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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Thursday, January 29, 2009

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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AAC Minutes (Jan. 29, 09)

In attendance: Wendy Brandon, Laurie Joyner, Jim Small, Steve St. John, Eric Zivot, Susan Lackman, Scott Rubarth, Yusheng Yao, Alex Winfree, Tocarra Mallard, Kory Eylmann

Minutes of Jan. 20 was passed with corrections.

For a key correction regarding the discussion on graduation hours in Jan. 20 minutes, Jim clarified what he had said at the meeting about the change and debate over the years from a course based to hours based curriculum to meet the needs of the students and faculty, and problems emerged in the process.

Wendy asked members about the issues they would like her to report to today's faculty meeting: 1. Development in RP review and selection; 2. another colloquium on graduation hours will be held on March 27. 3. AAC is looking at challenges and inconsistencies in our policies and will suggest changes and revisions to put through the governing process.

Susan (elected chair of RP review committee) briefed members that RP review was moving along well and would give feedback regarding revisions and comments to those who submitted the proposals by Feb. 16. She had sent a feeler to members of RP Review committee for a draft rubric to evaluate the RP proposals to be discussed on next Tuesday.

Scott mentioned that the review of the outside report about rebuilding of the Classics program was in process.

Dean will make announcement at the faculty meeting about the new RCC director and the new faculty in residence on campus.

Eric explained to the members about some issues and inconsistencies had and Susan had found in the process of working with the Academic Appeal committee. The issues, which were sent to members by Susan earlier through email are as follows: While considering Academic Appeals, Eric Zivot and I have come across several rules that seem contradictory or unfair and should be considered by the AAC.

1. To pass a course with CR/NCR, one needs a C-. Yet, if one gets a letter grade of D- one may pass a course.
2. When a student is dismissed from campus s/he is advised to go elsewhere to take courses. In past years the student was told that s/he may apply for readmission after one year by showing evidence of responsibility through a job (and not one in daddy's company) from which the student receives good reviews. We should not send students to go elsewhere to study - if they want to be readmitted to Rollins, they should show what a hiatus from education has done.
3. A limited number of professors regularly do not report a grade for a student (or report a grade of "Z") in order to give the student the ability to finish late work. This is, in effect, an Incomplete, but the student and professor skirt the application and contract for an Incomplete. Toni Holbrook has asked that AAC make sure that every professor turn in a grade for a student.
4. Tangentially to #3, in the case of an Incomplete, the rule should state quite clearly that an incomplete has to be completed within two weeks of the new semester.

5. A student who is on academic probation should show credible evidence of progress. While some students cannot erase the GPA deficit, a student who continues with semester grades below 2.0 for a full load, does not appear to be making an effort to improve.

The committee discussed the first four issues and left the fifth one for the next meeting. For #1 issue, Scott provided a rationale that convinced members not to make changes: CR/NCR needs a C- to pass because it does not have the negative connotations as a “D” has on one’s academic record and GPA calculation. Therefore the bar for CR/NCR should be higher. Susan suggested that the Dean of Faculty should send to faculty the necessary rules and regulations such as this one to put on the syllabus.

Rachel Simmons came to report on the revisions in the art and art history major and minor. The faculty members in her department believed that revisions made a good academic sense for students. With the two new hires, the department can provide 3 dimension and digital components through a list of new courses for the foundation programs. The new requirement adds advising, which will strengthen the students’ portfolio, improve their preparation as well as quality for the senior art show. Dean told members that she had met with Rachel and went through all her questions. The proposal received positive comments and was passed. Wendy suggested having it posted on the website as a model for major/minor revisions.

The discussion continued on the academic appeal issues. For #2 issue that students dismissed from school may go and take courses in other schools and come back to register again instead of taking the year off for reflecting her/his problems. The consensus was the current message could be misleading. AAC will compose a letter to the Academic Appeals committee, articulating our concerns and need for a review of our policy. Eric will bring a new wording for the policy to AAC.

The discussion on #3--a loophole in the incomplete system. Some professors simply do not report the grade for students or report a “Z,” which is not even in the system. Laurie pointed out that it was an equity issue, suggesting that a sentence be added: the “incomplete” should be used only in serious cases or dire circumstances. As for the related #4 issue, Eric said he could not support the current two weeks’ rule regarding completing the “incomplete” because its implications in his department about faculty load, graduation hours etc. No detailed discussion on the two weeks’ rule. Wendy suggested that Susan come up with the new wording for the policy of incomplete representing our discussion.