

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
April 2, 2007

Jorge Nobo, chair, convened the Academic Affairs Committee at 3:30 pm in the Boswell Room of the Memorial Union. Members present were: Pat Munzer, David Pownell, Bill Roach, Steven Elisha, Patricia Renn-Scanlan, Shaun Schmidt, Caren Dick, and Loran Smith. Guests were: Dr. Ron Wasserstein and Dr. Bill Sparks and Dr. Roy Wohl of the HPEES Department.

Dr. Nobo introduced our newest committee member, Caren Dick, who is replacing Jane Carpenter on the committee as a representative of the School of Nursing.

Dr. Nobo said that, of the Academic Units from which he had received comments, most were favorably disposed toward most of the committee's recommendations. The School of Applied Studies, however, recommended that we eliminate the Physical Education University requirement. Dr. Nobo asked Pat Munzer to summarize the School's position which she did as follows:

1. Within the total structure of the academic program, what students are mandated to take as a university requirement should be limited to the most critical and essential of courses. Many courses on this campus might qualify as excellent and valuable, but that is not a sufficient argument for inclusion given that a student's program can only accommodate a limited number of university required courses.
2. PE 198 is a valuable course among many valuable courses offered at this university. Without a definition of what constitutes a university requirement, it is difficult to recommend PE 198 as a university requirement. It is easier for SAS to support courses that have inherent skill sets such as MA and EN which directly affect student success in many courses regardless of discipline. PE does not meet this criterion.
3. The ultimate question is whether PE 198 has content that rises to a level that justifies it as a university requirement. The absence of a definition of what constitutes a university requirement allows the decision to include PE 198 as a university requirement to be no more than a popular vote.

In response, Dr. Sparks said that the course is very important. It is a high quality course, constantly reviewed and updated. It parallels what is happening on campus now:

the Wellness Center and the faculty wellness program. Also, wellness is a big issue nationally. The essence of the course is to try to teach people to be good decision makers. Caren Dick added that many employers are requiring wellness programs because there are fewer sick days and to save money in health insurance.

Playing devil's advocate, Loran Smith said that with all the pressures to add things to the curriculum, this committee needs to separate what is "nice" from what is "essential." The question is: is PE 198 an essential part of a student's academic program when we have added transformational experience and perhaps soon to add a technology requirement? If we can't make that decision here, how are we going to be able to do it when we deal with the General Education requirements when we will be forced to do so?

Bill Roach acknowledged that many programs have accreditation requirements which limit the University's freedom to add requirements to the curriculum. Nobo argued that PE 198 is not the old PE; it is a signature course emphasizing major issues. Munzer replied that SAS doesn't see that the course ties in to any major program or courses while English and Math do. She emphasized that the State of Kansas says that Associate degrees should be 65 hours maximum but a majority of SAS degrees are at 70 hours or more. If the state mandates a cutback, it will have to be in courses not covered by accreditation requirements (University requirements and General Education.) Roy Wohl replied that an overwhelming majority of the students who took PE 198 saw it as a positive experience. The HPEES Department does think it is an essential course.

Dr. Wasserstein suggested that the Committee move on to other aspects of PE 198. It is obvious from the reports from the Academic Units that there is no overwhelming desire to make much of a change in PE 198. There does seem to be support to make PE 198 a graded course and perhaps creating some sort of separate lecture course. Students taking the course P/F does not seem to be a big problem. The data suggests that taking PE 198 early in one's academic program is most beneficial but some students do not take it until their senior year. Ron asked whether we should be prescriptive in when students take PE 198, perhaps require students to take it by the end of sophomore year.

The discussion moved to the idea of requiring that all three University requirements be taken by the end of the sophomore year for students who start at Washburn. Transfer students might require other options. Shaun Schmidt suggested a policy that all three requirements be taken before completion of 45 hours or students would be unable to register for the next semester.

The Chair directed the Secretary to compile a list of all recommendations for the English, Math, and PE programs and we will consider this list at our next (and last) meeting to develop a list of proposals to present to the Faculty Senate.

Next Meeting: April 16, 2007 at 3:30 pm in the Boswell Room of the Memorial Union.

Adjournment: 4:40 pm