

PRESIDENT'S COLLEGE-WIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PLANNING

Minutes of the April 4, 2011 meeting

Location: MH-106

Present: James Cullen, William Cunningham Neal DeChillo, Mark Fregeau (Chair), Arlene Greenstein, Kristen Kuehnle, Jeramie Silveira, Keith Ratner, Nancy Schultz, Michele Sweeney

Guests: Judi Cook (Chair, Communications), Joe Kasprzyk (Chair, Computer Science), Jeannette Lindholm (English), Steve Matchak (Chair, Geography)

Mark convened the meeting at 12:30.

Voting on the minutes from March 28 will be deferred until the next meeting.

Mark announced NEASC wants to meet with us. The possible meeting time is 4:30 on Tuesday, April 5. Our next meeting is Monday, April 11. One block of time is available on Thursday afternoons that may be used for future meetings.

Communications

Neal reviewed the spreadsheet he had populated for the Communications Department. It shows strong internal demand, with 320 students enrolled. New concentrations have been added. The department needs faculty offices, updated labs, and more faculty.

J Cook reported that new computers have been purchased and labs and software updated.

A committee member raised a question about ways to accommodate more students in Communications classes. J. Cook reported that the department was exploring raising caps to 25 in non-writing intensive courses.

A committee member asked about experiential learning. J Cook explained that the department pairs advertising and marketing students with small businesses, and reports it is very successful. Experiential learning allows students direct experience in working with businesses. A committee member asked about institutional support, and J Cook reported that they had prepared for sale a manual (based on an idea from Geography) that they were selling to make money—but are now being told the money can't roll over and fund departmental initiatives.

Students in the department are active in groups: Victus, and others, and participate in national competitions. Communications advises the *Log*, and J. Cook reports that that WMWM has reached out to Communications.

A committee member asked about the connections between the Journalism program in Communications and Professional Writing in English. J Cook reported that they are separate programs, but there is some overlap. N Schultz (English) explained that the programs started out quite different, but with the boundaries of both of these fields dissolving into new media, the differences are now less obvious. Communications is anchored in the “practical arts” field with emphasis on training for the workplace.

The interdisciplinary of Communications was emphasized, and students have been taking courses in other areas such as theatre. There is a 35:1 student/faculty ratio in the department. J Cook, the department chair, has 70 advisees.

The Communication Labs are oversubscribed. Students can't work independently in the labs because they are overscheduled with classes. The labs only seat 15 students, and therefore classes scheduled there are capped lower than might be necessary if the classes were in a regular classroom. The department is willing to raise caps in their courses. Using labs for classrooms instead of for student work time hinders the program. Communications would like control over scheduling the labs.

J Cook reports that the field of journalism is undergoing rapid change. Students need to write, upload video and have other skills. A faculty member attended a conference last year to help keep the multimedia curriculum up to date.

They need cameras. While we do have a TV studio on campus, the equipment is analog—but with updating—a modern studio could benefit the whole campus.

The new concentration of Media Studies was created for students who want to go to graduate school. Students are encouraged to choose a track within the major.

There are nine full-time faculty and 11 part-time faculty, and the department is in violation of the contractual 15% rule.

Computer Science

Neal reviewed the spreadsheet he had populated for the Computer Science Department. There are 9 full-time faculty 9 part-time faculty in the department. This department is in violation of the contractual 15% rule. The department generated 5600 credit hours. They have staffing and space needs.

Currently, two new minors are pending in governance.

In response to a committee member's question, J Kasprzyk explained the difference between a BS in Information Technology and the Management Information Systems minor in the Business School. There are three areas in the Computer Science Department.

1. The theoretical computer science major, which is accredited, and created in 1977.
2. Computer Literacy, which is devoted to a couple of courses if students need to fulfill the requirement. This is historically part of the college's basic skills which began in the early 1980s. The department is charged with keeping this program up to date.
3. Information Technology, which centers on the day to day use of technology in the business world, and this a dynamic and changing area

A committee member asked who administers the Computer Literacy exam and if the department updates the test based on the pass rate. The Provost's office selected the test, and went with an exam that the department did not recommend. They are trying to get it changed, but J Kasprzyk mentioned it is difficult to get information about it from the administration.

A committee member asked about the 70% of classes taught by part time faculty. J Kasprzyk replied that the Computer Literacy courses are not that difficult to teach, and are adequately staffed by adjuncts if they teach well and understand the technology. A faculty member currently has release time to coordinate the program. Computer Science needs more faculty; it would be good to have an information technologist.

The department offers distribution electives, and Q and W courses.

Their biggest need is for more electrical outlets. With more places to plug in, courses could be taught outside labs, freeing up the labs for student work with specialized software. (Nancy's note: this is a similar concern to what we heard from Communications.) An upgrade of electrical services to the room would mean that the caps could go up. With enough electrical outlets, section size could be increased and labs freed up. There could be as many as 8 fewer sections of some courses. Eureka: efficiency!

A committee member asked about machines and software. The Computer Science program is focused on software development tools—but they use open source materials. The licensing is about \$500 for Oracle and \$700 for Microsoft, but much of what they use is free. The department negotiates for software deals with the various vendors. Management info is about installing software, updating and upgrading hardware.

English Department

Neal reviewed the spreadsheet he had populated for the English Department.

The English Department supports the university's mission and satisfies all kinds of internal demand. He noted that recent changes, including the elimination of the literature, dramatic literature, and writing concentrations, have been made.

A committee member asked about potential overlaps between Professional Writing and Journalism, asking what is the advantage of majoring in professional writing vs. communications? N . Schultz (English) explained that PW is an important subfield in English, which is humanities-based rather than centered in the "practical arts." J Lindholm added that the focus on language exposure in all the subfields is an enriching experience for English students, including professional writing. A committee member raised the question of whether or not it is confusing for students. The main difference is that Professional Writing is a BA program and Communications is a BS program. These programs offer very different kinds of experience with language. The methodology of the field of English is rooted in the humanities vs. social sciences training in Communications.

One committee member stated that students can enroll in Sports Movement Science from either an athletic training perspective or from a management or business perspective.

J Lindholm explained that essentially the two fields offer very different kinds of experiences with texts, with English centered on multiple opportunities to produce language.

A committee member asked what are the learning outcomes—are they different? N Schultz and J Lindholm replied that English training focuses on critical thinking skills. The field of English trains students to look at the world from multiple perspectives. At the center is a rich experience in language and literature.

The recent significant overhaul of the major was discussed. Enrollment numbers for BA are complicated by the fact that a large number of elementary and early childhood education students choose English as their second major.

A committee member asked about the dual degree, and an explanation was offered.

A committee member asked about the proposal in Criterion 7 for enhancing our staff—involving the creation of a new kind of position, and was very interested in the proposal.

N Schultz explained that the department brainstormed about visionary ideas for this section at the request of the provost.

The English Department is heavily involved in first-year initiatives and learning communities. The certificate program in ESL was discussed. It is a way for students to test the waters for master and a good feeder to the

masters program. Teachers can earn PDPs and additional compensation. Certificates are concentration areas that make students more marketable, in a job market where employers are looking for more flexible workers. There is a demand for ESL training in the public schools.

Geography Department

N DeChillo reviewed the spreadsheet he had populated for the Geography Department. There is good internal and external demand. There are 9 students in the BA track. 09/10 figure says they don't exceed the 15% rule, but S Matchak said they had.

The department has revised and updated their concentrations. They would like to begin a center for economic development and sustainability.

The Geography department is working with science areas to develop a joint environmental initiative, focusing on atmospheric studies and weather.

A committee member observed that for bio and chemistry—the BA numbers are low. He asked if Geography would be willing to consider eliminating the BA, and S Matchak replied that for a global subject like geography, the BA is really important. Language learning is essential to developing a global perspective.

A committee member asked about enrollment numbers, and what efforts the department is making to attract students. Geography is not taught in the public school—it's not well known as a discipline. S Matchak replied that the department is developing materials for recruiting and to increase visibility on campus. The department has joined with other Geography Departments in state-wide lobbying to put geography back into the Massachusetts frameworks. Tourism is a major industry in the state and the exposure in high school is very important. S Matchak described outreach to Honors program to create an Honors Geography course.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Schultz