Minutes of the Arts and Science Faculty Council

November 5, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by the Chair, Professor Lucius Outlaw, Jr. Present at the meeting were Dean Carolyn Dever, Professors Laura Carpenter, Katherine Crawford, Marshall Eakin, Jennifer Fay, Doug Hardin, Holly McCammon, Carmelo Rizzo, Ruth Rogaski, Tony Stewart, and Kip Viscusi. Sending his regrets was Professor Akram Aldroubi. Senior Associate Dean Karen Campbell attended as a guest of Faculty Council, and Jonathan Bremer, from the Arts and Science Dean’s Office staff, attended as the Executive Secretary of the Faculty.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Council Meeting of October 1, 2013.

There were no comments or questions, and Council approved the Minutes.

2. Business from the Committee on Educational Programs (CEP).

A. Proposed study abroad program at Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio, Brazil), administered by CIEE (Council on International Educational Exchange). Council members agreed that the academic merits of the proposal were strong, but many expressed concern about personal safety issues in Rio and found problematic in several respects the sentence in the proposal that “Rio is as safe as any major metropolitan area in Latin America, Africa, or Europe where we currently send our students.” Personal safety incidents involving Vanderbilt students studying abroad are rare, but they do happen. Information about security and safety issues presented in study abroad proposals quickly become out of date, Dean Campbell said, and, consequently, safety information should be posted online and updated often. Several Council members emphasized that full disclosure of security and safety information about study abroad locations is paramount. Study abroad proposals, Council members therefore agreed, should include standardized language that students and parents can find security and safety information about particular study abroad locations at specific websites and that, based on the information provided therein, students and parents can make informed decisions about whether to participate in a study abroad program. Professor Stewart pointed out that both CIEE and GEO provide safety information on their respective websites and stated that he trusts these organizations to make these judgments. Links to these websites will be distributed to Council members after the meeting. Deans Dever and Campbell also noted that some students take a leave of absence from Vanderbilt in order to participate in a particular study abroad program. In these cases, Federal law prevents Vanderbilt from being able to assist him or her if a problem arises abroad because that student is no longer considered a Vanderbilt student. Council then approved the study abroad program at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro provided that the problematic paragraph in the proposal is replaced by the standardized statement regarding personal safety information.

B. Proposed study abroad program at Kunming, China, administered by Middlebury and CET (China Educational Tours). Professor Rogaski, sponsor of the study abroad program, explained that the third-party provider is shifting its program from Hangzhou to Kunming, and she proposes that Vanderbilt follow this shift. Kunming is an attractive, multicultural city, with nice weather and clean air, and is located in the foothills of the Himalayas. Middlebury Schools Abroad selects the students and provides the academic core of the program, which is excellent, she continued, while CET administers the housing and other living arrangements. Kunming would therefore replace Hangzhou, and Vanderbilt would retain its other study abroad programs.
in China at Beijing, Harbin, and Shanghai. **Council then approved the study abroad program in Kunming, China.**

3. **Business from the Committee on Graduate Education (CGE).**

**Proposed creation of Astrophysics Ph.D. program.** Professor McCammon, a member of the CGE, explained that the CGE provided feedback to the Physics department based on an earlier version of the proposal. The CGE was initially concerned that only five faculty members were part of the Astrophysics graduate program, but were persuaded by the detailed explanation of how all of the courses related to the program were going to be covered and by the unanimous support of the faculty members in the Physics department. The revised proposal is in fine shape, she continued, and thus was approved by the CGE. Dean Dever, in response to a question, stated that she also supports and approves the proposal. Dean Campbell and Mr. Bremer, in response to a question from Professor Fay, explained that the proposed M.A. degree is primarily a recognized step for students on their way to the Ph.D. program. Students will not be admitted to the M.A. program on its own. Moreover, the M.A. degree in the natural sciences is usually a courses-only program, whereas the M.S. degree usually requires a thesis. Professor Outlaw and Mr. Bremer noted some typographical errors in the *Catalog* copy. **Faculty Council then approved the Astrophysics Ph.D. proposal.**

4. **Business from the Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Graduate Education (CGE).**

**New and revised courses.** Council approved the course changes and additions from the Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Graduate Education (the course descriptions will be attached to the Minutes of the November 2013 Arts and Science Faculty Meeting).

5. **Discussion of the Dean’s State of the College Address.**

Dean Dever explained that she will present her annual State of the College Address at the November Arts and Science Faculty Meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, November 19, at 4:10 p.m. in Wilson 103. The Address will include key metrics regarding undergraduate education, graduate education, faculty research, finances, and fundraising. She invited Council members to suggest other topics for this year’s presentation. Professor Fay suggested that Dean Dever describe the role of Arts and Science in the fundraising campaign initiated by the Chancellor’s executive committee.

Several Council members expressed concern about Vanderbilt campus safety and about the sexual assault incident on campus last June. Professor Crawford stated that the Women’s and Gender Studies program, of which she is the Director, is collecting data about unreported sexual assaults on campus. Many sexual assault victims wish to stay out of the system and hence do not report incidents to the police. Several such students have come to the WGS office, and she has heard anecdotal evidence of other unreported incidents. Professor Crawford urged faculty members to respond to the inquiry from WGS when it is distributed. Professor McCammon asked about Vanderbilt’s policy in this regard: Where can sexual assault victims find information and resources? With whom can they talk to discuss sexual assault incidents? Work needs to be done, Dean Dever stated, to make the campus safer and to provide information to campus users. Many students are unaware, for example, of the inexpensive parking stickers that can be used to park on campus after regular business hours and thus avoid parking in more dangerous locations off campus. The recent robberies on campus and just off campus have rattled many students, she said. Dean Dever also agreed with other Council members that there needs to be faculty engagement on this issue, which has not happened yet, although some information has been
offered. Provost McCarty is planning to discuss campus safety with faculty members at an upcoming faculty meeting, she said. [After the meeting, it was learned that Provost McCarty is scheduled to discuss campus safety at the December Arts and Science Faculty Meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, at 4:10 p.m. in Wilson 103.]


Professor Stewart, Chair of the Religious Studies department, explained that his department has noticed anecdotally a ‘swarm effect’ in student registration for courses. When students are registering for courses on YES, they can see the number of students enrolled in any given course, and students appear to be enrolling in courses that already have students registered in them and not enrolling in courses with few or no students registered. This phenomenon, he continued, has a detrimental effect on new courses and courses offered by new faculty members. Professor Stewart asked if other departments have noticed this effect and if enrollment information could be removed from YES when students are registering for courses. Professors Outlaw and Fay stated that they are aware of this phenomenon, especially for new faculty members. Dean Campbell responded that she will inquire about this question, but she suspects that broader issues are involved.


Professor Outlaw offered to host a dinner for Council members at his home on Tuesday, December 10. He requested that Council members let him know by the next Council meeting (December 3) whether they would be able to attend.

8. Adjournment.

Council voted to adjourn at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer M. Fay
Secretary of the Faculty Council