

2013-14 FACULTY SENATE
GRADUATES STUDIES POLICIES COMMITTEE
MINUTES
04 March 2014
Approved 4/1/14

Members Present: Ed Barakatt, Ann Blanton, Julian Heather, Sheri Hembree, Jonathan Kaplan, Christine Miller, Mary Reddick, Kenneth Sprott, Lori May

Members Absent: Geni Cowan, Tracy Hamilton, Rob Wassmer

Guests:

1. **Call to order:** Called to order at approximately 9 a.m.
2. **Minutes of 18 February, 2014:** approved.
3. **Information Items:** There were no information items.
4. **Report from Dean of Graduate Studies:**

Spring 2014 enrollment was over target by about 3%, and credential new enrollment was down for the second year. But the new graduate admits were up from last year. However, overall graduate admissions are down.

Fall 2014 admissions closed on March 1 and it appears that we have approximately 200 fewer applicants this year than last year. We began admitting graduate students a few weeks ago for those programs who have returned their ranked admissions lists.

The automation project has been delayed a bit because the IRT team has been trying to finalize a project for Financial Aid. The Grad Admissions team will meet next week with the IRT team to readjust the timelines, but we are still hopeful for a full launch on October 1 for Fall 2015 admissions.

5. **Report from Statewide Senator Chris Miller:** No report at this time.
6. **New Business:** No new business.
7. **Other Business:** GWAR

Ed: Why don't we just all have to have a writing intensive?

Mary: Because of resources.

Ed: We're creating quite an administrative process. We're going to throw students through the process without any instructions at all, and what we're trying to get them to do is learn to write both in the discipline and in general. What we're trying to do is get them to learn to write in general and learn to write in the major. If we had a class, then we do both. Keep the 2-step process with a class

Mary; How does that address both types of writing?

Ed: The department has to teach both. Even for people who are capable of coming in and having the GVAR waived, they can still learn to write in the discipline. Even if they start out good and they take a writing intensive course, they're just going to get better.

Ken: The problem when we went through the process last time is the programs who said they just don't have the room to add another course.

Ed: We mentioned physical therapy as being a program that didn't want the GVAR. What we did was, instead of adding a class, we put writing intensive in one of the classes we already had, so we buffed it up and we didn't have to go through our accrediting body.

Ken: That's what we did too. A one-unit class, we turned into a two-unit course, turned an intro class into a writing class. We took the unit we added from the thesis course, because we taught them to write in the intro class. But when my program took it to our College of Engineering council, everyone else said, "No, that's too much work."

Sheri: We took teaching writing very seriously, so we gave up content for it. We would love to be able to create a new course, we were perfectly willing to do the job, but our courses are packed full, so we had to give up something.

Chris: We don't teach writing, we just inform that these are the standards you'll be judged by, and you have to meet them. We have a writing sample and if they don't do well, they don't come in.

Sheri: We'd love to have another class, but we just did what we had to do.

Ed: if they write something, and you edit it and give it back, isn't that assessment?

Sheri; We don't have a writing sample. It seems to me that I'd love to have an adjunct. Most of our students don't need the help, but we could use a bridge, a step-up, and give them a foundation.

Julian: Sentence construction foundation work? That's English 85. Used for English language learners. We have the course, it's just not very well publicized.

Chris: We love the foreign students, but they get a lot of help with the writing sample, so when they get here, they're not what the writing sample represented them to be, so they need help.

Julian: Those are the students who need the 85. It's a class that a TA could teach, so it's a cheap unit.

Mary: Could the English department make a proposal that they could create this low-level, inexpensive course? Could we propose that?

Chris: The prior provost would have said no.

Mary: But grad admissions are dropping and it's a new day.

Chris: But it seems that we can't support these resources still. It doesn't hurt to ask.

Julian: But these people are paying top dollar, foreign students are, and we need to educate them. Make the resources available.

Mary: If we had a proposal for this course, could we attach it to the policy and say if you haven't achieved the GVAR, this is what we do?

Ed: Could they advance to candidacy after talking this course?

Julian: No, the focus would be too narrow.

Ed: Then after they take the course, they have to do another writing sample and get that evaluated.

Julian: When I proposed the one-unit tutorial before, it was greeted unkindly.

Sheri: Whatever the argument is to support this course, it would include multi-lingual learners, but it would be for all of our students who need help writing.

Mary: The assumption is that if you're in grad school, you know how to write.

Ken: If you're going to get a bachelor's degree, and you're going to get a masters now, why would you not be able to write?

Julian: The standard for meeting the writing requirement at the undergrad level is a C- .

Ken: Why can't we just use grades as a measure of student achievement? But I asked someone this and they said grades have too much pressure on them.

Julian: And grades don't reflect actual learning.

Chris: The problem is the part-timers, adjuncts who don't want to hold students to a line.

Ken: We had an adjunct called two-semester Ester, because it took 2 semesters to pass the class.

Sheri: I do feel my students are better writers when they're done.

Ken: When times are tight, we can use writing as a screen to keep enrollment down, but when we need to expand, we need to change and grow.

Mary: We asked in a workshop how many people know a student who would read a paper book from the beginning to the end, and no one raised their hand.

This electronic communication is really changing reading and writing.

Apostrophes are gone, no one capitalizes anymore. That conversation should happen on campus and we should devote resources to it. We're looking at a social media class to advise students what they should and should not post. The role of electronic media in the 21st century university and what it means to writing. These e-mails just drive me crazy.

Jonathan: But the content of what we're reading reflects how we used to communicate.

Mary: Affordable learning solutions. Publishers show how you buy a text electronically, and these allow dynamic multimedia and customization by the students who can insert their comments. Students aren't reading the old texts that have a set form. These interactive texts allow a remixing of everything.

Ken: The problem is we're taking our academic communication and turning it into what they see on media. Academic writing has to be different. It has to be accurate.

Jonathan: Academic writing is different because it's for a known, small audience.

Mary: We have students who could care less about that kind of writing because they have no intent of being in academia.

Jonathan: But then you have a small set of people who might be writing documents, policy.

Ken: But the issue is our students writing master's level writing in the discipline.

Mary: These are the makings of the argument of why we need the resources to teach the structure of the written language.

Ed: So going back to our proposal, are we creating the structure to address these issues?

Chris: I think it needs to be one of the pieces. We're asking programs to come up with this process. If a department says that their students are going to take this class, then the class has to be there.

Ed: Then they're making a strategic decision that if funding dries up, then it may come back on them.

Chris: We can present a process to WASC as a macro view of what everyone is doing.

Sheri: Any policy we provide is going to require something in the way of resources. Here's the way of meeting WASC requirements, are we onboard or not?

Ed: Maybe that's what can be used to generate these resources. You folks have to meet these criteria.

Julian: The earliest drafts came out of the reading and writing committee and they asked for resources.

Sheri: Here are some choices but we gotta have something

Ed: If we wanted to inject the course into this policy, that would be an intermediary step between one and two.

Julian: As I'm listening to this, I'm thinking that we've created this world where we basically require programs to take more responsibility in some form. We could say here are two ideas, which way do you want to go? Do you want to screen or just do the GWI course? We're trying to make decisions for something like 80 different programs.

Ed: This is to account for everyone. The people who want an intensive writing course, they're done. For those who don't want to have the course, they have another avenue for people who don't pass the writing sample and can get help.

Julian: People who've created a GWI course can go out and talk to other programs about how they've added learning outcomes and a couple of things to an existing course.

Jonathan: Every department could identify their class that every student is going to take that has a paper in it as well as a rubric that requires the students to write in an academic format and discipline specific writing. Every department

identifies a class. Whatever decision we put forth is going to have winners and losers. And it cannot be approved by someone outside the department. It has to be within the department. Is the class identified in which the students are going to learn about writing?

Ken: It's going to be more difficult for some than others but we have a mandate from the chancellor's office. We still have this requirement that the culminating experience has to include that.

Jonathan: What's currently there for the GWIs is a very specific requirement. We could loosen the reins so each department can adapt and decide some sort of paper or portfolio of writing assignments that can be assessed by someone in the departments, a committee.

Ed: We're asking that writing should demonstrate skill levels, and various things. You just said that each program can generate a course to do that. Right now there's no real mechanism by which this can be done. But if a course is identified and a paper has to be generated in that course, and these are the standards that have to be met, and if a program has to go through that process, then it's a writing intensive course.

Jonathan: Whether the instructor of record assesses it or if a department decides it's a committee that assesses it, it's up to the department.

Sheri: So would we check with programs before we do this?

Mary: There's lots of departments that probably have very obscure methods to do the cumulative experience. Maybe Chevelle or someone from this committee should go to one of the grad meetings to ask for input.

Julian: The proposed changes at the graduate level hasn't made it out of the reading and writing committee, so a deadline is a long way off.

Sheri: it will be relatively explosive.

Julian: When whoever goes to the meeting, start the discussion with 'Here's how we've listened to you, we're talking about getting rid of these things because they're not meeting your needs, and this is how we think we can meet your needs.' And list the options.

Mary: Something they can take back to their departments that doesn't seem heavy or intrusive.

Meeting adjourned 9:50.