

**College of Arts and Sciences
Dean's Council of Department Chairs**

**Wednesday, February 19, 2014
3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
BCC 206**

Attendees:

Angela Biselli, Chair of Physics
Jocelyn Boryczka, Chair of Politics
Nancy Dallavalle, Chair of Religious Studies
Jean Daniele, Assistant to the Dean
Rick DeWitt, Chair of Philosophy
David Gudelunas, Chair of Communication & Co-Director of Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Manyul Im, CAS Associate Professor
Jereyn Johnson, Chair of Modern Languages & Literatures
Dina Franceschi, Interim Chair of International Studies
Aaron Perkus, CAS Associate Professor
Elizabeth Petrino, Chair of English
Judy Primavera, Chair of Psychology
Kathryn Nantz, Chair of Economics
Laura Nash, Chair of Visual & Performing Arts
Kurt Schlichting, Chair of Sociology & Anthropology
Kraig Steffen, Chair of Chemistry & Biochemistry
Brian Walker, Chair of Biology
Joan Weiss, Chair of Mathematics & Computer Science

Regrets

Yohuru Williams, Chair of History & Director of Black Studies

Approval of the Minutes

Dr. Nancy Dallavalle moved to approve the December 11, 2013 minutes and Dr. Walker seconded the motion. All were in favor of the minutes with one minor change.

Student Awards Event—Dr. James Simon facilitated a conversation around the procedures associate with the CAS annual Student Awards Ceremony. Dr. Simon shared last year's awards program, so that chairs could focus on the number of awards submitted during our event, bringing their attention to the length of the program. Dr. Simon suggested that chairs consider having a departmental awards ceremony separate from the College-wide ceremony, so as to offer an opportunity to highlight their students in greater detail.

Chairs were invited for an open discussion and suggestions around the practices of our annual student awards ceremony. The following was discussed:

- Dr. Weiss mentioned that the timing issue was due to the length of the presenter's presentation. Presenters are not keeping to their one-minute time allotment and it is usually those who do not have a script to follow.

- Dr. Primavera suggested there be three different events on the same evening (one for each discipline). The Dean commented that some students receive multiple awards in a variety of disciplines, so this format would not work. A collaborative event across disciplines is noteworthy, offering an opportunity for everyone to learn of the work being accomplished throughout the College, and communicating our holism.
- Dr. Boryczka shared the Politics Department discussion around the Awards Ceremony, suggesting that a few designated people present the awards. This would move the program along more efficiently, keeping to the appropriate time limits. Departments are moving towards having their own awards night where they could focus on a more elaborate recognition of the student. Drs. Dallavalle and Johnson agreed with this suggested process. The chair or faculty working with the awardee could escort the student to the podium to share in their collaboration on their specific project or experiences.
- Dr. Nash suggested that there be staging of the movement of the program.
- Dr. Dallavalle mentioned that having a person shepherd students along and having a designated area where folks could take photos would be helpful. The Dean suggested Ms. Daniele ensure that the set-up this year would accommodate these good ideas.
- Dr. Im suggested having the Media Center add effective lighting.
- Dr. Simon noted that one minute is the equivalent of 150 to 170 words. These should be submitted in advance. The Dean added that this would help with annual reporting, and other needs for student profile info.
- Dr. Schlichting mentioned that other institutions tape and edit award ceremonies, which helped in keeping the event moving along. The noted that this is quite expensive and requires a good deal of lead time given the number of awards.
- The Dean took a vote of having three or four readers, an escort of chair or mentor with the student awardee, and an area designated for photos. The majority were in favor, so the new process will be implemented for this spring's student awards event.
- Dr. Walker asked to make a motion to reverse the order of presentation every other year so that programs late in the alphabet did not always go late in the program. All were in favor.
- Student selection and parameters for remarks at the event were discussed. The Dean's expectation is that departments choose one student per award. There are some departments choosing more than one student and in some cases there are such a small number of majors to select from. She asked chairs to be mindful of selecting their top student for their departmental award with the exception of group projects, which are generally related to the College-wide awards. It was agreed that only one student would be selected, except in rare circumstances, and reward remarks would be planned.
- It was mentioned that each department has their own criteria when choosing a recipient. Dr. Weiss shared that in the Math/CS Department if they have three students with a 3.9 GPA and the same qualifications, they offer the award to all three students. The Dean shared that when she chaired the Communication Department, criteria in addition to the GPA were considered in order to choose among the top GPA students. The Dean added that the challenge with multiple students receiving an award is that parents are frustrated with the dividing of the one-minute time frame that is then split between multiple students. They see this as their student not receiving the appropriate recognition, particularly when others go over the time limit.

- The Dean asked how many departments presented their award to more than one student. In referencing the spring 2013 program, there were 5 departments that presented to more than one student. The Dean added that the College-wide Award Committees also need to heed this parameter. Last year at least one of those committees selected more than one recipient/group.
- It was agreed by Chairs that the norm would be to give an award to one student. In extraordinary circumstances the award may warrant more than one student. Remarks for all awards must be submitted in advance.
- The Dean added that the CAS Student Awards Ceremony is a beautiful event that many administrators enjoy celebrating and learning about the accomplishments of our students. The Dean marvels at our students and looks forward to this event each year.

Workshop on IDEA—Dr. Simon talked about the IDEA course evaluation process, sharing departmental data relative to individual disciplines with each of the chairs. He mentioned that he attended an IDEA conference and shared some of the information and feedback he learned during from other institutions.

Dr. Simon is seeking ways to make the IDEA forms more useful at the department level. He received aggregate data from the SVPPA's with a breakdown from the last two semesters to help chairs guide department decisions on curriculum mapping and staffing. Chairs were given summary reports with their own department data, in hopes that they will gain a greater understanding on the importance of the IDEA process. He encouraged chairs to share this process with colleagues. Unless faculty utilize the IDEA form, the data is not useful. College-wide the student response rate is 63%.

Dr. Simon placed a focus on faculty choosing appropriate Objectives, given the level of a course. Departments might want to follow the lead of English, which uses uniform Objectives for all sections of EN11 and 12. It was mentioned that part-time faculty contracts highlight the use of IDEA as a contract responsibility. The Dean's office will inform department chairs when part-time faculty are not in compliance. We need to protect the student's right to make comments about their professors.

Dr. Simon shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the College's four major focus areas—response rate, progress on relevant objectives, excellent teacher, and excellent course. Data reflects academic year 2012-2013. IDEA is looking to receive at least 60% student response rate and the university was at approximately 65%.

Response Rate—average response rate of students in courses

- There were 185 sections (more than 10%) where there was no Faculty Information Form (FIF), indicating that instructors failed to specify objectives for the course.
- Some instructors, choosing to use paper evaluations, neglected to turn in their evaluations. The data indicated this occurred 65 times.
- Dr. Gudelunas mentioned that some of these forms may get lost from the evening sections.
- Dr. Im shared that some institutions have metal boxes for submissions to avoid misplacing submissions.

- Dr. Walker asked if there is a way to identify the specific course in which the faculty members are not turning in their evaluations. Dr. Simon communicated that Ms. Kim Baer, Academic Operations Coordinator, or Ms. Jean Siconolfi, CAS Operations Assistant, could help find out this information.

Progress on Relevant Objectives, Excellent Teacher and Excellent Course—Data demonstrates matches between the objectives chosen by faculty and what students communicate actually occurs in class. Each individual departmental score was distributed to the relevant department chair, focusing on the following aggregate data.

- Department-wide score
- Department score vs. CAS average
- Department vs. Discipline

With the approval of the department chairs, results for the Sociology/Anthropology and Physics Departments were shared. Each department chair received a hardcopy of their aggregate data, taking a moment to review individual department data.

The following points were highlighted:

- Chairs should keep in mind that low student response rate or failure to follow protocol lowers individual scores and affects department-wide analysis
- Dr. Simon mentioned that a negative rating could be relative to the course rather than the faculty. It could be useful to look at aggregate reports at different course levels—core level, 100-level, 200-level, 300-level or even multiple sections of the same key-course.
- It is important to better understand IDEA scores and help members of the department understand the process and their own scores.
- 85% of CAS courses list “teaching fundamental skills” as an Objective. Only 14% focus on the objective of ethics.
- Dr. Im mentioned that the University is below the national average on applying knowledge gained.
- Dr. Simon mentioned that IDEA scores should be distributed to faculty prior to the start of the semester. The purpose is to review the comments and reflect on changes that could be made. We are six weeks into the semester and the aggregate data has not been distributed to professors. After the evaluation forms are completed and sent to IDEA, there is a 10 day turnaround. The forms are presently in the SVPAA’s Office and have not yet been sent to IDEA. The CAS Dean’s Office will discuss the turnaround time and the importance behind distributing information efficiently, so that it is helpful in planning subsequent semesters.
- The importance behind this information is not about the scores but more importantly about the student’s experience. Faculty need to communicate learning objectives effectively and help student connect these experiences to other initiatives and coursework.
- It was recommended to have conversations among colleagues not around scores but rather how they help in curricular mapping and student learning.
- Dr. Walker asked if there was a cheat sheet to give to new part-time faculty, explaining this process. Dr. Im mentioned that there is information on the IDEA website, but the most effective form of communication is sitting down and explaining the process and importance behind these objectives.

- Dr. Simon suggested uniform objectives for upper level courses across disciplines. The Dean mentioned that everyone could choose among a set number of objectives and there might be a difference on the rating of importance. Everyone will have the same learning outcomes but a few will be highlighted.

The Associate Deans are available to work with departments, chairs, or individual faculty.

Pre-tenure faculty review –The Dean discussed the annual pre-tenure faculty review process. It is beneficial for faculty to receive honest feedback during this process. The Dean is available to meet one-on-one with chairs to discuss ways to communicate negative feedback. She highlighted the importance behind constructive conversations, issues of collegiality, and the expectations for the chairs letter of recommendation. The following comments were made.

- Dr. Bayne noticed that the chair's letter of evaluation is sent to both the Dean and SVPAA. He did not recall that this was past practice. He asked if the Dean recommends the chair's letter be sent to her first for suggestions on revisions or additions to the evaluation. The Dean's office could then forward the final copy of the chairs' letters to the SVPAA's Office.
- The Dean commented that at times chairs may use language that focuses on a personal rather than professional situation or is have a problem offering negative but appropriate and important feedback. Negative feedback should be respectful but frank and rigorous. It is important to draft a letter and share it with the candidate. This gives the candidate an opportunity to discuss the feedback and an opportunity for the chair to make fair revisions when crafting the final version. We build a consensus in the department about a candidate's progress, because when the colleague comes up for tenure the department leadership may have changed. It is important to be supportive, fair, honest, and transparent.
- Dr. Boryczka shared that the Politics Department has a process requiring the pre-tenure faculty to get materials to appropriate faculty timely, so there is sufficient time for discussion. What is a good response when deadlines are not met? She also asked if the department wanted to construct a reflection on a colleague's collegiality, what are some constructive ways to handle this type of communication and should this be reflected under service?
- Dr. Im commented that we want to make sure it is about working situations and professional responsibilities, comporment, and outcomes.
- The Dean added that in the area of teaching, the focus related to collegiality may be whether the colleague is someone who participates in discussions about courses and is interested in developing new courses for the curriculum as articulated in the job ad and hiring process, willingness to teach their share of core/required courses, and similar kinds of contributions to the teaching culture of the department and university. As for scholarship, is interest expressed in colleagues' scholarship? Engaging with students outside of the classroom to develop their scholarship? The department should come up with some definitions and examples of what constitutes collegial behavior in each of the areas.
- The Dean noted that it's important to reasonable expectations; chairs should discuss a developmental timeline with pre-tenure faculty to help them map out areas of growth at different stages of their career.

- Dr. Gudelunas recommended conversation around the culture at Fairfield, explaining and helping them understand collegial culture at the University.
- The Dean suggested operationalizing collegiality in ways that map to hiring conversations, mid-career mentoring and expectations, and those for senior faculty. This helps pre-tenure faculty understand the importance of engagement with students and colleagues beyond the walls of the classroom and their disciplines. The Dean has these conversations in hiring interviews.
- Dr. Primavera commented that she finds importance in having pre-tenure faculty become familiar with the department before engaging in university committees. The Dean agrees that this is a developmental process. Chair letters could focus on the stages and expectations set within these stages.
- The Dean's concern is that pre-tenure faculty are receiving information that is not necessarily correct in terms of what they need to achieve for tenure and promotion. She engages in pre-tenure discussions annually to mentor and share important steps and to listen to concerns and/or misunderstandings.
- Dr. Nantz commented that while mentoring faculty, they may feel that the advice offered is based on the individual preference of the faculty mentor. She suggested a segment at the chairs retreat to help with handling these types of situations and discussions in terms of dealing with inappropriate messaging to junior colleagues.
- Dr. Boryczka suggested a topic around difficult personalities at the chairs' retreat.
- Dr. Gudelunas asked if candidates going up for tenure should send a memo to the Dean with a list of professional external reviewers. The Dean confirmed and added that chairs should view this list in advance to advise their colleagues relative to their suggestions for external reviewers. The Dean reaches out to chairs to obtain their agreement on the list as part of the formal process. It would be better if the chair had already reviewed, and adjusted if necessary, this list.
- We urge candidates to submit their materials as early as possible, giving external reviewers more time to review their materials.
- If the Chair has concerns about faculty applying, particularly in the 5th year, they should let the Dean know. She has discussions with faculty when they are not ready to go up for tenure. It does not look good for the College if colleagues go up for tenure before they are not ready.
- Dr. Boryczka asked if there were any red flags around R&T, as chairs mentor colleagues through the process. We may want to think about certain areas more heavily. The Dean commented that her recommendations to pre-tenure faculty ("tip sheet" was shared with chairs) is revised annually based on previous year's decisions if additional clarification or advice might be useful.
- The Dean commented that in the area of scholarship, if a book is not peer reviewed or is not actually published by the time of submitting the dossier, it may not count. Such an outcome cannot stand alone without a complement of articles, for example. There should be a focus on developing a complement of accomplishments rather than putting all eggs in one basket. In area of service, are they demonstrating institutional and department citizenship as well as engagement with the broader university and their profession? (we expect incremental demonstration of these things). When focusing on quality of professional collegiality, you certainly can document lateness or absence from meetings, not meeting department deadlines, failure to keep adequate office hours for students, any demonstration of disrespect to colleagues and/or students. However, faculty expressing

reasoned critiques of department operations, disagreeing with department policy or decisions, suggestions to improve/change curriculum, etc. should not be considered non-collegial, as these are behaviors related to the professional responsibilities of faculty, can be expected when a diverse group is working together, with differences of opinion being expected, and this should be clearly tied to the goal of creating optimal student experiences and learning, transparent and supportive departments, etc.

- When reviewing promotion cases, lack of leadership and major gaps in scholarship seem to be problematic from the perspective of the R&T committee.
- Dr. Petrino mentioned that the first place to discuss shortfalls would be during the annual review process. How do we get everyone on the same page in terms of collegiality, since colleagues have different views? The Dean again suggested beginning a conversation in departments around professional collegiality (not focusing on the person's personality or friendliness). Someone bringing concerns in an open and respectful way is collegial. Folks engaging in bullying and intimidation are not being collegial and people who dominate the department culture in a non-civil way are not collegial. It's about identifying behaviors (not personalizing).

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.