College of Arts and Sciences: Academic Programs Committee Meeting Minutes

College of Arts and Sciences (COAS)

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College of Arts & Sciences Council : Academic Programs Committee Meeting : 2006 : 10 : 27

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CAS ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF 27 OCTOBER 2006 MEETING

Attending:
Sheramy Bundrick, David R. Carr (chair), Eric Odgaard, Bea Smith (ex-officio)
Absent:
Jim Krest (perhaps lost in the karsts of Slovakia...or is it Slovenia?)

The committee discussed three items:
1. "Emergency" Catalog Meeting
2. Program proposal from Graphic Design
3. Online and Distance Learning courses.

1. "Emergency" Catalog Meeting

Jennifer Baker informed the assembled group of several items affecting programs. First, that several of the Tampa departments have changed programs and courses which may affect offerings on this campus. USF St. Pete programs have the choice of "mirroring" those changes locally or retaining programs as defined in our current catalog. All programs are advised to check with their counterparts in Tampa. Should a program wish to adopt the Tampa revision, a memo to that effect, accompanied by the description of the revision, should be submitted to Ms. Baker. Please contact her if you have questions.

Second, the routine for implementing program and course changes has become more elaborate. To wit:
   Program proposals and course changes will be approved in the following way.
   1. Approval secured within the program.
   2. Approval by the CAS Academic Program Committee.
   3. Approval by the CAS dean.
   4. Approval by the USFSP Undergraduate or Graduate Council.
   5. Approval by the USFSP VP for Academic Affairs.
   6. Approval by the USFSP Campus Board
   7. Approved changes then submitted to Board of Governors for vetting.
         a. Assessment by V.P.s for Academic Affairs (all campuses)
         b. Assessment by ACE group.
         c. Approval by USF Board of Governors.
A number of deadlines exist. Here is the most significant. All program proposals and course proposals must be approved within the college by **15 November** to meet the submission deadline of the Undergraduate Council. As you may have noticed, "autonomy" has varied interpretations.

Last item of note: Revisions to the General Education requirements are being considered by committees in both Tampa and St. Pete. Stay tuned.

2. Program proposal from Graphic Design
The committee assessed the excellent program proposal for a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic

Design. The current designation as a "BFA in Studio Art with a Concentration in Graphic Design" does not accurately describe the program. The committee approves the proposal with the following provisos:

We suggest that an additional faculty line in Art History be added. That addition would work to the advantage of both the Fine Arts majors and students wishing to fulfill General Education requirements. We noticed a few technical problems which need to be addressed. The committee chair will consult with Prof. Spadaro on these items.

3. Online and Distance Learning courses.

The committee unanimously adopted the attached statement.

The Pedagogy of Distance Learning

The University administration has taken a wise approach in cataloging the breadth of options available in distance learning (see the draft of *USF St. Petersburg Flexible Learning Program Guidelines and Policies*, hereafter referred to as the "*FLP draft*"). These courses rely on all manner of technology to provide educational services across a number of settings, such as two-way closed-circuit classes for prison inmates (one of the earliest designs), flexible scheduling for students with inflexible job schedules, and massive, on-line versions of Keller-style (self-paced) classes. In addition, although one might think of classes as being either brick-and-mortar or distance learning, there is actually a broad range of so-called "hybrid" course designs, ranging from traditional brick-and-mortar with some materials distributed over, or discussions conducted on, the internet, to courses in which the content is delivered remotely but assessment takes place on campus (or vice versa).

Given these complexities, and because distance learning classes are likely to become a part of the transcripts of transfer students irrespective of whether a particular school offers any such courses, fitting distance learning to the educational setting and mission of the university is a fundamental task for all institutions and requires cooperation across multiple levels. Fiscal powerhouses such as the University of Phoenix, where students can pay a premium to earn entire degrees without ever meeting an instructor, show the potential of both the financial gains and the strain on pedagogical goals that distance learning, taken to the extreme, can create. Thus, distance learning courses may have a significant impact on both the financial and pedagogical goals of the University. As such, they fall under the purview of the Academic Programs Committee (APC) pursuant to section 1.3.1.2 of the CAS Bylaws.

 Academic Freedom

In the classroom, academic freedom provides us the latitude we need to make educational experiences inspirational, informative, and lasting. It is one of the most cherished components of the Academy. This ideal is no less relevant to on-line courses; instructors should always have the freedom to teach their assigned topics as they see fit, no matter the medium through which they choose to teach. At the same time, this does not   provide *carte   blanche* to teach whatever and however we like. As was made clear in reviewing academic freedom in CAS over the last few years, academic freedom does not allow an instructor to teach wildly off topic, nor to teach classes that are inappropriately difficult (or excessively easy) for their course levels. The AAUP has the official position that distance learning classes, properly done, can at the least match the pedagogical quality of brick-and-mortar classes. That they can, however, does not mean that they all do. These circumstances are the rationale for systemic checks such as the APC, which group is charged (under section 1.3.1.1 of CAS Bylaws) with evaluating and approving both new and modified course offerings for compliance with the academic standards of the college, system, and (in this state) legislature.

USFSP Flexible Learning Program

The *FLP draft* provides an excellent opening statement from which to discuss how our university will approach distance learning classes. One of the points made clear in the *FLP draft*, for instance, is that creating an on-line course requires either the design of an entire new course or a substantial redevelopment of an existing one – to the point where the administration has proposed course releases and/or monetary compensation, technical support (for development), and staff support (for development, administration, and clearing copyrights) to assist. As mentioned in the discussion of Academic Freedom, this point is relevant to the Academic Program Committee because that group is charged with vetting and approving all such course changes. Established procedures for the University require that all such proposals go through an approval process (see relevant forms for new course proposals and both major and minor course revision proposals, at http://www.stpt.usf.edu/coas/faculty_staff.htm). Again, under section 1.3.1.1 of the CAS Bylaws, this process begins internally with review and approval from the APC.

Implementing Distance Learning Classes at USFSP

The *FLP draft* provides an impressive offer of support from the administration in developing, maintaining and teaching distance learning courses; as the AAUP notes, a quality distance learning class is often more labor intensive for the instructor than is a brick-and-mortar version of the class. The *FLP draft* also wisely identifies some of the critical issues associated with implementing distance learning courses on our campus. For instance, faculty are: cautioned to carefully consider class size for their distance learning courses; advised to seek grading and administrative assistance as necessary to support large class sizes; and cautioned against implementing distance learning classes in such a way that they diminish or detract from existing programs or traditional class sections. The latter point is an issue beyond the explicit scope of the APC, but is already salient to the university, as at least one brick-and-mortar class on campus has already seen its enrollment drop significantly even as the enrollment of the on-line version has increased.

What the *FLP draft* also suggests in this latter point is that distance learning classes are not intended to supplant the educational mission of the institution. The CAS mission statement explicitly spells out that our goal is to be a research-oriented liberal arts school, building our eminence through the quality of the education we provide and the scholarship of our faculty (among other things). Distance learning classes, by their very nature, provide greater access to the university for people beyond the immediate community. Further, it is worth noting that the history of institutions that have heavily invested in distance learning courses shows a strong tendency for a reduction in those schools' national prestige. Thus, it is incumbent on both proposing faculty and the APC to be especially vigilant in making sure that on-line course offerings reflect the academic mission and quality of the institution.

Recommendations for Distance Learning Proposals

Technically, many classes on campus are already "hybrid" distance learning courses (e.g. any course that distributes its syllabus or other materials on Blackboard, or via email). The APC sees no benefit in reviewing such trivial changes. However, the APC deems distance learning courses

that meet either of the following criteria to be significant changes, to the point where such courses require review under CAS bylaws:

1. If at least half the course content (e.g. materials, lectures, discussions, student-instructor contact) is delivered in some format other than traditional brick-and-mortar style
2. If at least half the course grade, in total points, (to include homework, quizzes, and tests, but *not* including research papers) is conducted without a proctor, and/or off campus

The APC recommends that faculty with current distance learning courses, or considering proposing distance learning courses (whether of new classes or as modifications of traditional offerings on campus), review the information required for the proposal to be reviewed. These guidelines can be found at http://www.stpt.usf.edu/coas/faculty_staff.htm. In addition, the APC recommends that faculty consider the following issues in their design:

1. Courses should comply with all current guidelines available on campus. This includes following established procedures for vetting course proposals, consideration of current and future guidelines on course and teaching loads, and Academic Learning Compacts for the department, division, and/or major in which the course is to be offered.
2. Pedagogically, the purpose of grading is to inform students about specific content areas in which they should invest more time. Practically, graded materials are one significant means (faculty-student interaction being the other) of assessing student performance when it comes time to decided whether a student deserves credit toward the degree for their work. Because faculty-student interaction suffers in on-line courses that do not include live, two-way communication, the questions of what is graded, how often, and by whom become critically important.
3. All distance learning courses should require the active involvement of their instructors with their students.   Examples in the distance learning literature include virtual office hours and classroom discussions (both of which are already available on Blackboard), course-specific office hours for consultation in person or by phone, extensive encouragement and use of email, and scheduling optional brick-and-mortar review sessions. As in the traditional classroom, not all students will avail themselves of these opportunities. However, the number of contact hours should be equivalent to that required of regular courses.

Finally, the APC makes the following recommendations to the CAS College Council.

1. Guidelines for appropriate course loads and assignments of faculty involved with distance learning courses should be determined by the program or division and vetted by the CAS College Council.
2. The APC suggests that the programs and divisions determine the appropriate number of course credits their majors may have count toward their degree. This may be implemented administratively in the OASIS registration system.

CAS ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF 3 NOVEMBER 2006 MEETING

Attending: Sheramy Bundrick, David R. Carr (chair), Jim Krest, Eric Odgaard, Bea Smith (ex-officio)
Guest: Mark Pezzo

The minutes of the 27 October 2006 meeting were approved with the understanding that additional material will revise the committee's statement on distance learning.

The task before the committee resided in examining the proposed changes to the Anthropology program and three new course proposals in Anthropology. The committee unanimously approved these with the following suggestions and edits.

Anthropology Program changes:

In "Anthropology Program at USFSP": rework into 3 numbered categories. Should be "Interdisciplinary Social Sciences"
In "Upper Level Required Courses": A methods course now required; eliminate the "either."
In "Upper Level Electives": Why list ANT 2000 here? Perhaps move statement to "Lower Level Required Courses."

Anthropology New Course Proposal Forms:

Diasphora course:
If the SUS course number of "Peoples of Africa" will be used for the "Diasphora" course, then the SUS title should be adopted.
Fill out all required information. E.g., Budget acct no., phone, et al.
2. "boarders" should be "borders."
4A: "it" should be "is"
4G: strike "from the University of Florida." We also questioned the specialty in African archaeology--particularly if the SUS title applies.
5D: Title of book missing.
7: Why not check "Historical Perspectives"?

Archaeology of Africa course:
2: Number should be 4XXX if no equivalent found in SUS list.
3: Gordon rule? Indicate that and computation portion.
4A: Seems vague.
4C: Currently offered as Africana course? Specify course number.
4D: correct "enrollement"
4G: strike "from the University of Florida."
5D: Full citation needed

"Peoples of Africa" course:
The committee wondered if the SUS description also applied to the Diasphora course.

2: specify which number, 4352 or 4353. Do not use 4930.
Course description incomplete.
3: specify
4G: Should read simply "Ph.D. in Anthropology with a specialty in Africa"
5B: correct "responsable"
5C: correct "conflict" and use parallel construction (all nouns or all adjectives)

All suggested revisions and edits should be incorporated. Revised material will be presented to the APC chair prior to forwarding to the CAS dean.

An additional sheet spelling out the differences between the new and old.should be attached to the proposals.

 Other business:

More discussion of distance learning courses then ensued. Eric Odgaard related his conversation with Kathy Carvalho regarding her course. Eric and Dave will speak with Keith White after the meeting about his course. Information from those two interviews will be incorporated in the APC minutes of 27 October under "Some Thoughts on Distance Learning."

The committee anticipates receiving proposal from both World Language Education for a Spanish major and from Journalism in the next meeting. Additional material should also be submitted by Graphic Design. That meeting is scheduled for Monday, 13 November 2006, due to the Veterans Day holiday.