Call to Order

Provost Steve Allred called the meeting to order at 4:06 PM in the Alice Haynes Room of the Tyler Haynes Commons.

Consent Agenda

Minutes of the May 11, 2009 meeting (available online) were approved without dissent or abstention.

Reports

Provost Steve Allred provided a brief summary of the number of likely H1N1 cases on campus since the beginning of the school year.

President Ed Ayers reported with enthusiasm recent meetings in Washington, D.C. and northern Virginia with other educators, alumni, and the press. Reflecting on these meetings and his opportunities to meet the new students, he expressed his gratitude to faculty and alumni for the positive steps forward we are taking even as other colleges and universities are struggling and for being able to take credit for our successes. He encouraged the faculty to continue realizing the great opportunities we have to work intensively (not extensively) across the different schools and programs at the University. He thanked the three subcommittees working on curriculum reform issues and the search committee seeking a new dean for the Robins School of Business.

Old Business

UFC Childcare Benefits Options Report – Doug Hicks

Doug Hicks (Chair of University Faculty Council) presented the UFC Childcare Benefits Options Report that had been approved by University Faculty Council in the spring of 2009. He noted that the report had also been approved by the Staff Advisory Council. After a brief review of the background and major conclusions of the report, it was moved and seconded that the University faculty pass the following recommendations contained in the report:

“We therefore recommend that the University continue to explore the possibility of an onsite childcare center, to open with the next few years. We recommend that the University take two immediate, relatively low-cost steps to improve the childcare situation at the university: First, the University should set up a resource and referral service for childcare. Second, the University should provide back-up emergency childcare.”
The motion passed without any dissent or abstentions. Hicks noted that the University Faculty Council has established a three member committee to work with the administration on this issue.

**New Business**

1. **Nomination of Erik Craft as Faculty Secretary – University Faculty Council**

   Craft was approved by acclamation. Provost Allred thanked Robert Schmidt for his five years of service as Faculty Secretary.

2. **An amendment of the Purpose of the Honorary Degrees Committee - Provost Allred**

   “The Honorary Degree Committee solicits and serves as a screening and review panel for suggestions regarding possible recipients of honorary degrees and nominations for Commencement speakers, and provides the President and the Trustees timely consultation and advice representing faculty perspectives with regard to proposed recipients of honorary degrees and Commencement speaker nominees.”

   The motion was seconded. This amendment to the Purpose of the Honorary Degrees Committee was approved with no dissent.

3. **Endorsement of the First-Year Seminar Guidelines (available online) – Libby Gruner**

   The Provost introduced the topic of the First-Year Seminar (FYS) Guidelines by noting its relation to the other two subcommittees working on general education requirements and cross-disciplinary opportunities. He noted that he wants to follow appropriate governance procedures and permit the committee that is working on the FYS program to be able to move forward provisionally.

   The faculty begin discussing the proposed Guidelines and sharing concerns. This discussion began with David Leary and Sidney Watts noting a desire for a stronger connection to the concept of a liberal arts education and a sharpening of their goals and what makes them distinctive.

   Gene Anderson (chair of the General Education Revision Committee) briefly noted the purposes of the upcoming open forums at which suggestions and dialogue will take place. He said that he expects issues to percolate and be narrowed.

   Libby Gruner noted that the Guidelines are only one part of the FYS program description.

   The discussion continued with Michael Kerckhove asking how a seminar proposal would help meet these FYS goals. Perhaps the proposal should identify how it meets the Guidelines. Jane Berry asked if there are certain skill sets, ideas, or unifying concepts we want students to learn. Gruner replied although that was part of the discussion in May; first-year seminars are not expected to share unifying concepts.
Scott Davis shared a concern about the vagueness of the Guidelines and wanted the assurance that any proposal that met the Guidelines would be approved. Gruner and Dan Palazzolo responded that the Guidelines don’t stand alone but that there is much flexibility for many big ideas and opportunities for faculty and students to be excited.

David Leary requested that criteria be articulated clearly and that he had concerns about having FYSSs count toward major credit and General Education requirements. He asked, “What makes them distinctive?”

Joe Troncale moved to add “and deepen students’ understanding of themselves” after the first of five common goals. The motion was seconded, and after various friendly amendments, the proposed modification of the first of five common goals read “1. Expand and deepen students’ understanding of the world and themselves.”

The question was called and passed. The amendment passed.

Porcher Taylor raised a concern about the possibility of investing time in a proposal only to have it turned down. Joan Neff responded that it was the committee’s goal to work with the faculty and help with revisions if necessary.

Peter Smallwood noted that we do not expect everything to be perfect and that the program will change from year to year after suggesting that some of the liberal arts language from the May meeting be added to the preface of the FYS Guidelines. This motion was seconded.

Libby Gruner offered the following to begin the FYS Guidelines, which after a minor friendly amendment read “The first-year experience is critical both for developing habits of mind that will carry forward throughout a student’s career and for focusing attention on transferable academic skills, including critical reading and thinking, and the ability to write and speak clearly and effectively. The goals of the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program focus our attention on the importance of a liberal arts curriculum: it combines an emphasis on important skills (thinking, reading, and communicating) with a concern for developing intellectual curiosity.”

The above amendment passed.

Nancy Shauber raised further concerns about counting FYS courses as meeting general education requirements and how these courses could affect small departments and tenure track candidates.

The discussion continued with Steve Addiss calling for self-governance among future participants. Jennifer Glancy asked for the term “seminar” to be defined.

Brian Henry moved that it be made explicit that there could be no replication of courses already existing on the books. The motion was seconded. After discussion, the amendment failed.
Con Beausang moved that the bold type of the middle three of the five common goals be removed and that the following sentence read “To assist faculty in developing FYS proposals, please refer to the following expansion on goals 2, 3, and 4.” The amendment was seconded and passed.

Beausang also moved that include scientific literacy in the five goals. After being the seconded and further discussion, the amendment failed.

At approximately 5:45 p.m., a quorum call was made. Lacking a quorum, the meeting was adjourned to a date to be determined.

The resumption of the University Faculty Meeting was called to order by Provost Allred at 4:02 PM on September 24, 2009. Provost Allred announced the meeting room was only available until 5:00 p.m., but that the same room was reserved for next Wednesday, September 30th from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. if needed.

Discussion of the FYS Guidelines began with an amendment by Libby Gruner to address concerns voiced in the previous week’s gathering. She asked those present not to forget about the opportunities and excitement surrounding these seminars. She reminded the faculty that there will be workshops and summer institutes and ongoing discussion.

Gruner moved that the following two paragraphs begin the FYS Guidelines:

“First-Year Seminars (FYS) provide entering students the excitement of engaged learning through a diverse array of seminar topics. With small classes, a variety of topics, and close contact with faculty, first year seminars offer a hands-on introduction to academic inquiry. Seminars emphasize critical reading and thinking, information literacy, and effective communication in writing, speech, and other appropriate forms.

A wide variety of seminars will be offered each year, drawn from every school of the university. Each entering student will take an FYS in the fall and spring of the first year, establishing a foundation of academic skills and intellectual habits for a lifetime of learning.”

The amendment was seconded. After discussion the amendment passed.

Carol Summers moved that the paragraph preceding the listing of the five common goals (paragraph three) be replaced with the following paragraph:

“First-Year Seminars will serve as an introduction to the modes of inquiry, expression and investigation that lie at the heart of a liberal arts education. Distinct from distribution and major requirements, they foster habits of mind fundamental to students’ intellectual and academic development, including critical reading and thinking, and the ability to write and speak clearly and effectively. Integrating explorations of specific questions and
topics with the development of skills, seminars aim to foster intellectual curiosity and students’ ability to act on it.”

Louis Schwartz offered an amendment to add the words “In a way that is” preceding “Distinct from distribution.” After being seconded and discussion, the amendment failed.

An amendment to delete “Distinct from distribution and major requirements,” passed.

Steve Addiss proposed an amendment to add the phrase “sharing ideas and research through discussion” after “including critical reading and thinking.” After a second and discussion, it passed.

Hugh West moved to add an amendment to substitute “academic” for “the modes of.” After a second and discussion, it passed.

Libby Gruner moved that we substitute “, which” for “that” in the first sentence. After a second, the amendment was passed.

Louis Schwartz moved to amend the first sentence to read “First-year Seminars will serve as an introduction to academic inquiry and the modes of expression that lie at the heart of the liberal arts education.” After a second, the question was called and passed. The amendment passed.

Dan Palazzolo moved to strike the last sentence of the first paragraph and the last phrase of the second paragraph. After a second, the amendment was passed.

Louis Schwartz moved to substitute the following amendment for the second paragraph following the “In Writing” section:

“In order to create uniformity in the writing requirements for first-year seminars, all seminars will require at least two or three analytical essays each semester. These essays should each be at a minimum approximately 1000 words (about 3 pages) in length and the total number of all of them should be at minimum approximately 3000 words. These 2 or 3 essays must progress in complexity from the beginning to the end of the semester, students must be given the option to rewrite these papers either after they have been graded or after some initial draft has been reviewed by either an instructor or a writing fellow, and they should be assessed, minimally, in terms of (a) the presence or absence of a central thesis or argument; (b) the presence or absence of an organization that advances this thesis or argument; (c) the extent to which the student’s use of evidence is accurate and appropriate; and (d) the attainment or non-attainment of at least minimally adequate standards of grammar and spelling. Faculty should also assume that in addition to this minimum they should expect to assign several less formal writing assignments in the spirit of the goals described above.”

After being seconded and discussed, the amendment failed.
Doug Hicks proposed that the same paragraph be replaced with the following sentence:

“In order to create an approximate parity in the writing requirements for first-year seminars, all seminars should include 5000 words (approximately 20 double-spaced pages) of academic writing.”

The amendment was seconded. After a brief discussion, the amendment was approved.

The question was called, seconded, and approved. The Guidelines were approved by the faculty.

4. Proposals requiring Field of Study approval – Mark Rhodes

The two new dance classes (DANC 230 & DANC 240) were approved as fulfilling the field of study requirement for the FSVP category.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erik Craft, University Faculty Secretary