciences).

Announcements. Jim announced the Student Life Committee would take the lead on student housing issues.

Old Business.

CE Designation

Laurie reported that Micki Meyer is prepared to wait until next year to initiate the CE (Community Engagement) designation process if there is insufficient time to finalize all of the details. Jim asked if he had the process correct that we had discussed: the Dean's Office provides a roster of names who would serve on the CE Designation Committee, AAC would approve this roster, and the CE Designation Committee would then make judgments on applications essentially independently of AAC. Laurie and Wendy agreed that last year's AAC had discussed how deeply AAC would be involved in implementing the CE Designation and preferred that the CE Designation be handled by a committee with dedicated focus rather than burden the New Course Subcommittee with such a responsibility, and there was general agreement that AAC would not want to redo work done by the CE Designation Committee. The CE Designation Committee, it was agreed, would make the judgments as to the courses earning this label and would inform AAC and the registrar's office of the courses that qualify each semester. Wendy provided some additional suggestions to the CE Designation Proposal form; this form and the general process were approved unanimously. Steve will incorporate these changes and send the approved form to Jim.

Academic Probation

Steve brought to the committee a request from a faculty member for an explanation as to how academic probation cases were handled during Maymester. The academic probation policy provides that students finishing a semester below the GPA cutoff for good standing will be placed on probation and would not return to good standing prior to completing a full semester (16 hours) in which the GPA rises back above 2.0. Maymester creates a situation unanticipated by the academic probation policy: students enrolled in Maymester courses prior to knowing the results of their Spring grades, and might complete Maymester with a cumulative GPA again above 2.0, but with the ability to only take 1 or 2 courses. Laurie reported that 6 students moved from probation to good standing after Maymester, and 3 students moved from good standing to probation. In the 6 cases of moving to good standing, all of the GPA's were quite

close to 2.0 when the Spring grades came in. She also noted that, as always, academic advisors were informed of these status changes. In the summer, the Academic Appeals committee was unavailable. Laurie discussed the issue with her staff in the Dean's Office, and the consensus was that it did not make sense to place students on academic probation given their GPAs above 2.0 at the end of Maymester. The committee was in agreement that the Dean's Office acted appropriately, but also agreed that this gray area required review. Jim announced that he would place the issue on the rolling agenda, and Laurie noted that AAC would be reviewing Maymester during this term and should consider this issue as part of that review.

LACS Arts & Sciences Major

Gabriel Barreneche attended the meeting to explicate the substantial changes proposed for the Latin American and Caribbean Studies major and minor. Gabriel reported that the faculty members involved in LACS were motivated to thoroughly review the program given the retirement of Pedro Pequeno, the relatively recent arrival of new faculty members with expertise in Latin America, and the results of an external program review. The external review noted that the relative inflexibility of the current major was not in accord with programs at peer institutions and would limit student recruitment into the major. In addition, the faculty were troubled by the fact that students engaging in field studies in Latin America and the Caribbean did not earn credit for this work and, as such, this valuable experience was not encouraged by the structure of the major.

As a result, the proposed major reduces the required number of courses from 12 to 10, provides an hourglass model with a LAC 200 foundations course and a LAC 400 capstone course, provides a large range and flexible selection of relevant courses from political science, economics, anthropology, environmental studies, humanities, and foreign language, and allows approved study abroad courses and opportunistically offered LAC courses to count toward the 4 class elective component to the major. The proposed major also reduced the advanced foreign language requirement and permitted French or Portuguese in addition to Spanish.

Wendy was concerned that the catalog description should provide more cohesion and also asked if five 300-level courses seemed sufficient. Since the flexibility of the major was seen as one of the most important motivating factors of the proposal, the committee was interested in whether some of the allowed courses might actually have their own pre-reqs, and that these "hidden courses" would therefore render the major still inflexible. Gabriel felt that with such a large range of offerings this would not be a large issue, but Alex and Barry noted that in Economics and Political Science, many of the listed courses did indeed have pre-requisites. Steve wondered if some of the courses like POL 317 and POL 321 which have POL 100 as a pre-requisite might be amenable to listing LAC 200 as an appropriate alternate pre-requisite, which would provide LACS majors an alternative and less burdensome avenue into those classes. The committee asked Gabriel to provide AAC with a list of the pre-requisites associated with each of the allowable courses in the proposed LACS major. The discussion was suspended in the interests of time.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 am.

Minutes approved at the meeting of October 21, 2009