Committee on Academic Policy

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NOV. 9, 2006

Present: Professors Kanipe, Major, Pellman (Chair), Sciacca, Strout, and Urgo (ex officio)

The meeting began at 4:10 p.m.

1. The minutes of the meeting of Nov. 2 were approved, and the Chair announced that the Committee will not meet on Nov. 16.

2. The Committee discussed the proposal to the Academic Council to change the guidelines in the Faculty Handbook concerning eligibility for election to the CAP, in order to prevent the election of more than one person from one department. The Committee discussed how to make our eligibility requirement parallel to those of the Committee on Appointments. Some members were especially concerned about programs that function as departments, but can include people from other departments. We decided to turn to the Academic Council for clarification.

3. The Committee returned to the discussion of the recently passed motion on College Seminars. Professor Strout reported on the number of seats and of seminar sections that will be required for fall 2007, and explained his intentions to have conversations with Chairs to encourage the addition of sections of sophomore seminars.

4. The Committee discussed our proposed motion for the Dec. Faculty Meeting, for a Committee of the Whole to discuss questions raised by our colleagues on the three special taskforces. We agreed that brief statements from each taskforce chair would be useful, and would provide an opportunity for the taskforces to begin concrete discussion with other faculty. We also discussed length of the CoW, the structure, and the possibility that the same objectives could be achieved under the rubric of a report by the Chair of CAP.

5. The Committee discussed the posting of syllabi on the web. The Committee agreed that this practice should be reexamined in the future, by spring of 09.

6. The Committee discussed some registration patterns, and also the prevalence of double concentrations. We decided to seek more information about how many and which students avoided either the arts or the sciences and why (individual preference is the common stated reason). We also decided to look at double concentrations, and to ask the CAS and the Registrar how often students check formally with advisors in both concentrations. Should we require signatures from both advisors on paperwork like course changes? We decided that this may be a question for the CAS.
7. The Committee discussed the concerns expressed by some colleagues that too many classes were cancelled on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

8. The Committee discussed a request from the Academic Council that we formally consider issues of grade inflation. Some of our questions were how much we must consider changes in pattern for the individual student over four years, how grades in 100-level classes compare with grades in advanced classes, and whether there are differences in the patterns of grading among faculty according to their rank? We are aware that the standards of excellence are very different across the disciplines. We must wait for more information.

9. The Committee discussed updates on departmental planning activities.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Esther S. Kanipe