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Minutes, Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, Thursday, February 7, 2008

Arts & Sciences Academic Affairs Committee

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Minutes for AAC

February 7, 2008

In attendance: Sharon Carnahan, Yusheng Yao, Jennifer Cavanaugh, Scott Rubarth, Shannon Mariotti, Thom Moore, Tina Bucci, Kristen Trucco, Ben Balak

1. Review and Approval of Minutes

With one minor change, we accepted the minutes from the last meeting.

2. Old Business

* Course Credit Proposal

TM's proposed change to the bylaws was accepted with the deletion of the word "single" from the last sentence: to read: "Exceptions to this policy may be made for internships, where a student may be awarded up to four hours of academic credit (without an associated letter grade) for an internship outside of the context of a department or program during a semester."

* Timing of reports concerning advising, library issues

Advising issues: mid-February LJ and KH will have a proposal, which we will analyze (in draft form) next week.

* Report from Curriculum Committee member

Tina Bucci:

Issues raised: Alan Nordstrom's proposal

- Will gym requirement be an element of curriculum reform?
- How will PE and language requirements fit into Curriculum reform?
- Enthusiasm for proposals for topic-based courses, esp. for science courses based around pressing topics.

Curriculum Committee meeting expects AAC members to attend meeting on Tuesday Feb. 19th @ 3pm.

AAC refer BPE (Basic Physical Education) department to the curriculum review committee to discuss their concerns about requirements.

3. New Business

Physics Major Revision

LJ: are these changes going to sharpen divisions within the majors, instead of drawing them closer?

TM: Physics wants to change designation from labs to projects; They should be given more than lab credits for these projects, which take more than 15-20 hours each week. In lieu of labs, projects are very helpful; but they need to change designation from labs.

LJ: Why can't we ask mathematics to serve the needs of physics students?

TM: Mathematics and physics can overlap at the lower level, but not at the upper-levels: this is the problem.

TM: This proposal does not require any new faculty lines and the changes can be made with existing staff. Does not require additional resources, but instead reduces resources for the major.

LJ: Our mathematics department's purpose is to service non-majors, then, right?

TM: No, they mainly service their majors. But they don't have many.

LJ: We need a broader divisional discussion about what the math dept. needs to teach to service other departments.

SC: If this move happens, could it result in any spin-off, non-major courses where undergraduates recognized them importance of physics math?

TM: No, the math is not accessible at the introductory level.

BB: Are we becoming less interdisciplinary, duplicating the general education department in-house in each department?

YY: Is math unwilling or unable to teach these physics courses?

TM: They can teach everything except computational physics.

YY: This is more than a physics dept. problem; it speaks to a larger issue about disciplines.

TM: Yes, but immediate needs are pressing: right now, we need to get our students to the level they need to do the work they need to do.

TM: Math and physics as disciplines are going in different directions.

LJ: Tenure track lines are too hard to come by to replicate areas and have physics and math doing the same thing.

BB: Two separate issues raised by the Physics proposal:
1) revaluing number of credit hours

2) math requirements

TB: If there was a person in math that *could* teach computational physics, could students use that to fulfill their physics math requirement?

SR: We are having each department go in different directions.

SC: AAC needs to ask people to stop and think. We might need more information before we can make a decision.

YY: Each discipline seems to be becoming more and more specialized

Resolution: Table the issue until next week, for further discussion.