

Academic Affairs meeting  
November 15, 2010  
11 a.m. – 12 noon  
Newcomb Hall Board Room

Minutes

Attending: Brandt Allen, Daniel Bluestone, Carolyn Callahan, Ted Chang, Mary Gibson, Ed Kitch, Stephen Patek, Michael Puri, Sarah Turner

Guest: Justin Thompson

### **1. Ivy Stacks Issues**

At the last Academic Affairs meeting, Daniel Bluestone raised concerns about the current inaccessibility of Ivy Stacks materials. Ed Kitch, a member of the Libraries Committee, researched the matter and reported that federal stimulus money became available for retrofitting Ivy Stacks to expand its capacity. Ivy Stacks in its present form is nearly full, so the University administration decided to go ahead. This required relocating the books and items in the stacks to a warehouse located in Richmond; the materials become unavailable for two years.

The University's point of view is that the materials are available via interlibrary loan; but members of the Academic Affairs Committee noted that many of these materials are University-specific. The question was raised whether these materials are really inaccessible, or whether, with stimulus dollars, we could retrieve them when necessary. Further questions were raised about the organization of the resources and the consequent ease and expense of retrieval. Ed said that if someone has an urgent need for a particular item, we should find out if it can be retrieved. He offered to ask Karin Wittenborg.

### **2. Provost's Office Update**

#### **Post-Tenure Review**

Justin Thompson of the Provost's Office reported on the issue of post-tenure review, saying that no progress has been made on that front. Provost Tim Garson brought it up at the last Executive Council meeting as a planned item by the Provost. Conversations are underway about massive numbers of retirements on the horizon and also about productivity. Post-tenure review looked like an area that the Provost should explore. The deans have met and looked at School policies. No official committee is working on this issue.

Carolyn Callahan said that at the last meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee issues were raised that should be considered if post-tenure review is taken up seriously. Justin would characterize this as an ongoing conversation. In some schools, for instance McIntire and Nursing, some sort of post-tenure review currently is in place. A discussion of integrating post-tenure review with an annual process ensued. In the Engineering School,

there is a push to have a scoring system which assigns a number to faculty productivity. Justin hasn't heard any talk about one system for all schools.

Carolyn said that some deans face an issue when they desire to use post-tenure review for ultimately dismissing someone and those procedures aren't clearly delineated at the University level.

## **Capstone**

Justin said that Milton has pulled together a committee to discuss the possibility of a University-wide capstone requirement. He has requested that each school that offers undergrad degrees appoint a representative to serve on the committee. They are tasked to discuss a process for proceeding with this option should the decision be made to adopt a University-wide commitment to a capstone. The committee would make recommendations to be approved by the Academic Affairs Committee and the Faculty Senate. Members of the committee noted the importance of considering cost.

Justin said that at the Academic Affairs Committee's last meeting, there was discussion on how this might work – one-on-one, or possibly a seminar where a group of students work on a capstone. Justin will send a list of committee members for inclusion in minutes.

[Members of the Capstone Project Committee are as follows:

Architecture: Earl Mark

BIS: Anne Marie Plunkett

Curry: Randy Robey

College:           Arts: Maurie McInnis  
                          Humanities Bruce Holsinger  
                          Social Sciences: Karen Parshall  
                          Natural sciences: Jim Galloway

Engineering: Kay Neeley

McIntire: Carl Zeithaml

Nursing: Emily Drake

Faculty Senate: Michael Puri  
                          Ted Chang

Library: Diane Walker

Provost's office: Milton Adams]

The impetus for this has come from a number of bodies over the years – the Rector, the Provost, groups of faculty.

Ed pointed out that any particular department could already proceed with this if they wanted to. The discussion is whether the Provost will require a capstone. Would it be a generalized requirement which the different schools would then interpret individually?

Justin said that Chapel Hill created an optional capstone; only a quarter of the students opted in. At Princeton, every student creates a capstone project.

Ed asked if we need to do a better job of making the case to the Rector and the public about what we actually do at the University.

Brandt Allen said the Law School has not been able to make a capstone requirement work. Michael Puri said that a capstone experience is in place for a distinguished major in A&S. Those who want to take part in this will have to take the initiative to keep GPA to 3.4, which is cutoff in College. Others might not qualify because of a lower GPA or the lack of a defined project.

### **3. Template for program closure process**

Carolyn said that as new initiatives have started, the faculty are realizing that other initiatives might not continue. How does a program get shut down? What are the processes and procedures? What is equitable treatment? We should make a set of recommendations for a program that is being considered to shut down, to protect the University and the faculty. Lately this just happens by attrition; we can't have a program because we don't have sufficient faculty. This is hard on the faculty still left. If we do come up with recommendations, what should we recommend?

Ted asked, if the administration decides to simply not fill vacancies as they occur, what can we do?

Ed thinks we might have a number of programs on the books that are effectively closed. There's a degree closure procedure that is the mirror image of the new degree procedure. It goes to the Academic Affairs Committee, to the Faculty Senate, to the Board of Visitors, and then to SCHEV. A dossier has to be built to "close" a degree program.

Justin said that SCHEV, every year or every other year, tracks the number of graduates in each of the University's programs. When a program fails to produce, SCHEV brings it to our attention; they ask us to tell them why, or explain. The University then goes to the department and asks them to document what is going on and the future of the program, which is then reported back to SCHEV.

Carolyn said that last year the Academic Affairs Committee was asked to approve closings, but it turned out that the faculty involved had not been informed. The Academic Affairs Committee is eager to avoid a recurrence.

Ed remembers the closing of the Department of Communications. It didn't mean that the faculty associated with that department were terminated; they were reassigned and continued doing what they had been doing.

Carolyn said that in some universities, when a program is closed, that is grounds for ending tenure; but that is not the case here.

Justin said that we have a number of programs that SCHEV has spotted with low productivity, which have continued based on University justification. For instance, we have a number of language programs where we don't have a large number of graduates, but we justify them with the number of students served.

Ed asked if we are considering having the committee create a template. Carolyn said that her only concern is that, before we get an action for closure, there be some process by which the people involved are notified and can give feedback. We don't want faculty saying to us, "We never knew." In a recent example, the Academic Affairs Committee thought this process had taken place internally within the school, but it had not. We would support faculty by creating a procedure that is fair. Our role should be to create a policy, not advocate for specific programs.

Daniel Bluestone said he would like to see the Faculty Senate play a role in resisting a move to monetize programs. He would like to see a conversation on this across the Grounds.

Sarah Turner said that the University should be engaging in programs that wouldn't be found at University of Phoenix. How do we hold that general principle without advocating for programs that are of low quality? That's a difficult line to draw in writing policy. We don't want to take away the prerogative of deans in this area. How can we help keep the University out of the business of monetizing every degree program but still have a process to allow programs to be closed on quality grounds? Carolyn asked where that conversation should occur.

Daniel said that the model we're working with seems to equate warm bodies with quality. There are certain things at the University we should be holding onto, just because we're a university. Justin said that the SCHEV process does acknowledge that, because one of their criteria involves the unique contribution of a program.

Ted Chang said that he is in a department that is very close to closing down; even if they had the option of complaining to the Faculty Senate, they wouldn't have done that. As people resigned and they weren't getting replacements, they went to one-and-a-half faculty. The dean suspended their graduate admissions and made himself the chair of the department. Most people didn't want to fight it; they just took their options and left.

Carolyn suggested that the Committee look at past closings and how they were implemented. It might be good to discuss what this university wants to preserve and what the faculty think it's important to preserve. We understand we can't spend money we don't have, but what do we believe in as a university? What are guiding principles we can establish about how decisions are made? What good advice can we offer to the President, the Provost, and the deans about this?

Brandt said that we could use our template for new program proposals to initiate a proposal for new degrees and for degree closures.

Michael suggested we make up a mission statement. When deans press back against programs, they want the programs to justify themselves. They need then to come up with a more humanistic argument, a self-justification. Maybe we could amplify that and endorse it. We don't want too much of an "us vs. them" mentality with deans. They need insight that is well-articulated; we have to meet them halfway. Michael likes the idea of advocating with the deans.

Dan offered to send committee members a link to a relevant article about English universities. [Here is the link:  
<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2010/mar/09/britain-the-disgrace-of-the-universities/>]

The meeting was adjourned at 12 noon.