Minutes
University Senate Academic Policies Committee
Volume 49, Number 29
May 7, 2013

Members Present: L. Bica, S. Duckworth-Lawton, D. Dunham, G. Hanson-Brenner, J. Hoepner, J. Markgraf, D. Mowry, B. Nowlan, J. Pratt (Chair), S. Wical, S. Fish (Student Senator), M. Wick (representing P. Kleine)

Guests: Ivy Bohnlein, Sarah Britt, Margaret Cassidy, Jennifer Fager, Pam Golden, David Jones, Phil Inhinger, Bob Knight, Brady Krien, Jill Prushiek, Cody Thompson, Jeff Vahlbusch

Chair Pratt called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

1.0 Meeting Minutes

Minutes from 4/23/2013 were approved following a minor revision (correction to meeting number). Minutes from 04/30/2013 were approved as distributed.

2.0 Review of Honors Program

Pratt praised the Program for its excellent ideas for growth and development, especially the development of a communal culture.

Director Vahlbusch indicated that sustainability of personnel is a major issue. Honors can only be sustained with additional support for personnel time. The program is at a tipping point—it has grown as large as possible. If additional growth is desired, such growth cannot occur without a cross-campus conversation about resources for Honors.

Pratt lamented the continued lack of financial support for quality programs and indicated that the APC will recommend the University award more resources to Honors. Pratt inquired about the external reviewer’s comment about a “need to rework/refocus the entire Honors curriculum” and the reviewer’s assertion that a number of program criteria have not been met. Vahlbusch indicated that the review was conducted in 2011. Since that time, Honors has done a lot to address the concerns—particularly in the areas of active learning, EDI, Service-Learning, and community-based learning. Also, the Program is up from just 10 courses with Honors prefixes in fall semester 2009 to 41 courses in fall 2012. These changes represent a significant investment from departments around the University. Vahlbusch indicated that the model of “Honors as GE replacement” has been out of date for 20 years—great programs do not simply replace GE for Honors students. Vahlbusch sees this issue as Honors’ next big challenge. Honors staff has been waiting for LE reform so they know what they’re working with. Now that University Senate has approved a new LE program, they will look at what Honors can do and make transformations.
Pratt asked how Honors will get away from replacing Liberal Education. Vahlbusch stated that more and more of our students are coming in with most of their GE done. Honors will not separate from LE, but needs to do more than just LE. Honors’ task is to craft a program that can meet the needs of many or all of its student groups. For example, they are considering a model from the University of Houston model consisting of 4-5 distinct pathways through the Honors program for students with different needs. Honors has been working with departments to create departmental honors programs, which is a way of creating a 4-year Honors track.

Duckworth-Lawton asked about advertising more widely about the ability to turn a regular course into an Honors course. Vahlbusch acknowledged that this is an approach used by many quality Honors programs; however, UWEC Honors has kept it relatively quiet so as not to flood faculty with extra work that is not compensated.

Bob Knight stated that Honors has budget to help buy out time reassignment for faculty. Pratt acknowledged seeing budget information in report, but suggested that the budget looks insufficient to sustain Honors over the long-term. Vahlbusch indicated that in the last two years, Honors has not lacked funds to create the curriculum it need. Pratt drew attention to the fact that some faculty are volunteering their time to teach without compensation.

Mowry suggested that Honors could be a model of LE across 4 years that culminates in a capstone. David Jones indicated that there has been support for Honors from Academic Affairs, but the challenge is the ad hoc nature of Honors faculty staffing. Having only a minimal core faculty makes it difficult to do strategic planning for long-term.

Pratt asked if there is a plan for sustainability after Vahlbusch retires. Vahlbusch stated the need for a model that’s attractive to the next generation of leadership. Honors cannot be dependent on the work of 2-3 individuals who will not be there forever.

Pratt indicated that the program review form only includes major recommendations. APC will add to the form in order to capture all of the recommendations from internal and external reviewers. Vahlbusch reiterated the fact that the external review was completed 2 years ago; therefore, some comments are no longer relevant. Ivy Bohnlein asserted that Honors could serve as a model for LE reform and that it is intended to be a laboratory for the entire University. Bohnlein asserted the importance of full-time appointment for the Honors director.

3.0 Geology Review Form and Narrative

Pratt asked about the appropriateness of identifying this department as changing in form or direction. Chair Kent Syverson indicated previously that pursuing responsible mining is, in fact, a change in direction.

Wick expressed the belief that it’s a fundamental change toward a more majors-heavy department, which he interprets as a change in form/direction. This role change is intentional.
on the part of Geology faculty, which is important to acknowledge.

Pratt asserted that the focus on majors will not occur at the expense of Liberal Education. Geology will still contribute to LE while strengthening the emphasis on its own majors. Pratt will send Geology’s review form to APC, the narrative will be rewritten, and APC will finalize this review via email.

4.0 Latin American Studies (LAS) Review Form and Narrative

Motion to recommend to the Provost that the LAS program continue in its present form. Motion passed unanimously

5.0 Women’s Studies (WMNS) Review Form and Narrative

Motion to recommend to the Provost that WMNS be strengthened and reviewed early. Motion passed unanimously.

6.0 Upcoming Agenda Items

APC members discussed the program review process with Wick. Wick emphasized the challenges of zero sum resources. Nowlan indicated that, despite a lack of resources, APC’s role is to identify units that are in need of support.

Meeting adjourned at 2:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted
Lori Bica
Secretary for the Meeting