The University Faculty  
The University of Richmond

Minutes of the Meeting of May 11, 2009

Call to Order

Provost Steve Allred called the meeting to order at 8:47 AM in the Alice Haynes Room of the Tyler Haynes Commons. He declared a quorum and congratulated everyone on a great Commencement Sunday.

Presentation: ODK Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year presentation - Steve Bisese

Becca Frazier, president of ODK, presented the ODK Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year award to Dr. Mary Middleton, Instructor of Accounting. Becca noted that there were eleven nominations for Dr. Middleton and praised her as an outstanding teacher and mentor.

Informational Item

In March 2009, the University Senate approved a proposal by the School of Continuing Studies to create a new graduate certificate and master's degree (M.Ed.) in education leadership and policy studies.

Consent Agenda

The following consent agenda items were approved by voice vote without dissent or abstention.

1. Approval of the minutes of March 24, 2009 meeting (available online)
2. Approval of Proposed New Student Organizations (available online) - Max Vest
3. Approval of University Faculty Committee Membership (available online) - Bob Schmidt

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<th>Academic Disabilities Accommodation Committee</th>
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Reports

1. Provost's Remarks - Steve Allred

   The Provost kept his remarks brief to allow ample time for discussion of the First Year Experience. Nevertheless he did take time to congratulate Anita Hubbard who is retiring after 26 years of service. He also congratulated those receiving 25-year medallions this year: Van Nall, Dona Hickey, Emma Goldman, Tom Bonfiglio, Suzanne Jones, Andy Newcomb, and Jean Moorefield. Finally, the Provost encouraged the faculty to attend Colloquy on Wednesday, August 19th.

2. UFC Childcare Benefits Options Report (available online) - Doug Hicks

   Faculty Council focused a lot of energy this year on this report and will ask for faculty approval in the first faculty meeting of the fall. Summarizing briefly, the administration has made substantial progress with respect to family life issues including a new and generous parental leave policy and additional flex time options. The purpose of the report is to call renewed attention to child care policies and to recommend “that the University continue to explore the possibility of an onsite childcare center, to open within the next few years.” In the meantime, the report proposes that the University (a) set up a resource and referral service for childcare and (b) provide back-up emergency childcare.

3. End-of-Year Committee Reports (available online)

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<td>Richmond Scholars – report posted May 8, 2009 (access the committee reports via Netfiles (admin/provost/Richmond Scholars Reports) *</td>
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New Business

1. Changes to the School of Continuing Studies' Standards and Processes for Promotion (Faculty Handbook, Ch. VI, Section C; changes are available online) - Jim Narduzzi

   SCS revised its schedule for promotion considerations to accommodate changes in the Board of Trustees meeting schedule. Revisions include changes in some due dates as well as notation of "typical schedule" where appropriate. The modifications were approved unanimously by voice vote.
2. Proposals requiring Field of Study approval - Krista Stenger (all are available online)
   a. LDST 102 - Leadership and the Social Sciences
   b. CLSC 220 - Introduction to Archaeology
   c. CLSC 212 - Dining and Drinking in Classical Antiquity
   d. MLC 333 - Geometries of Being: Transitions to Modernity in Russian Painting, 1895-1934
   e. THTR 215 - Physical Theatre: Actor as Creator

The motion to approve these courses for Field of Study passed unanimously by voice vote.

3. Proposal from University Faculty Council to revise Guide to Faculty Governance, Ch. III, Section B.2.b (available online) – Doug Hicks

The proposal from UFC passed unanimously by voice vote without discussion.

4. Proposal from ad hoc Curriculum Task Force's Undergraduate First-Year Experience Committee (available online) – Libby Gruner

   The Provost made several prefatory remarks. First, whichever of the three alternatives is chosen, it will be expensive and that is acceptable. He is more optimistic about the budget now than he was a few months ago. Second, voting will be done in two rounds by secret paper ballot with the ballots counted by a panel of staff members. In the first round the three options are to be ranked from one to three. A ballot will not be included in the count unless all three proposals are ranked. The two options with the highest number of points (first choice awarded three points, second choice two, and third choice three) will be included in the second round where a single vote is to be case for the preferred option. Third, Steve wished to thank Libby Gruner for her dedication, hard work, and leadership of this committee.

   Libby Gruner introduced and thanked the task force: Erik Craft (RSB, Economics), Joanna Drell (History), Joe Essid (Writing Center), Al Goethals/Thad Williamson (JSLS), April Hill (Biology), Dan Palazzolo (Political Science), and Carol Wittig (Library). Formed in February as part of the strategic plan, the task force met weekly. They reviewed experiences from other schools; held open forums; and met with students, departments and schools. These discussions led to the development of a list of goals for a first-year experience. As an aside, a review of fall’s faculty survey concerning Core revealed mixed feelings. For example, 58% said they would not teach Core while 39% said they would. Attitudes toward a common syllabus were exactly in the middle, averaging three on a five-point scale.

   The task force made three decisions.

   a. Eliminate the requirement for English 103. Many students place out of English 103 already; 50% take it currently. Furthermore, the literature indicates that a one-semester infusion does not work; writing must be included in multiple courses.
   b. The First-Year Experience should be a two-semester experience. Student surveys indicate strong support for two semesters; faculty is mixed. The task force believes that this is a special experience and a two-semester experience is valuable.
c. Incentives will be provided for faculty: smaller classes (15-16) that allow working closely with students, support to cover commitments to the major, pedagogical support via the Writing and Speech Centers, opportunities for faculty to work together, and allowance for a pedagogy of expertise and shared exploration.

There was no consensus on the “best” way to achieve the objectives and the task force agreed that more than one approach could work. Given that even the best approach will fail without faculty support, the task force decided to submit three alternative formats for faculty choice. Individual committee members spoke in support of each proposal.

Joanna Drell spoke in support of continuing the two-semester Core. Core is unique, innovative, connected, rigorous, and personal. It imposes high expectations, establishes the importance of a liberal arts education, encourages students to move beyond preconceptions, examines the core of human experience, promotes shared exploration, and facilitates the close analysis of primary sources without an expert intermediary. The best students blossom but all students benefit from having tried. From a faculty perspective, Core is a living course with annual changes and five-year overhauls by the Core faculty, it provides faculty oversight with clear and coherent rules, provides a vast support network for faculty and an intellectual center for the discussion of teaching, and it tends to modify intellectual behavior and learning.

Dan Palazzolo spoke in support of “Core Plus One.” The key question is does Core have to be two semesters? Over 150 faculty members have participated in Core and this alternative builds on that experience and the substantial qualities of Core. But after a semester of Core, students would be given an opportunity to choose. Some students do gain from a two-semester experience with the same students and teacher. The problem is when students do not find the chemistry. The seminars allow for close textual reading with students who share the same interests and a faculty member who is passionate about the subject. There is no reason that the seminars could not work within the current Field of Studies structure. Core is a non-expert model and that is fine. This alternative retains key benefits of Core while reflecting the different values that our faculty has.

Joe Essid spoke in support of a two-semester sequence of first-year seminars. Having taught both Core and topical seminars, he cannot stress enough the advantage of writing in different contexts. First-year seminars allow current Core instructors to develop a two-semester seminar that gives students the option of following the same instructor, or not. Seminars provide the opportunity to learn to write for different audiences and for different purposes. They allow for personal feedback from someone who cares. They provide for engaged learning and the incorporation of technology within these seminars.

Discussion. Patricia Strait (SCS) asked about the role of adjuncts in Option 3. Libby Bruner noted that although a number of adjuncts teach English 103, very few teach Core. The Provost and President support staffing by individuals with a long-term association with the University.
Olenka Pevny (Art History) asked about the difference between first-year seminars and a course in a major. Libby replied that a number of seminars might not fit into a major because, for example, they might be multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary. Dan Palazzolo noted that the differences might not be great in some cases – the main differences are that a seminar would be smaller, writing-intensive, and open only to first year students.

Dorothy Holland (Theatre) asked about faculty oversight in the last two models. Libby replied that something like the Core group committee would be established.

Mike Kerckhove (Math) noted that Joanna Drell argued that Core took advantage of other faculty member experiences, stressed writing over two semesters, and used a common syllabus. What about Options 2 and 3? Libby replied that although seminars do not have a common syllabus, all alternatives stress writing and faculty support.

Carol Parish (Chemistry) asked whether the task force had surveyed students. Libby explained that a subset of Core students is surveyed each year and the task force reviewed results from several of these surveys. They also met with current Core students.

KimMarie McGoldrick (Economics) noted that Option 1 gives a clear connection across sections. What about the other two? Libby replied that seminars would be clustered. A second-semester seminar might include a follow-up or even use the same text.

Julie Laskaris (Classical Studies) argued that while the goals of Core are good, other approaches can achieve those goals at lower cost. Option 1 takes a toll on small departments and the heavy preparation is a heavy burden, especially for junior faculty. Furthermore, she has never found the claimed benefit. She often receives blank stares when attempting to build on Core. Libby replied that resources will be provided to support any option that is adopted. The Provost noted that it is not only a matter of resources but also how we talk about the first year experience and how we hire faculty. It must be a high priority on a Dean’s agenda. We must commit with enthusiasm.

Joyce McAllister (English) noted that the attractiveness of Core is its high standards and the written consistency of those standards. Libby emphasized the role of the faculty workshops and oversight committee under any option. Joe Essid noted that a premise of the program at Stanford is that faculty can be trusted to do well but need guidelines, e.g., each assignment must meet certain goals.

Doug Hicks (Jepson) noted that some faculty members have bought into Core while others have not. Seminars offer the promise of excitement. Core Plus One presents a lower bar for interested faculty.

Lee Carleton (English) noted that change is inevitable but not necessarily good. He sees the value of Core but it need not be a monopoly. He has never seen a course that engendered so much negativity.
Ted Bunn (Physics) noted that the difficulty of maintaining uniformly high standards is a challenge in all options, including Core. He hopes that the committee will be successful in maintaining the rigor but thinks that it can be done in any option. Could you summarize the results from the student Core surveys? Libby replied that 25% of Core students are randomly surveyed annually. The survey is open-ended and consequently cannot be summarized quantitatively very easily. Ray Hilliard indicated that 70-75% have positive things to say about Core. Nearly all say that they have improved in areas of reading and writing. Students’ primary difficulty is in reading, not writing. Consequently, there was an early philosophical decision to eliminate books that do not require a careful analytical reading of complex arguments.

Nicole Sackley (History) has taught Core for two years and emphasized the importance of students taking the same professor for two semesters. Students commonly are unappreciative at the end of the first semester but learn to talk and gain trust in the second semester. The two-semester structure fosters a mentoring relationship.

Jeffrey Harrison (Management) argued that a big benefit of college is choice. 75% positive ratings imply 25% negative and that is too high for a common experience.

Jonathan Wight (Economics) emphasized that he values a common set of texts but agrees with students about variable quality. Consequently, we should make teaching in Core so attractive that there is a waiting list and we can select the best. He proposes summer seminars for faculty to learn interdisciplinary teaching. The Provost indicated that he has had discussions with the President and both are committed to supporting the first-year experience, including summer seminars.

Bill Myers (Chemistry) noted that Core has placed great emphasis on writing, reading and talking. Nevertheless, is convinced that many students remain uncomfortable talking even though they say that their Core instructor worked hard on getting student to talk.

Tze Loo (History) has taught in Cornell’s writing program. Its downsides are that (1) it is not a “signature” course, (2) there exists an incredible variation in quality, and (3) faculty buy-in is so low that it is staffed by an army of graduate students. Libby replied that is why the task force is proposing options and the administration is pledging resources. Joe Essid indicated that he and Lee Carleton saw those problems at Cornell, however, full-time faculty who did teach were enthusiastic. With incentives, faculty are lining up at Dickinson and Stanford.

Scott Davis (Religion) promised not to restate his past criticisms of Core but wanted to point to issues of faculty morale, student opposition, and uneven rigor. The best available research indicates that the seminar approach makes reading and writing more central to freedom and respect of students.

Gary Radice (Biology) spoke in favor of Options 2 and 3 since they bring in the sciences where reading and writing are critical. Many new hires are interested in teaching non-science courses.

Anna Creech (Library) reminded all that Core has the advantage of teaching the skills of critically reading a text. Once gained, students have that background for all of their courses.
Della Fenster (Math) was eager to teach Core and did not need incentives. She found it both exhausting and exhilarating. She built her annual reviews and tenure packet from what she learned teaching Core. Students stay with you and you end up writing letters for thirty or more students. Core also provides lasting friendships with students and colleagues from around the University.

**The Votes.** Ballots for the first vote were distributed and 184 valid ballots were returned with the following results.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>1st Choice x 3</th>
<th>2nd Choice x 2</th>
<th>3rd Choice x 1</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Two-Semester Core Course</td>
<td>35 x 3 = 105</td>
<td>34 x 2 = 68</td>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
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<tr>
<td>2: Core Plus One</td>
<td>65 x 3 = 195</td>
<td>114 x 2 = 228</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Two Seminar Sequence</td>
<td>84 x 3 = 252</td>
<td>36 x 2 = 72</td>
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<td>64</td>
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Ballots for the vote between Core Plus One and the Two Seminar Sequence were distributed. 180 faculty members participated with 94 voting in favor of the Two Seminar Sequence and 86 voting in favor of Core Plus One.

The Provost announced the passage of the Two Seminar Sequence as the First Year Experience beginning with the 2010-2011 Academic Year.

**Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:40 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Schmidt, University Faculty Secretary