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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Thursday, January 15, 2009

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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AAC Minutes (Jan. 15, 09)

In attendance: Wendy Brandon, Laurie Joyner, Jim Small, Steve St. John, Jennifer Cavanaugh, Scott Rubarth, Eric Zivot, Susan Lackman, Yusheng Yao, Alex Grammenos

Review and discussion of the minutes for Nov. 25, and Dec. 2. The minutes were passed with corrections. With regard to the issue of Diversity Committee, Laurie explained as she understood it (as the issue in the Provost's talk was not clear to some of the AAC members). She stressed the importance of the issue—it was an issue of good education not merely a human resources issue. The implications of the committee's role to the college's governing structure: is it led by the A&S (Rollins' model) or shared by equal representation from A&S and Holt (University model)? AAC accepted her suggestion to invite co-chairs of Diversity Committee to brief us about their important work.

Laurie raised the question of the Phase II Curriculum Renew Committee: First, a few members left from the old Curriculum Review and Renew Committee did not want to continue in the new committee. AAC should find replacement. Second, Laurie explained to AAC that she asked Mark Anderson to serve as a temporary liaison person between her office, the RP Selection and Review Committee and the faculty because there were a lot of changes in her office and she needed a historical memory till the new associate Dean be identified. Laurie told AAC that five RP proposals were submitted by the deadline. AAC will ask Mark to call a RP Review Committee meeting to select a chair, whose role is to communicate with the faculty, and to share the responsibility of a strong assessment of RP from the beginning.

Laurie shared her idea about the role of the Phase II CRC: it would have a greater role to play in this second wave of reform. We already started the reform by discussing the reduction of graduation credits/hours. Other work included clarifying the tenure review procedure, RP selection and evaluation. AAC's role was to develop the protocol for the committee. Another faculty meeting was needed to field the questions about the next stage reform.

Regarding the issue of graduation hours reduction, Wendy asked AAC members to choose one of the four questions and to gather information from the faculty. She suggested AAC to meet once a week for the next month, from 7:45 to 9:00 on Tuesday.

Laurie brought up a related issue regarding graduation hours—electives. Should each department decide on how many electives its majors should have? The philosophical question behind this discussion is whether more is better? What is the best education for our students? Education is more than the major a student adopts. Susan raised the parity issue between our credits/hours and those of other liberal colleges. She volunteered to sit in a subcommittee to study the issue. Scott and Eric thought that college rather than each department should make decisions on graduation hours. The debating issue was whether each department should have a choice regarding electives or there should be uniformed criteria? Eric said we should also consider the economic responses or consequences with this change of electives. Laurie said she was interested in learning the curriculum model

by the top 40 liberal arts college since they could get their graduates into graduate or medical schools [with reduction of graduation hours].

Communication Department emailed Wendy about eliminating a few courses including a theoretical one. AAC would ask the department to provide a rationale for this significant change.

Susan offered to contact Studio Arts Major regarding their proposal and would report to AAC about their case at next meeting.

Mark Anderson prepared a survey for entering students to check their math competency. He asked for permission to send the survey to the faculty. Our students do not have math preparedness in general, but what is the necessary test for the first year students? The survey would help answer that question. AAC would ask Mark to explain to the faculty his goal on a cover letter.

Susan said she sent through email to AAC members some issues, big and small, to ponder.

Wendy mentioned that at the next meeting we were going to discuss Julian's proposal.

Laurie mentioned Barry Levis' concern of the difficulty to find people to teach honor and RCC courses. Laurie suggested the need for some rotating commitment from each department, the clarified expectations for all faculty, departments to share the responsibility, even specified in the appointment letter and the reward system. She thought it not merely an administrative issue but one concerned with all the faculty and college.

Scott briefed the committee that the outside reviewers had submitted a 20 page report regarding rebuilding of the Classics Studies program. He will meet with the administration this month to discuss the report and then ask Wendy to report to it the executive committee.