The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by the Chair, Professor Malcolm Getz. Present at the meeting were Dean Carolyn Dever, Professors Laura Carpenter, Beth Conklin, Michael Hodges, John Janusek, Holly McCammon, Ifeoma Nwankwo, Vesna Pavlovic’, and Carmelo Rizzo. Sending their regrets were Professors Brooke Ackerly, Jennifer Fay, and Richard Haglund. 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 March 12, 2013.

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

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

A. Proposed revision of the Jewish Studies minor. Professor Getz explained that the proposal would eliminate the foreign language requirement for the minor. Professor Nwankwo expressed concern about the program’s vote for the proposal. Even after Council requested an explanation for the high number of abstentions or a revote, there were still two faculty members who did not respond in a revote of the proposal and only tenure-track faculty members were asked to vote. Professor Nwankwo stated, though, that the proposed revision appeared to be reasonable and did not seek to hold up the proposal on the vote question alone. Council then approved the proposed revision of the Jewish Studies minor.

B. Proposed revision of the Physics minor. Professor Getz explained that the proposal integrates several new courses into the minor; the basic structure of the requirements does not change and the minimum number of credit hours required remains the same. Mr. Bremer recommended two small changes to the Catalog copy: A new sentence should be added near the top of the copy, “The minor requires a minimum of 19 credit hours of course work, distributed as follows:,” and the “+” signs should be converted to “and.” Council members agreed. Council then approved the revision of the Physics minor with the two small Catalog copy changes.

C. Proposed revision of the Sociology major and Honors program. Mr. Bremer explained that the proposal updates the major by, among other things, reorganizing the concentration clusters, allowing students who double major in Sociology and HOD to use HOD 1700 in place of SOC 211, and clarifying the Honors program requirements. Professor Carpenter, of the Sociology department, stated that the restructuring better reflects the expertise and offerings of the department and encourages majors to concentrate their electives. Professor McCammon, also of the Sociology department, added that there are two sets of clusters: Sociology majors are required to take at least one course in three of the four core areas in order to gain knowledge of the discipline and are encouraged, but not required, to concentrate their electives in one of the five advising
clusters in order to orient themselves toward a career that could grow out of the degree. In response to a question from Dean Dever, Professors Carpenter and McCammon explained that courses in the “Environmental Sociology and Demography” advising cluster examine the impact of human populations on the natural environment. Mr. Bremer recommended two changes to the Catalog copy: Honors programs in the College of Arts and Science must require honors students to complete two semesters of honors thesis coursework, not just six credits of honors thesis coursework, and, consequently, one clause in the Research Skills section of the Catalog copy should be revised accordingly. Second, the requirements for the Honors program should be further clarified in the Catalog copy; some of the bullet points are not requirements and some requirements have not been made into bullet points. Council then approved the revision of the Sociology major and Honors program, subject to editing of the Catalog copy.

3. 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 as corrected (the course descriptions will be attached to the Minutes of the April 2013 Arts and Science Faculty Meeting).

4. Admissions data and Update on Academic Analytics.

Admissions data: Dean Dever encouraged Council members to review the admissions data that she forwarded from (Vice Provost for Enrollment) Doug Christiansen’s office to department chairs. She hoped that department chairs distributed this information to their colleagues. The students whom Vanderbilt has succeeded in recruiting are impressive and exciting and they seek to work with faculty members directly. These students are present and future leaders coming from all over the country and the world. It is important to be responsive to them so that they develop a sense of having a personal stake in Vanderbilt. She is proud of what Vanderbilt has been able to accomplish with regard to admissions and would like to make it more visible to faculty members, partly in order to give the faculty a sense of ownership of the process and its success.

Academic Analytics. Dean Dever explained that there is a new tool available at Vanderbilt, Academic Analytics, with which departments can gather data about the research productivity of their faculty members. This new tool is not intended to be used for departments, such as Art and Theatre, that are not research-oriented. She presented the new tool to department chairs in three recent meetings and plans to work with them over the next few months to generate data using a set of reasonable and meaningful criteria for each department. Academic Analytics is a company founded by the then-Dean of the Graduate School at Stony Brook who thought that there should be a better means of ranking doctoral programs than the one used by the National Research Council (NRC). Dean Dever further explained that the use of Academic Analytics is very important for a number of reasons, as an alternative to the NRC rankings, as a means to
make wise investment decisions about academic programs, and as a response to political and other external pressure that public and private universities should defend and justify everything they do. Adoption of the Academic Analytics tool, further, is relatively benign, Dean Dever continued. For starters, departments have some control over the criteria used to measure research productivity. If Vanderbilt does not collect and organize this kind of information, others will do so, and, consequently, it is necessary to be proactive about this issue.

In response to questions from Council members, Dean Dever emphasized that the data will be organized based on departments, not on interdisciplinary programs, and not on individual faculty members, pre- or post-tenure. Also, Vanderbilt cannot use the information publicly, nor can Vanderbilt call it a ranking system. She recommended that programs begin using Academic Analytics by selecting appropriate criteria, attaching reasonable weights to these criteria, and subjectively choosing a small set of peer departments in other universities with which to compare. Academic Analytics offers departments access to data from 160 institutions. Departments can use the data to inform prospective graduate students about the strengths of the program and for internal use to assess areas in which the program is doing well or needs improvement. She cautioned that the data can be misused. If Academic Analytics turns out to be not useful, then Vanderbilt will abandon it.

5. **New Business and Concerns.**

No issues were raised.

6. **Good of the Council.**

No issues were raised.

7. **Adjournment.**

Council voted to adjourn at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly J. McCammon  
Secretary of the Faculty Council