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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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Minutes approved at the 12/2/09

AAC Minutes – November 18, 2009

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)

Guests in attendance: Ilan Alon, Mario D'Amato

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

Announcements. Jim announced that the final documents for the LACS major (i.e., the catalogue copy and major and minor maps) were forwarded on to Toni Holbrook. The revisions to the Academic Honor Code were forwarded to Executive Committee. Jim noted that the faculty would consider the Bylaw changes to the AAC Responsibilities and Membership approved by AAC earlier this year. The next meeting will be December 2, and Jim Eck and Pat Schoknecht will be present to discuss the Blended Learning Initiative.

Jim brought up the Grade Appeal made to AAC and noted that AAC had very little information about the case. He noted that this was, according to the Bylaws, in the purview of the committee. Laurie noted that, from her reading of the appeal, the only issue was to locate a syllabus from 2008 and, if the grading policy is spelled out the way it is in the 2009 syllabus, then AAC can conclude there is no basis for appeal. There was general agreement on this point and also that AAC might consider a change to the role of AAC in examining Appeals since there is an Academic Appeals committee. Laurie offered to track down the relevant syllabus.

Minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously pending one typo fix and one minor addition.

Old Business.

Committee on Curricular Renewal - Phase II

Jim noted that it was long overdue to appoint the second phase curriculum renewal committee. There was confusion as to the four names of individuals who had agreed to serve – Rachel Simmons, Marc Sardy, Ryan Musgrave, and Paul Stephenson. Wendy clarified that last year's committee established that 8 faculty, 2 from each division, be elected to the committee (with elections run by Division Chairs), and that AAC had offered those four names as candidates who had agreed to run, and also representing a slate with some continuity to the phase I committee.

Because Musgrave is on sabbatical, her candidacy might have to be withdrawn. There was confusion as to what exactly AAC had determined to do with regard to representation on this committee, and Wendy agreed to review the minutes and the notes from last year, and report to the committee via email so that the committee could be seated as soon as possible.

Academic Calendar

The committee reviewed again the Academic Calendar for 2010-2011. Wendy asked why the Holt calendar is not aligned to the Arts & Sciences calendar. Don suggested we raise this issue during Jim Eck's visit. He also noted a mistake in the draft, with Maymester ending before it began (Maymester schedule is tentative, pending AAC approval of a May term). Annie noted that the schedule started earlier than in years past. Laurie asked if Annie would meet with Toni to make certain that all issues had been considered. Wendy moved to accept the calendar pending the typographic change and the meeting with Annie and the Dean's staff. The motion was unanimously approved.

New Business.

Asian Studies Major

Ilan Alon and Mario D'Amato met to introduce the Asian Studies major and minor. Ilan noted that the proposal represented the work of a large group of faculty working for over a year. He felt that a strength of the proposal was that all of the required courses were already being successfully taught.

Jim asked if the major created any staffing issues. Ilan noted that all of the courses were staffed and that the minor was successful. He also noted that there was an increased interest now in the Chinese language. Mario and Ilan predicted that the major could expect to have about 10-20 students eventually, probably from the population currently interested in International Business and International Relations. Ilan reported that those in the languages were supportive (Alex agreed).

Annie asked if Japanese was taught at Rollins. Mario said that it has been taught by an adjunct in the Holt school for many years.

Wendy raised the issue of whether the major had an academically cohesive structure (alluding to majors with a clearer developmental structure of Intro -> depth courses -> capstone), or if it was more of an "alphabet soup" – would students appreciate the connections between the courses? Mario responded that this should happen through advising, and Ilan felt that the study abroad experiences would provide, for most students, a central theme to build coursework around. Rollins has or will soon have study abroad opportunities in China, Japan, and India.

Annie said that the flexibility of the major was a positive. Don, in response to Wendy, suggested that not every major need be built around the Intro -> capstone model, and that particularly capstone courses lack good evidence for their effectiveness. Wendy clarified that she was not being prescriptive about structure, but was trying to see the major as being cohesive. What were the Learning Outcomes?

Mario replied that Asian Studies is really not academically cohesive, like many “area studies” programs – it is by its nature heterogeneous. Ilan gave as Learning Outcomes knowledge of an Asian language, experience in an Asian culture, and a skill set that he felt would be highly desirable to employers.

Laurie stated that she was supportive of the major and that she felt that the committee should not be holding Asian Studies to a higher standard than any other major. At the same time, she felt that AAC should be concerned throughout the curriculum about intellectual coherence of majors and examining how key learning objectives are introduced and reinforced throughout a particular course of study.

Alex noted that it can be problematic when the people who create a major feel a special responsibility for “taking care” and managing that major, through advising, helping students pilot through it. People leave, after all, and that should not leave a major rudderless.

Annie asked if we would review all majors in this fashion. Wendy felt that this was indeed what AAC was there for. Laurie noted that this was one of the issues AAC had identified last year as a task for the Committee for Curriculum Renewal Phase II Committee.

Barry moved to accept the proposal and Don seconded. The guests left and the committee began discussions. Wendy said that she felt very strongly about this – that majors can’t be just a “fish soup”. She also felt like what AAC was asking for was not unusual in this regard, and cited the back and forth conversations last year leading to the African American Studies new minor map and this year’s back and forth with the LACS major and minor.

Don felt that there was some further information required. He wondered what the administrative structure was going to be? He cited the year when no one submitted the Women’s Studies course schedule. Laurie also wanted some budget information – although these seemed minor, there was the issue of whether courses counting for Asian Studies might have to be taught more often, demanding time from faculty who had other responsibilities in their home departments.

The committee decided, by general consent, to request specific additional information before continuing deliberations: 1) A statement of administrative responsibilities and budget impacts, 2) Learning Objectives for the major, 3) sample 4-year schedules of hypothetical students to show examples of how a student might progress through the major, 4) letters of support from the Chairs of departments whose faculty would be teaching courses that count toward the Asian Studies major, and 5) an accounting of which courses counting toward the major had pre-requisites which might be “hidden” credits required for completion of the major.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 am.