

EPAG Minutes

Wednesday, February 15, 2012

Noon-1:30 Campus Center 214

Holly Barcus, Terri Fishel, Janet Folina, Kate Hamilton, James Heyman, Ann Minnick, Yeukai Mudzi, Kathy Murray, Jayne Niemi, Sonita Sarker, Patrick Schmidt, Harry Waters Jr., Chris Willcox

1. The minutes from the February 8th were approved.
2. The Board of Trustees will be meeting on March 2nd. Please remember your assignment if you have one. You should be getting an email reminder as well.
3. We discussed the previous day's faculty meeting. Sonita thanked Patrick for acknowledging her in his remarks. We agreed that Patrick did an admirable job at the meeting. Several members of the committee have been contacted by the Mac Weekly for comments or interviews – we compared notes about that. We also discussed the next steps we might take to address the resource allocation question that was raised and what other information we should bring up in the discussion. We also had a lively discussion about possible ways forward for the college to “cover” geographic areas and what EPAG's role is and is not in the development of concentrations or other possible curricular venues for study of things Russian and Central European. We affirmed that concentrations must emerge from the faculty. This discussion recalled the reasons we added the “further thoughts” section to our report. We were reminded that if the EPAG decision is overturned, then then allocations must be in made to the department. That means that other allocation requests will not be granted. There are long-term trade-offs. That fact might not be as clear to someone if they have not sat on the Allocations Committee in times where there are more requests than available allocations. Conversations among individual faculty and students will mean a lot over the next month.
4. We returned to our work on Writing. What direction are we headed? There are some things that could potentially be done and passed this year that would improve the Writing requirement. We know that there is even more that could be done and there is some pressure to act. There's an intermediate position between doing nothing but reflection and creating a full-blown Writing Program. Ann described some recent activity, such as the visit from the writing director at the University of St. Thomas, where they have spent a lot of money and 7 or 8 years on writing, and still do not have a requirement. We don't have a collective agreement here about many writing-related questions. There are questions and perceived barriers, such as branding our requirement as “argumentative”. One person sees a big disconnect between the report and the proposed revision to the requirement, which dampens any excitement about bringing a motion to the faculty. Another said it's more important to do thoughtful projects than to hurry to “save” current students. Another said there should be more opportunity to learn how to present evidence in their discipline, and that a continuing program past the first semester is important. Another is proud of what's been done so far, and wants that known by the faculty.

It was noted that the difference between a place like St Thomas and us, is that they have a clean slate because they don't have a requirement. We have a requirement, but one that may not work and is difficult to assess, and this makes it harder to start from scratch. One person commented about the students who write well, and others who don't, and identifying the latter group needs the most the attention. There is a faculty reading group that is charged with telling the Provost what could work. As for GERC's report, there are some recommendations we have not acted on: establishment of a Writing Program with a Director, articulating the Argumentative nature of our requirement, limiting the course enrollment, and requiring 15 percent of the class time be devoted to writing instruction. Much time has passed since the original requirement was passed, and much has changed. At least one person thinks it's worth taking the risk of bringing the drafted motion to the faculty. Others don't think it's going to pass. We are back to the question "what should EPAG do?". At the very least we should provide a summary of what's happened and initiatives in place so that the faculty are brought up to speed. Perhaps a chart projected at the faculty meeting? The only available faculty meeting is really the April one. Most of what we have are tweaks, and it's more important to have the larger discussion among the faculty as a whole. We actually need to focus on the things we have added and changed to see if they are working. This conversation about writing will continue next week.

5. Legal Studies review: (Patrick leaves, Sonita presides) Comments or questions for discussion? Is it typical or normal for a concentration to not have a particular path through the program? They come in various forms, and the legislation that created concentrations allowed for that. We will mention other legal studies expertise on campus that may not have tapped in their reaching out activities, since they mention a couple of such courses. We appreciate the attention to overlap issues and ways to prevent them. There were positive comments about creating a place for students interested in law careers, and the experiential aspects of the program. We checked for the existence of a web page – and there it was. Sonita will draft the letter .

Adjourned at 1:28.

Respectfully submitted,

Jayne Niemi

Registrar