10-26-2010 GAC Minutes

Minutes of the Council meeting for October 26, 2010
Approved by the Council on November 19, 2010

In attendance: J. Aini, J. Baronner (staff), J. Bartow (staff), P. Bolton (staff), S. Chittur, Nicholas M Fahrenkopf, C. Fox, L. Fuller, T. Groves, S. Kazanas, L. Kranich (Chair), F. Leiva, H. Miller, Timmons, K. Williams

Unable to attend: S. Commuri, W. Lanford

Guest: John Pipkin, Associate Dean of Arts & Sciences

1. The minutes from 10-12-2010 will be distributed by Friday via the Chair.

2. Dean’s report – K. Williams

   The Professional Science Management Program in Forensics Biology has been approved. Certificate programs in both Computer Science and Biodiversity, Conservation, and Policy are in the process of being reviewed.

   NRC has requested that institutions respond to their data by the deadline of November 1st.

3. Chair’s report – L. Kranich

   The majority of the Senate meeting held October 18th was devoted to discussion of the programs deactivation announcement. The Governance Council will meet this Friday, 10/29, concerning our request to clarify the role and scope of the CAA Academic Program Review Committee.

   A revised proposal from the School of Business for a Graduate Certificate Program in Information Security has been circulated and will be discussed at the November 19th GAC meeting.

   At the upcoming Friday meeting Council members assigned to an individual program review will summarize their findings/recommendations. Assignments follow: Year of Review 2008-09: Computer Science, Informatics, Sridar Chittur; History, Heather Miller. Year of Review 2007-08: Philosophy, Tom Timmons; English, Lisa Fuller; Educational Administration and Policy, Suraj Commuri; Reading, Tim Groves Year of Review 2006-07: Criminal Justice, Bill Lanford; Physics, Fernando Leiva; Sociology, Stephanie Kazanas; Earth and Atmospheric Sciences (Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences), Nick Fahrenkopf; Psychology -- Joe Aini.
4. Committee Reports

CAAS – H. Miller, Chair

No activity at the moment, but some cases are on the horizon.

CC&I – T. Groves, Chair

CC&I will hold their first meeting of the semester on November 12th.

CEPP – S. Commuri, Chair

No business being conducted.

5. New Business

Deactivation of Graduate Programs in Classics, French, Russian, and Theatre

John Pipkin, Acting Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences, attended the meeting to discuss the deactivated Graduate programs. The Chair previously sent the President’s letter to Senate Chair Eric Lifshin listing the programs targeted for deactivation. Although some have already been deactivated, some are currently active. The Chair mentioned that under Section X.4.3 of the University Senate Charter, the “Council shall have the responsibility for the conduct of the University’s graduate educational program.” Members had various questions and comments. What is the vision for these programs and for the University as a whole? Why is the University providing new lines for strong departments when the strong departments can survive without new resources while the humanities are being cut? The elimination of these programs affects Graduate training in other areas as well. Why weren’t discussions held with the departments prior to programs being closed? Does this signal that studying languages and cultures is not important? The closing of languages will affect our ability to attract students. How does this fit with the University’s “world within reach” motto?

The question was asked which, if any, of our doctoral programs improved since the last NRC rankings. While some programs have held ground, it cannot be said unambiguously that any programs have improved. It is not clear what criteria were used to select the five program areas. The President has stated the decisions were based on enrollments and budgetary considerations and not on academic merit. Yet there are programs with lower enrollments that were not targeted for deactivation. Also, why was academic merit not considered? According to the Going Forward
Plan, Final Draft, dated January 12, 2009, “In undertaking this review, we consider, first, that it is the primary responsibility of the University at Albany to advance knowledge and research and to provide high quality education……” If so, why wasn’t academic merit taken into consideration? GAC was never consulted in reaching this decision. The President mentioned having received advice and consultation from BAG 1, 2, and 3, the Strategic Planning process, and the Going Forward Plan. However, among the members of the most recent panel, BAG 3, only 59-65% included as their top guideline to “Preserve and promote the University’s CORE MISSION [Expanding knowledge and transforming minds to shape the future of our community and the world], and sustain those areas that are essential to maintaining that core.” This raises the question of the quality of the advice.

Professor Pipkin mentioned that Dean Wulfert saw the process as data driven and that all three BAG groups were important in this process. Dean Wulfert argued strongly that Arts and Sciences are at the center of the University’s mission. Dean Wulfert held a CAS Council of Chair’s meeting on April 28th and obtained suggestions from department Chairs. The Chairs were given budgetary information and engaged in group discussions on how best to meet three target reductions of 5%, 10% and 15%. The Dean also asked each Chair to individually identify units within the College that he/she considered not essential to CAS or to the University and asked that such confidential recommendations be forwarded to her. A member found it troubling that such private conversations were not made public since private suggestions such as these could pit one department against another. A member attending the Chair’s meeting emphasized that a vote was not taken at the meeting. A member inquired whether there is a ranking of programs. Such information would be available to the deans but would likely not be made available to the Council.

At the Senate meeting on 10/18, Michael Range, immediate past Senate Chair, submitted some budget data and provided comments. He listed the percentage change in the state budget from 05-06 to 10-11. Among the changes during that period, Athletics support increased by 26.1% and Student Success received an increase of 11.6%.

A member mentioned that the University is now the poster child for eliminating the humanities. How will this affect our ability to recruit students? A member stressed that the loss of French will be catastrophic for LACS. Also, how will fieldwork be performed when these languages are discontinued? A member inquired which languages are being taken by English graduate students. It was noted that it is not simply a matter of students taking French or other language courses, but some of these students are trying to obtain teacher certification and will not be able to do so.
To determine the full extent of the impact, it is necessary to determine the overall enrollment in French graduate courses, not simply by French students. Institutional Research may have such data.

The Chair mentioned that Dean Wulfert's attendance at a future Council meeting would assist in the Council's formulating a response to the deactivation of those specific graduate programs. A member noted if the deactivations are data driven, we are hampered by not having access to that data. Although the deactivation decisions have been made, a response from GAC is necessary. Failure to respond would be interpreted as tacitly accepting or agreeing with the deactivations. The Chair will invite Dean Wulfert to our meeting on Friday, 10/29. A member suggested asking for data ahead of Friday's meeting. A member volunteered to obtain data on graduate students taking foreign language courses. The Chair will compile a list of members' requests for data.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05.

END OF GAC 10/26/2010 MINUTES
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