Faculty Members Present: Professors Bhattacharya, Boquet, Epstein, Lane, McDermott, Rakowitz (General Faculty Secretary), Smith, Steffen, Yarrington, Rusu (Executive Secretary), Strauss (Chair); Weiss
Administrators Present: SVPAA Lynn Babington; Deans Berdanier, Gibson, Hannafin
Student Observer: None
Regrets: Professors Behre, Crawford, Downie, Klug, Kris, Preli; Deans Kazer, Williams
Guests: Dallavalle (7c), Scheraga (7b)
Observers: Bayne, Davidson, Porter

Reconvened from recessed meeting of May 2, 2016

7. New Business

Motion: [Rakowitz/Lane]: to postpone continuing discussion of Core until after discussion of Item 7c.

Motion passed: 13 - 0 - 0


Prof. Dallavalle provided an overview of the self-study process and goals: AJCU has invited all 28 Jesuit schools in US to undergo an affirmation exercise. Fairfield is one of first of the 28 schools to go through this affirmation process. The process involves responding to questions about what we are doing in terms of mission and what we will be doing going forward to keep the mission and identity alive. The report was written by a series of committees focused on the 7 chapters in the guidelines. Each committee was comprised of 5-7 people who met for several weeks to draft texts.

The report identifies 3 top priorities (also printed in the text): 1) Hiring for mission and recruiting for diversity; 2) Mission is visible in academics; and 3) Our service efforts are coordinated and enmeshed in mission.

Open session for faculty, students and administrators were held to share information and gather input on the report. Academic Council is the last stop on the tour for feedback. There was also opportunity to comment on draft (posted on the university website). After today, the committee will go to the Board of Trustees in June. Following our report, we’ll be visited by an external team (members of 4 AJCU schools), who will provide comments on our report. The ultimate goal is to have our school affirmed by the Society of Jesus. We need to communicate to the AJCU that we are serious about continuing as a Catholic, Jesuit institution.

Prof. Dallavalle invited questions and comments.

Prof. Rakowitz asked about connections between the second priority (mission visible in academics) and a common intellectual experience, with our discussion of the Core.

Prof. Dallavalle noted that it’s not clear that the Core is about the humanistic tradition.
Prof. Epstein said that clarifying the intellectual coherence of the Core is part of what they are looking for. You can also connect parts of it to Jesuit pedagogical goals.

Prof. Dallavalle said that the Jesuit intellectual tradition is not the same thing as Catholic tradition. There is a big story that we are in dialogue with.

Prof. Epstein asked if this is something that all AJCUs were asked to do. [Correct.] And it’s an affirmation? Are some schools going to choose not to affirm?

Prof. Dallavalle replied that it’s unlikely. AJCU is saying they want to know we are in. There are some schools that are more out front than others. It is okay that different schools have different profiles when it comes to mission. For example, we don’t have a graduate program in Catholic Theology. It’s fine—they want us to tell them who we are and what will work for us going forward.

Prof. Lane noted one point that needs to be reinforced: The Jesuits have put out the call for them to put the stamp on it. We want this stamp and not someone else’s.

Prov. Babington agreed: the impetus for the AJCU affirmation process is that the Jesuits would like to be in control of affirming their universities, not some other Catholic group.

Prof. Strauss thanked Prof Dallavalle, who then left.

a. Proposal for Core Curriculum Revision (continued from 5/2/16 meeting)

Continued discussion of informational questions.

Prof. Steffen asked Prof. Epstein to talk about the committee’s interactions with EPC, in terms of funding this proposal, as the minutes are sparse.

Prof. Epstein explained that the minutes are sparse because the committee didn’t send a full proposal to EPC. They told EPC that many elements of implementation (and thus resources) are dependent on the final details. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) in Tier 1 and integration in Tier 2 are most resource-heavy. Details of these need to be refined before resources are identified. Need to consult with others on this. With support of provost, we can have working groups this summer to identify what the resource needs would be. Then, we can return to EPC with work from the working groups with more precise identification of resource needs.

Prof. Yarrington asked if there will be efforts made to get more consensus on the proposal. It was a close vote in UCC (8-7).

Prof. Epstein explained that they have worked to get as many departments on board as possible. When the proposal first went to UCC and received alterations, and then came to AC, I pointed out that the changes that had been made were not made in consultation with those who brought the proposal. So, when AC voted to remand it to UCC to consider concerns of those who brought the proposal, we came back to UCC with a memo saying we’re changing it with the concerns of UCC in mind (for example, the AP credit proposal). The other main issue was the distribution of humanities requirements in Tier 1. The memo that came back to UCC explaining why the changes didn’t work for us. What we said in the memo is that we are open to other ways of achieving the Humanities requirement, including other options, and are willing to discuss them. But, at UCC, they proceeded with a vote on the first one [original] proposal, and it passed 8-7. There might have been more support had we gone to other proposals.
Prof. Yarrington responded that because we’re making this massive changes in the Core, it’s troubling to have the vote that close. I would have liked the vote to be stronger. Maybe we need to have some deep conversations about the problematic elements.

Prod. Epstein explained: I think the problem is how the vote was presented to the committee. All I could do was to follow the process. As for the courses in Tier 1, the departments would identify the courses that would be part of the Core in their area.

Prof. Boquet said: I’ve been wondering what it is that we as a body are being asked to do and it seems like taking the UCC conversation as a map, what this body did with the UCC input was to return that first version of the proposal and say, take this back, look at it again, and then we want to see it again. A model for us in working with this document is also to not re-litigate what’s in there but instead ask: Has it gone through the governance steps? Have the essential questions been asked? Has sufficient input and response been received to take it to the GF? I just want some sense of what we are doing here with the material. Do we have the information we need to move it to GF for discussion?

Prof. Lane responded: I don’t think we have. We don’t know the exact number of courses, their names, the resource requirements. We’re asked to push forward to GF a document that is not finished. If you came to us with a minor program with this level of detail, it would not pass. It doesn’t have the level of detail we need.

Prov. Babington said: If you developed every course and every option and presented that, the time and energy and work would be lost if it’s not passed. The idea is to pass a basic structure and then spend time with developing the specific courses.

Prof. Lane replied: But I don’t think we have a structure. Has the English department agreed to this particular project [i.e., WAC]?

Prov. Babington: Writing across the curriculum is included in all of the tier one humanities courses.

Prof. Lane asked: Who is going to train the historians how to do WAC? Right now I have bare bones and it’s not enough for me to go forward.

Prof. Epstein explained that we do want to take this to EPC before GF (ideally), but the routing is UCC, AC, GF. EPC isn’t a contingency to go to GF. I’d like to go with more detail to EPC, but we need approval from AC to proceed on.

Prof. Davidson proposed that the current proposal might not have taken other factors into account or satisfied what we want in a core. First, it’s a dramatic reduction, excessive given where we are right now. I question the premise of bringing a universal core to all students. Professional schools could receive accreditation requirements that will change their core. We’re going to end up with a core with excessive reduction and lapse of universal core down the line. Second, the contentiousness of the core means that it does not have the broad agreement that’s been depicted. Many don’t agree with 45-credit core. The Core would be a nightmare because it requires a top-down allotment of a number of core slots. Third, there is insufficient consideration of how this proposal will impact study abroad. Departments might eliminate credit for study abroad. Students would be disincentivized to study abroad. This could lead to problems of housing and loss of prestige to the university for lack of a robust study abroad program. All these things considered, this proposal needs a little bit more time to mature. Maybe another year would not be out of the question.
Prof. Epstein responded that he does not understand the argument being made about how the Core proposal will impact study abroad.

Prof. Davidson explained that students will be disincentivized to study abroad.

Prof. Epstein responded that he doesn’t think the Core proposal poses a threat to study abroad. It’s not come up in the past 2 years. I’ve presented to all of the schools and departments, and I think there would be broad support among the GF for most of this. We conceded with transfer and AP credits. With a 15-course Core, students will have more chance for electives. It will offer more flexibility and freedom. We have an exceptionally large Core, even for other Jesuit universities. We are not aligned with other schools in our profile. There is also going to be pressure for exemptions. It’s better to define now what we see as the essentials of a Fairfield Jesuit education. Then, you can defend the inclusion of particular areas down the road. Without doing this, you are left with a Core that only applies to one of the schools and leaves them at a disadvantage to choose electives, particularly students in the CAS.

Prof. Davidson said that the universal Core is a stop-gap at this juncture.

Prof. Epstein said that that is the opposite of my intention. The goal is to identify what we think of as our Core curriculum.

Prof. Bayne noted that the Journal of Record requires EPC review. It also requires that Academic Council proposals go to EPC first. So, we’re out of order.

Prof. Epstein replied that he did go to EPC, and that the notes are included in the packet.

Prof. Bayne said that the EPC didn’t receive a full proposal and so they could not fully review it.

Prof. Epstein said he was explicit when he went to EPC that he’d return to EPC with greater detail in the fall.

Prof. Bayne said that if AC did something here, and you went back to EPC in the Fall, then AC would have to revisit it.

Prof. Epstein said that he’s willing to have AC review it again.

Prof. Rakowitz noted: Given the process that it has gone through, this proposal deserves an up or down vote from this [Academic Council] body. Given the issues presented, it’s possible to have motions that have contingencies built in. We should also think about other language that relates to resources in the proposal.

Motion [Boquet]: to grant speaking privileges to professor Porter.

Motion passed: 11-0-2

Prof. Porter: Over the last several years, I have privately asked questions of students across campus about their course selection: what they would take if there was no Core at all. Students generally responded that they would take more courses in their major. The Core helps students save them from themselves—a life down the road that they have not yet wrapped their mind around. Students won’t voluntarily take art or literature courses unless they are required to do so. They don’t see the value. These disciplines help them to get out of their worlds and understand how others experience being human. We need to require our graduates to think intelligently about art. Alumni from all majors come back and tell us, “I had no idea how much that art history class would affect me.” The argument that they’ll have more room in their schedules to
take electives is unfounded. I encourage you to get into the nitty gritty with this proposal in front of you. We need to make sure the students get a good product. Right now, it’s not a good product.

Prof. Steffen asked if Prof. Epstein is interested in obtaining some support for the summer workshops to flesh out the details of the proposal.

Prof. Epstein replied that, as he understands it, the resources for summer work are already committed.

Prov. Babington confirmed: I have committed resources in next year’s budget and shared this information during the last meeting; it’s in the minutes.

Prof. Lane said that what’s on the table is out of order [question of summer resources]. I don’t know how we can think about voting on this. I can’t recommend sending this to the GF to vote on.

Prof. Yarrington asked, let’s say we wait until September, after summer work, and the proposal comes back to EPC and then AC; would we lose anything with this procedure?

Prof. Epstein said he’s willing to suspend this request and return to EPC to have that portion in place when he goes to GF. We can go back to EPC in Fall and return to AC before proceeding on to GF. I don’t think we’re obligated to return to UCC.

Prof. Yarrington said she doesn’t see us losing anything by doing this.

Prof. Epstein responded that we have concern about losing momentum, but I wouldn’t object to it. Resources are important.

Prof. Yarrington said she wants us to feel more positive as a body, and people can be more on board.

Prof. Rakowitz shared that EPC would be meeting Sept. 22, with AC meeting Oct. 3. GF could meet later in Oct. So, this proposal might not slow us down anyway.

Prov. Babington said if we leave here with the current suggestion on the table, and people spend the entire summer working on this, and then goes to AC and is rejected, that’s a lot work that could be wasted.

Prof. Boquet said we can come up with a motion that suggests the kind of action AC takes going forward.

**Motion [Boquet/second]:** The Academic Council advises the Director of the Core to return to EPC with a more specific proposal regarding resource needs and to bring that revised curriculum proposal with specifications to the Academic Council in Fall 2016.

**Motion passed: 11-0-2**

Prof. Strauss invites Prof. Scheraga to the meeting.

**b. Committee on Conference with the Board of Trustees: Report on March meeting, preparation for June meeting**

Prof. Scheraga stated that he is here to get direction from AC in terms of our conversation with the Board of Trustees, issues we want to raise with the Board.
Prof. Lane reminded Prof. Scheraga that the Committee has a letter that lays out the issues that you want to continue to address. We want to think about laying out an agenda now for next year. One of the issues is how we move forward in terms of shared governance, especially as reflected by your report regarding budget.

Prov. Babington said that the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board agreed that we want to talk about academics (rather than things that are not academics). There is a budget committee of the Board to talk about the budget. Seems that this issue should be discussed by those on the Board Budget Committee. There must be some academic issues to discuss, such as resource issues.

Prof. Scheraga noted that there are some things that you can’t disentangle.

Prov. Babington said you can talk about academic issues that require resources, but the budget seems outside the scope of this particular committee. It would be best to engage them with what we do with our students academically.

Prof. Epstein said: on the other hand, we have some clear graphic representations of the percentage of the budget that is directed to academics. This is important to draw attention to the Board. What percentage of the operating budget is directed to the core academic mission?

Prof. McDermott added that the increase in the use of non-tenure track lines to administer programs is problematic.

Prof. Bhattacharya explained that we just went through a search and saw a huge difference in the quality of the applicants; we are below market rate and this had a huge impact on the market pool. This is an academic question when getting quality faculty on board.

Prof. Weiss said that the proposed Core curriculum says that full time faculty need to teach in the Core. We have a heavy reliance on adjuncts—can we afford this?

Prof. Steffen said we have to be very aware of the high cost of living in this area when we do searches. This creates challenges with young families. One of the few ways we have had of leveraging good faculty is our benefits package. It’s nothing now like it was before. We need to address this across the interaction with the board. We are going to lose faculty who are here and have a harder time getting good faculty.

Prof. Boquet raised concern about the delimiting of the questions about the budget to the Academic Affairs committee. The Handbook charge to the Committee on Conference includes, “to confer, individually or collectively, with the Board of Trustees or any committee of the Board…” It doesn’t say that it meets largely with the Academic Affairs subcommittee. Now it’s becoming common understanding, but it’s not the charge of the committee as written in the Handbook. I have questions about the Board development. I’m really interested in how people are selected, what types of development Board members go through. Would love to hear the committee engage with the Board on these things. We should get more information about this.

Prof. Scheraga noted that Prof. Boquet’s recollection about the Board is correct.

Prof. Hannafin added that we should include staff in our discussions of salary.

Prof. Lane said that one of the issues with the Core is that it should represent the best of what we have, which is our full time faculty. We can’t keep doing this on the cheap.
Prof. Bhattacharya said in order to get excellence, you need to put in resources. So, I think it’s an academic question of excellence.

Prof. Scheraga said he will write up this substantial list to the committee. He also clarified that his report on the budget was specific to the budget.

Prof. Lane noted that committee was put together because of a NEASC report.

Prof. Scheraga said I don’t want my comments to be read as a blanket condemning of governance.

Prof. Rakowitz said the executive committee of the board has asked to meet with some faculty about where things are going. We are setting something up for next week. I’m not sure where we’re going to be in June with these issues.

Prof. Strauss noted that the comments were broad enough that they’re not just about the MOU.

Prof. Rakowitz noted that something more specific might arise next week after discussion.

Prov. Babington said that some of these things might be worth bringing up when the FSC meets with the board (e.g., question of human capital). Those messages need to be heard more than once. Even the Core revision issue.

Prof. Epstein said that this [conversation] is the AC giving guidance to the Committee on Conference. But AC is not the only place where suggestions can come from. We could say if more specific topics come up, we could contact Prof. Scheraga.

Prof. Scheraga: Of course.

Prof. Strauss reminded the Council that we do have an ongoing opportunity to present feedback to Prof. Lane as our liaison.

Prof. Rakowitz said that the group meeting with the board will focus on more than just the terms of the MOU.

Prof. Bhattacharya said a question that comes up with prospective faculty is: What is the health benefit offered to FU? How can I explain the 70/30 contribution?

Prof. Epstein noted that we’re still talking with the administration.

Prov. Babington asked if we could prioritize a couple of the suggested topics, since we can’t talk about all of them.

Prof. Scheraga thanked the Council and left.

The Council agreed to defer agenda item 6a until a future meeting [no official vote taken].

Prof. Rakowitz thanked Profs. Rusu and Strauss for serving on the Executive Committee.

Motion to Adjourn 3:24 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Smith