

11-4-2009

Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Wednesday, November 4, 2009

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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Minutes approved at the November 11 meeting

AAC Minutes – November 4, 2009

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

Guests in attendance: Don Davison, Juli Ochoa, Deb Wellman, Rick Fogelsong

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 a.m.

Announcements. Jim notified AAC about an academic appeal that had been forwarded to AAC. The committee discussed whether it should be sent directly to Academic Appeals. The matter was deferred pending receipt of further information on the case. Jim also announced that the committee would invite members of the East Asia Studies major to describe their proposal at the meeting of November 18, and announced the intention to take up the Masters of Planning in Civic Urbanism at the next meeting.

Minutes. The minutes of the 11/4 meeting were unanimously approved pending several typographical corrections and wording changes to improve accuracy.

Old Business.

Blended Learning Initiative

Jim reported on a meeting with the President of the Faculty, Rick Fogelsong, and the Chair of Professional Standards Committee, Thom Moore, regarding the IT solicitation for applications from faculty entitled Blended Learning Initiative (hereafter, the RFP) . The PSC has been charged with evaluating these proposals, but Jim reported that PSC is reluctant to proceed without some “statement of policy” – some decision by AAC supporting the RFP and characterizing it (as a pilot program or as some other description). Jim felt that AAC had a few options it could pursue, such as holding colloquia on the topic of technology and the curriculum and different “delivery systems”.

Alex seconded the notion of colloquia and some sort of clear communication to the faculty about the status of the RFP. Laurie wondered if such a plan might be premature; that once the proposals came in (deadline: November 15), PSC would be in a better position to determine whether AAC’s involvement was necessary, and AAC would have a better idea of what kind of involvement was necessary. Laurie felt that the committee should take a close look at the RFP and give IT feedback about the document. Laurie also noted that the larger issue at stake was faculty taking an active role in the strategic direction of Holt.

Barry felt that holding workshops dealing with topics like Blended Learning was not something that required AAC’s input, but that any sort of pilot program certainly was. He urged that such

a program be thought out in terms of how it would be assessed. Chris felt that the RFP was soliciting something beyond just adding technology to existing courses.

Barry asked if it were too late to retract the RFP. Laurie noted that everyone (i.e., Roger, Jim Eck, IT) is now committed to using the governance process. This means that the proposals are going to PSC, prompting Barry to ask if PSC might involve Jim Small, as Chair of AAC, on the proposal review. This suggestion was met with general approval by AAC.

Dawn asked if there wasn't a general process for sending out RFP's? Laurie responded by giving the history of the particular RFP – that CIO Pat Schoknecht explained that they wanted the RFP to be open to Crummer faculty, not just A&S faculty, but that when it was agreed that the initiative was primarily inspired by the Holt curriculum, Pat, Roger Casey, and Jim Eck all agreed that it belonged in the A&S governance process. Dawn iterated that she expected IT grants to be found on the Dean of Faculty website, not sent around by email.

In the interests of time, Jim proposed that the discussion was deferred to a later meeting. After some further discussion, it was decided that: 1) Jim would invite the CIO and the Dean of the Holt School to a future meeting, 2) would ask Thom Moore if he might be involved with the PSC review of proposals, and 3) that Jim Eck prepare a written proposal regarding the RFP.

Dean's Report on Maymester

Continuing from the previous meeting, Laurie provided further information about Maymester 2009. A survey was sent to faculty who taught in May term. In response to the question: did you meet your course goals? all responding faculty indicated that they did. Affirmative answers were also exclusively given to a question about meeting the goals of the General Education Designation for the course. The survey asked about whether faculty had difficulty fitting into the 3 hour per day, 3 week structure of the semester; generally the responses indicated that while this provided a challenge in some instances, acceptable solutions were found. There were also a number of comments that indicated that, even to the surprise of the professors, the students seemed to perform better in that time structure than during the regular semester. This seemed to be true even for the small number of students taking two Maymester courses. Students also often responded that they felt more engaged and able to perform better. Laurie made a point of highlighting in her own notes all of the comments that might be considered negative and read many to the committee. The frequency and severity of the negative comments appeared to be not greater than what one would expect from a semester course.

Laurie reported that Maymester netted the Dean of Faculty budget \$100,000. As a point of context, Laurie was asked to identify \$400,000 in the Dean of Faculty's budget for reallocation, which she noted will be very difficult to achieve without increased revenue. She also provided the committee with a comparison of tuition fees for Rollins Maymester versus other ACS college summer terms.

Jim asked if Laurie would be bringing AAC a formal proposal to re-authorize Maymester. Laurie indicated a definitive yes, and also that she was open to exploring other ways of designing the

semester. Some professors in evaluations had asked for a couple of days to be added to the term and the exam moved to a Saturday. Like with intersession, Laurie suggested that the grading period for Maymester could close later to allow papers or other assignments to be turned in after the last day of classes. She was also sensitive to concerns about equity. Maymester 2009 courses were invited solely on the basis of known demand for courses, but she welcomed the idea of putting out a general call for course proposals and selecting perhaps the top ten (an approximate number) in terms of enrollment.

Jim noted that if A&S did not have a Maymester, that Holt summer programs would certainly expand in any event. Barry objected to what he perceived as “territoriality” between A&S and Holt. He also noted that Holt has experience offering summer courses and that it had gone from 4-weeks to 6-weeks because 4-weeks was too short. Laurie noted that the faculty evaluations of Maymester indicated that at least those courses met their learning objectives in the 3 week term. She said that AAC could certainly advocate a longer May term but should consider the possibility that a longer session would be less attractive to students and lower enrollment.

Barry and Alex argued that it might be impossible to fit courses into the 3 week semester. Alex noted that it might be easier to do so if courses were designed specifically for Maymester, as is done now with Intersession. Laurie noted that we are accepting transfer courses now in some cases where the courses are taught over 3-4 weeks. Barry wondered if AAC could see examples of syllabi and comparing Fall or Spring semester versions of courses to Maymester versions. Laurie responded that she would contact faculty about providing these for AAC, and noted that the College currently offers a variety of course formats (Intersession, Holt 4-, 6-, and 8-week classes, etc.).

Jim asked Laurie to draft a motion for AAC regarding Maymester.

New Business.

Revisions to the Academic Honor Code

Don Davison provided AAC with three documents detailing proposed changes to the Academic Honor Code. He described the process for approval of the AHC revisions; namely that it had to be approved by both SGA and the A&S Faculty, with the latter process involving first AAC and then Executive Committee. He noted that his predecessor, Deb Wellman, had been intimately involved in the revisions, and turned over to her presentation of the details of the proposed changes.

Deb recounted a history of the need to alter the AHC. She noted that the AHC is a 13 page document that is not ideally formatted to allow easy understanding, and that when put into practice, there were some inconsistencies and several difficult-to-interpret passages. There were also occasions in which changes had been inserted into the AHC that did not seem to work well in practice. Originally, Deb reported, she had assumed that all honor cases would be contested cases, but in practice, students usually admit wrong-doing. Knowledge from in-

practice realities helped shape the revision. Deb noted that the revision reflects about an hour's worth of study for every couple of paragraphs of the original document.

As Deb began explicating the changes, Jim noted what appeared to be an inconsistency with a recommendation of the college attorney: that Rollins destroy documents following adjudication of a case. Deb and Don stated that the college attorney's recommendation was in fact being followed – that documents related to a case must be held on after adjudication until all appeals (or possibility of appeal) have been exhausted. Don agreed that the language could be made more explicit.

In the interests of time, further discussion was tabled. Don reminded Jim that AAC needed to appoint one of its members to the RP committee, and Jim indicated he would talk to Don Rogers.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 am.