Minutes of the Arts & Science Faculty Council

November 3, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 4:13 p.m. by the Chair, Professor Gregg Horowitz. Present at the meeting were Dean Carolyn Dever, Professors Michael Bess, Kate Daniels, Shane Hutson, Leah Marcus, Ruth Rogaski, Edward Saff, Michael Stone, Arleen Tuchman, and David Weintraub. Sending their regrets were Professors Houston Baker and Dennis Dickerson. Senior Associate Dean John Sloop and Pre-major Adviser Andrea Hearn attended as guests of Faculty Council, and Jonathan Bremer, from the A&S Dean’s Office staff, attended as the Executive Secretary of the Faculty.

1. Follow-up discussion about pre-major advising and CASPAR.

Professor Horowitz stated that he did not receive any topics from Council members for this follow-up discussion. He then gave Senior Associate Dean John Sloop an opportunity to present an opening statement. Dean Sloop assured Council members that he and Associate Dean Frâncille Bergquist regularly meet with Patricia Armstrong, Director of CASPAR, and act quickly to resolve any problems that arise. CASPAR is not isolated at The Commons from communication, direction, and assistance.

Professor Saff stated that he talked about CASPAR and pre-major advising to his colleagues in the Department of Mathematics who teach calculus. They told him that they were initially concerned about the guidance that students were receiving from pre-major advisers regarding the appropriate placement of students at the various levels of calculus courses, but the pre-major advisers quickly adapted and worked well with the Math department. Dean Sloop responded that math is a special concern for pre-major advising and that he will continue to think hard about how to establish an excellent advising system for that discipline. He also stated that in the future he will be sure to proactively hire some pre-major advisers from the natural sciences and mathematics.

Professor Weintraub proposed that A&S students be permitted to declare a major near the end of their first year and that this declaration be in effect after that semester’s final exam period. This would allow some students to be advised by faculty members in their major department at the beginning of the students’ second year. If a student already knows what major s/he is going to pursue by the second semester, he explained, then s/he might be better served by receiving guidance from a major adviser. This proposal, he continued, is not intended to solve the problem of how CASPAR should advise sophomore students. Many Council members expressed support for this proposal, and several others expressed qualified support. Some concerns about the proposal include: Would this proposal cause students to race to declare their major in order to receive preferential enrollment in courses required for the major? Would departments be able to adequately advise the increased number of declared majors? Some AXLE advising would shift to departments, but CASPAR was created partly because there was some uncertainty about the quality of AXLE advising in departments. On the other hand, if this proposal were to be enacted, there would have to be some resources in CASPAR for
advice about academic majors. Professor Horowitz then tabled discussion of this proposal to new business in order for Council to address the other agenda items. Council members thanked Dean Sloop for participating in this discussion and answering questions.

2. **Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Council Meeting of October 6, 2009.**

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

3. **A&S faculty election procedure.**

Professor Horowitz explained that Mr. Bremer’s revision of the opt-out message explicitly specifies and expands the reasons that allow faculty members to opt-out of being considered and elected for positions on the Faculty Council, Graduate Faculty Council, and the Faculty Senate. The revised message gives faculty members who have served repeatedly on Council and do not wish to be reelected the option to opt out of being nominated and elected. After a brief discussion, and the addition of a comma after “e.g.” in the revised message, Council approved the revised opt-out message, which is attached to these Minutes.

4. **Feedback of the Dean’s State of the College Address.**

Many Council members lauded Dean Dever for her State of the College Address, which she presented at the October A&S Faculty Meeting and is available on the A&S web site. They stated that they greatly appreciated the enormous amount of useful and important information provided by the Address and were impressed by Dean Dever’s command of that information. The preference would be for more information, rather than less, they said, especially because many of the faculty members who attend the State of the College Address each year are department administrators. Several Council members suggested that the Dean provide more qualitative information along with the quantitative data. It is not always clear, for example, what the import of some data might be and whether or not they indicate that A&S is succeeding in a particular area. More self-critical analysis would be valuable also. Dean Dever thanked Council members for their comments and stated that she is curious and eager to receive more feedback about the Address.

5. **Graduate Education Task Force Report.**

Dean Dever stated that the Graduate School is planning to hold two town hall-style meetings in December in order for faculty members to discuss the recommendations of the Graduate Education Task Force Report, which was published in September and is available on the home page of the Graduate School’s web site. The Report has significant implications for A&S. She encouraged faculty members, especially department chairs and directors of graduate studies, to participate in these meetings. Dean Dever also strongly suggested that departments should begin to think about ranking the priorities of their graduate programs and articulating a strong case for them.
6. 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 amended (the course descriptions will be attached to the Minutes of the November 2009 A&S Faculty Meeting).

7. New Business and Concerns.

Professor Horowitz brought Professor Weintraub’s declaration of major proposal back to the table. His proposal would allow A&S students to declare a major near the end of their second semester at Vanderbilt, but would not require or even encourage students to declare a major in their second semester of residence. After a brief discussion, Council voted to charge CASP with reviewing Professor Weintraub’s declaration of major proposal.

Professor Bess suggested that the quality of life among students, especially pre-med students, should be a topic of discussion for a future Council meeting. It would be good, he said, if we could find ways to alleviate or reduce the amount of stress and anxiety that many students experience.


Professor Horowitz stated that he wanted to gain agreement about the length of Council meetings. After a brief discussion and no major objections, Council members reconfirmed that Council meetings should be scheduled from 4:10 to 6:00 and that if a Council member has to leave the meeting before it ends, then so be it.


Council voted to adjourn at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael D. Bess
Secretary of the Faculty Council
January x, 2010

Dear Colleague:

During the spring semester we elect new members for the A&S Faculty Council, the Graduate Faculty Council, and the Vanderbilt Faculty Senate. Tenured and tenure-track members of the A&S faculty are eligible to stand for election and to vote. The newly elected begin their terms of service in the next academic year (2010-2011). The Faculty Council and Graduate Faculty Council normally meet on selected Tuesdays at 4:10 p.m., and most Faculty Senate meetings are held on Thursdays at 4:15 p.m.

In general, faculty members are expected to provide this type of service to the Vanderbilt community. If, however, one (or more) of the following applies to you, you must notify me by e-mail that you are unable or unwilling to stand for election by Monday, January x, 2010 at the following address only:
cas.faculty.sec@vanderbilt.edu:

- You hold an elected position that extends beyond the current academic year.
- You have recently served on the A&S Faculty Council, the Graduate Faculty Council, or the Faculty Senate and do not wish to be reelected.
- You anticipate an unavoidable regular time conflict with other college duties, or
- You are unable to serve at this time for other legitimate reasons (e.g., on leave).

Please give your name, the reasons you are unable to serve, and the office or offices for which you are unable or unwilling to serve. If your message is sent to any other e-mail address or by any other means, I cannot guarantee that your request will be honored. If you are subsequently elected to an office, you will be expected to serve in that office.

At http://sitemason.vanderbilt.edu/cas/facultycouncil/EligibleFaculty, you will find a list of eligible faculty. If you find an error, please inform me, and the list will be updated.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Secretary of the Faculty
College of Arts and Science