Graduate Academic Council
2010 – 2011

Minutes of the Council meeting for November 9, 2010
Approved by the Council on January 24, 2011

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

Guests: Dean Edelgard Wulfert, CAS, and Provost Susan Phillips

 Unable to attend: J. Aini, R. Beach, L. Fuller, W. Lanford

1. Minutes from the 10/26/2010 GAC meeting will be voted on via e-mail.

2. Dean’s report – K. Williams

   No report.

3. Chair’s report – L. Kranich

   The Chair, along with CAA Chair Richard Matyi, met with the Governance Council on October 29th regarding GAC’s request for clarification of the role and scope of CAA’s Academic Program Review (APR) Committee, in particular, whether CAA’s role is limited to the review process itself or whether they might make programmatic recommendations. GOV requested that GAC and CAA formulate specific language for the University Charter and/or CAA guidelines.

   The Executive Committee met November 1st and discussed how to present the comments from the Councils on the proposed program deactivateds to the President. The SEC also received resolutions from the SUNY-wide Senate, LLC and CPCA as well as a letter from AAUP sent to the President. SEC will forward comments to the President by November 19th, as requested. Resolutions will be brought directly to the full Senate.

   The final draft of the Campus Strategic Plan is now available. Some of the Council’s comments do not appear to have been incorporated. In the section on Graduate Education (Strategic Theme 3), governance is still absent from most of the “suggested responsible units” for implementing the action steps for achieving the six strategic objectives. Also, it is still not clear why it is necessary to revise the Senate Charter to reconstitute GAC.

   The Chair requested Council members reserve Friday, December 3rd, 9:30-11:00 AM for an additional meeting to continue discussion of the CAA assessments.
4. Discussion of Deactivation of Graduate Programs

The Chair mentioned that the Council has the responsibility for the conduct of the University’s graduate educational program, and that the Council is charged with reviewing proposals that would affect the continuation of graduate programs. The question before the Council is whether these deactivations represent sound academic decisions. For this, the Council needs to know the criteria used to select the designated programs, the enrollment and budgetary data upon which the decision is based, the process by which it was reached, and how this fits with the vision and priorities of the University as we move forward.

Provost Susan Phillips and Dean Edelgard Wulfert attended the meeting to discuss the Graduate program deactivations. The Provost provided a handout summarizing the budget reductions by division since 2008 and the estimated reductions for 2010-11 and 2011-12. Thus far, Student Success has had the highest reduction with 22.8%. Faculty reduction was 66.1 FTE’s within the Schools and Colleges.

For 10-11 and 11-12, we received none of the tuition increase but did receive more money than expected from SUNY Central. The estimated total cut of $13.5M is unlikely to be the final figure. We will have an additional $1.7M midyear reduction.

Of the 70 lost faculty positions, 11% were from the arts & humanities, 72% from social sciences, and 17% in the sciences. These were achieved through resignations and retirements, and the distributional impact was inadvertent. Thus, for example, the History Department has lost six lines, and that department has a large teaching load. A member mentioned that the projected savings from the proposed deactivations was around $2M out of a target of $13.5M. Should we expect more program actions? The Provost mentioned that most cuts will not be from Academic Affairs, but it is difficult to predict how the budget process will play out. Several measures short of cutting programs are being discussed. In response to a member’s inquiry, the Provost discussed measures under consideration for raising additional revenue.

Dean Wulfert described the two to two and a half year history of the budget crisis leading up to the present state and the current proposal for program deactivation. She also discussed the May 2010 Council of Chairs meeting in which Chairs were asked to develop two different budget scenarios for CAS involving a 5% and 15% reduction (minutes available on-line under CAS minutes). On average $1.2M can be recovered each year due to resignations and retirements. Retrenchment was the word utilized at the BAG meetings.

Dean Wulfert distributed a handout containing enrollment figures for other programs with low enrollments and discussed each in turn, including trends, potential cost savings (e.g., disciplinary versus interdisciplinary), average work load, and discrepancies with previously distributed figures.
A Council member inquired of the possibility of downsizing versus deactivation. The Dean mentioned that she had to arrive at a $2.845M budget reduction spread over 2-2.5 years. She added that when real numbers were provided to the Deans, the cut was distributed over two years. However, the Dean was only able to put one year of cuts into the mix. She mentioned that all of this information has been previously distributed. The Provost mentioned that one of the constraints consists of existing contractual obligations. In areas where there are non-tenure-track and/or temporary staff, they are the first to go. One could cut adjunct faculty for the $2.5M figure. The next cut could be untenured faculty, but that would be devastating for the University’s future. Before that we need to consider the tenured faculty with the lowest priority. The Dean mentioned that the French faculty do not teach 100 and 200 level classes.

A member inquired of the solicitation by the Dean of the Chairs’ anonymous suggestions for program cuts. What were their instructions? Were they instructed to consider the University’s mission and the educational impact of alternative cuts? On what basis were they requested to make suggestions? A Council member who had been present at the Chairs’ meeting stated that previously the Chairs had engaged in an exercise in which they split into groups and each group developed a list of priorities and recommended cuts in the event such cuts were to be implemented. Each group then presented their recommendations to the entire group. The results were forwarded to the Dean. Figures were tabulated and returned to the Chairs. The minutes from these meetings are available on-line through CAS.

The Provost stated that in the Fall of 2008, when it was clear some cuts were on the horizon, the Provost and Councils started the process of discernment where all possible areas were discussed. In the Fall of 2008, we never believed $32M would be cut from our budget two years later. Departments were asked to place the “University hat” on to review scenarios of possible implementation of first and second year cuts. The next scenario was a 5% and a 15% cut. By that time we had acquired another set of suggestions from BAG 1 and BAG 2. BAG 1 and BAG 2 were combined in BAG 3 meetings. The University’s mission was discussed in the first and second BAG groups. The second BAG group was composed only of faculty. In the report we were trying to grasp the image of what the cuts would look like and to be mindful of going forward. That group was not trying to write a mission and was not charged to do so. Discussions tried to distill the University’s vision, to visualize future strategic plans, and to preserve the experience in undergraduate education. The BAG 2 meetings provided a strategic report with a statement of maintaining a distinct role for and a comprehensive view of graduate education. In the BAG 2 report one can read of the concern of wanting to maintain some presence in each area even if we cannot maintain full presence. In no meeting was it expressed that we should forego teaching languages and humanities.

A member mentioned looking at the 10-11 and 11-12 estimated reduction targets where the baseline of 10% across-the-board was utilized for cuts. Then adjustments were made to the baseline. While Academic Affairs was cut the least, why was the baseline taken to be equal division? Why weren’t Academic Affairs and cutting
academic programs reserved as a last resort? For example, cuts to Athletics would not jeopardize the core mission of the University. The Provost mentioned that, by comparison, the initial cuts were relatively small, and at the time it appeared possible to absorb the cuts without a major impact on Academic Affairs. Therefore, the 09 and 10 cuts were across-the-board. It was never her wish to cut Academic Affairs. After budget and reduction plans were discussed, the group was requested to consider a 9% across-the-board cut which would more adversely affect Academic Affairs. The next step was Plan B which consisted of improved suggestions from the budget advisory groups. We were told the results were not sufficient, and it was necessary to go further. Over the course of the process, as we learned of the size of the deficit we then turned to reviewing Academic Affairs. The Dean mentioned the extent to which CAS experienced cuts in the end of that period. CAS had a smaller reduction than other colleges due to its size and central role. Within Academic Affairs, CAS will still have been impacted the least of all areas.

There is not a uniform view about running the University. Student Success is an essential part of the infrastructure. How much further can we cut mail services, health and police services, and extra-curricular activities for the students? The Dean attended a program last night where the vital importance of athletics in colleges was discussed. Students' experiences are further enhanced by their learning to compete, etc. How will the changes affect graduate studies? What is this Council's role?

The Provost mentioned that vibrant discussions are being held on the campus regarding what programs remain and for what length of time. Deactivation is temporary for up to three years, and decisions have to be made regarding discontinuation of programs. No finish line has been drawn at this time. Within the next one to two years, program modifications will come up for review by GAC. Conversations are being held, and nothing has been imprinted thus far including foreign languages. There are questions for us to consider. Everything that has always been here in the past will not necessarily stay.

The meeting concluded with the Provost, Dean, and others exiting the meeting.

Chair Kranich will be composing the Council’s response to the President’s deactivation proposal. Members are urged to send their comments to him. The final comments are due to the Senate Chair by 11/11.

The Chair invited members to remain and continue discussions on the deactivation of graduate programs. Dean Williams substituted for Chair Kranich.

One member emphasized that if pertinent information was provided earlier, a lot of problems could have been avoided. Dean Williams noted that although information from the Chairs' meeting was shared with Chairs, that information and the information discussed today should have been distributed earlier. Another member mentioned that many public universities utilize money from private institutions. Many other universities utilize private partnerships to their advantage. Dean
Williams questioned why we have not entered into foreign markets and believes that is a lost opportunity. If we are unable to attract high quality students within the US, then it is necessary for us to seek them from the outside.

A member stated that the University administration has not discussed our mission and globalization. Conversations are not taking place on those subjects. Languages are becoming increasingly important as we live in a global world. Another member mentioned that the globalization program was faculty driven, is resource neutral, and should be part of the University’s mission. The globalization initiative arose out of the compact planning process. Whatever became of that?

A member expressed the opinion that the present matter demonstrates that the Senate charter is flawed in dealing with graduate academic programs. It was suggested that we add our voices to other Councils regarding the proposal of deactivation and its effect on education. The deactivation of programs was not thought through thoroughly.

Regarding drafting the Council’s response, our statement should stress how graduate education is being affected by the deactivation of programs. A member mentioned that two meetings ago we discussed the fallout and major consequences. Another member pointed out that reading knowledge of French fulfills the research tool. The French programs serve many students who are not French majors. 26% are from English and 9% are from Anthropology and General Education. There are many shared resource courses as well which also serve graduate students. Those range from 24 as a high to a low of 5 students. If the University cuts smaller programs, all languages will be lost. The member requested that colleagues provide statistics on work on outside PhD committees. A PhD in English comprises one chair and three members, Spanish provides two members, etc. Most are international students, and we are trying to internationalize our program with mostly foreign students. This is not an insular program.

5. Future Meetings

- Friday, November 19, 9:30-11:00 AM, UAB 320
- Friday, December 3, 9:30-11:00 AM, MSC 102
- Friday, December 10, 9:30-11:00 AM, UAB 320

END OF GAC 11/9/2010 MINUTES

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