The meeting was called to order at 4:16 p.m. by the Chair, Professor Kassian Kovalcheck. Present at the meeting were Dean Richard McCarty, Professors Karen Campbell, William Damon, Emmanuele DiBenedetto, Robert Driskill, Malcolm Getz, Jose Medina, Michael Stone, Joel Tellinghuisen, Holly Tucker, and Patricia Ward. Professor Amy Kirschke sent her regrets. Associate Deans Kate Daniels and Russell McIntire attended as guests of the Faculty Council, as did William Longwell, from the A&S Microcomputer Labs, and Jonathan Bremer, from the A&S Dean’s Office staff.

Professor Kovalcheck, as Chair of Council, made two announcements: First, A&S faculty members have approved, by e-mail ballot, the two amendments to the A&S Constitution. The amendments create a new Committee on Graduate Education. Second, continuing Council members are reminded that the first Council meeting of the 2005-2006 academic year is scheduled for Wednesday, May 4, at 5:15 p.m. in Calhoun 415A. The purpose of this meeting is to elect a new Council Chair and Secretary. Council members accepted the results of the Constitutional referendum, and the continuing members agreed to meet the next day for Council elections.

Dean McCarty congratulated Professor Medina, for he was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure at the recent Board of Trust meeting. Professor Medina, Dean McCarty continued, is a prominent exception to the informal rule that tenure track faculty members should avoid service-related activities. He has distinguished himself for his service to the Philosophy Department and to A&S, and Dean McCarty is deeply grateful to him. Council members applauded Professor Medina.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Council meeting of April 5, 2005.

Council unanimously approved the Minutes.

2. Revisiting the On-line Course Evaluation pilot project.

Dean McCarty distributed two handouts of data summaries of instructor evaluations, which had been prepared by Mr. Longwell. The first handout compared in-class course evaluations and on-line course evaluations for the same instructor and the same course over a two-year period. The second handout compared in-class course evaluations and in-class course evaluations for the same instructor and the same course over the same two-year period. These data summaries compare the results of questions 4, 5, and 9 on the course evaluation form that students complete for every course. Dean McCarty explained that the P values for the comparisons of questions 4 and 5 were not statistically significant for the first data summary, although they were statistically significant for question 9. He stated that A&S does not use question 9 for tenure or promotion considerations; however, because many other factors are likely to be involved in the quality of overall instruction than just the quality of the particular instructor. The
response rates were similar for the on-line system and for the in-class system, and the
data for the two systems were generally consistent with each other. This data summary,
though, does not take into account the natural variability of evaluation results from year
to year. The second data summary presented an indication of the natural variation from
one year to the next. The P values on page two of this data summary show no statistical
significance on the comparison of questions 4, 5, and 9. The natural variation from year
to year, according to this data summary, appeared to be about 0.1 units. Consequently,
there was not a large amount of variation between the first and second data summaries.
Further, there is no evidence of gender bias in the course evaluations, including the
written comments. The data summaries show no systemic bias between the results of
course evaluations of male and female instructors. Dean McCarty therefore concluded
that we are as close to a matched system of course evaluations, between the in-class and
on-line systems, as possible. The histograms included with the data summaries presented
some of the same information graphically. The statistical significance of the results of
question 9 in the first data summary revealed itself by its skewed nature, while it is
apparent that the results of the other questions were approximately balanced around the
zero point. Dean McCarty stated that A&S now has an on-line course evaluation system
that will serve our needs and that will allow us to eliminate paper records of course
evaluations. He hopes that these data summaries and this presentation address any
concerns that Council members have had about the on-line course evaluation system.

Professor Stone asked whether Mr. Longwell looked at the results of course evaluations
for any large enrollment courses. Mr. Longwell replied that he had attempted to include
some large enrollment courses in his survey, but either the same instructor did not teach
the same course from one year to the next or ITS had incomplete data. Professor Tucker
thanked Mr. Longwell for collecting this information and for writing the data summaries.
Professor Campbell seconded that note of appreciation and asked whether students
offered many neutral written comments on their course evaluations. The summaries of
the written comments included positive and negative examples, but not neutral ones. Mr.
Longwell responded that not many written comments could dependably be classified as
“neutral.” There were more positive and fewer negative written comments with the on-
line course evaluation system than with the in-class evaluation system.

3. Business from the College Program Committee.

Council unanimously approved the recommendations of the CPC.


Council approved the course additions from the Curriculum Committee as corrected (the
corrected set of course descriptions is attached to the minutes of the May 2005 Faculty
meeting).
5. **Business from the Committee on Educational Programs (CEP).**

The Women’s and Gender Studies Program rewrote and subsequently resubmitted their previous proposal to revise their program requirements. The CEP has approved the revision. Dean McIntire explained that the proposed Program is similar to the current Program except that the revised program major requires 33 hours of course work instead of 36, although the Honors program still requires 36 hours, and there is a new major requirement, that students learn research skills (number four in the list of major requirements). All of the new courses proposed by the Program have already been approved by the Council and the Faculty. Dean McCarty asked whether there are any college-wide requirements for honors programs. He thought that the 3.0 minimum cumulative grade point average for entering the honors program and the 3.3 minimum cumulative grade point average for honors students within the major were too low. A 3.0 grade point average, after all, is below the mean grade point average for all students. Dean McIntire replied that the Honors Committee is planning to address this issue next year, but the 3.0 cumulative grade point average is the minimum college-wide entry point for students entering an honors program. Some departments have set the entry point to their honors program higher. Professor Damon noted that the proposed Program revision requires that all majors complete a senior thesis. This must be possible only because they are expecting relatively small enrollments. In connection with this point, Professor Kovalcheck asked if there were a sense of the faculty about the appropriate length of a senior thesis. Several faculty members responded that senior theses should be approximately 75 pages long and seminar or independent study papers for three credit courses should be approximately 25 pages long. There appeared to be general consensus on this point. Dean Daniels added that these types of courses are not technically a part of the curriculum, and, consequently, they will not be affected by the advent of the AXLE curriculum. Professor Damon wondered what would happen if a student fails the oral exam of his or her honors thesis. Dean McIntire responded that in that case the honors thesis would revert to a senior thesis. This is the standard practice in other disciplines. Professor Campbell asked whether honors students majoring in Women’s and Gender Studies would be required to complete both an honors thesis and a senior thesis. Dean McIntire responded that Professor Casper, who is the Director of the Program, has stated “no” to this question. Professor Casper then suggested that the relevant wording should be clarified by adding the phrase “in lieu of a senior thesis” after the word “thesis” in section (e) of the proposal. Council approved this amendment to the proposal, and then approved the revision to the Women’s and Gender Studies Program.

Dean McIntire cautioned that Council should be careful to ensure that both CPLE and AXLE nomenclature be used in revisions to majors and minors and other relevant academic program changes in the next few years, since the revisions would be applicable to both CPLE and AXLE students.

6. **New business and concerns.**

Dean Daniels exhibited a proof copy of the cover of the new First Year Writing Seminar booklet. The four photographs on the cover represent different aspects of the seminar
experience—the classroom; student advising; independent study; and group study without faculty supervision. Council members enthusiastically praised the new booklet cover.

7. **Good of the Council.**

Professor Kovalcheck thanked Professor Damon for his work as Secretary of the Council this year and stated that it was good that Mr. Bremer was able to aid him in his efforts.

8. **Adjournment.**

Council voted to adjourn at 5:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William W. Damon  
Secretary of the Faculty Council