College of Arts and Sciences
Council of Chairs
Wednesday, April 23, 2014
2:30-4:00 p.m., AS-122

Meeting Minutes

Guests:  S. Mahan, P. Shea

Not present:  M. Lifchitz, M. Williams, K. Zhu

Introductory Remarks: Dean Wulfert called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Minutes of March 12, 2014, Meeting: A motion to approve the minutes was made by R. Hoyt, seconded by A. Lyons. The meeting minutes for April 2, 2014, were approved.

Announcements:
- Department, faculty and/or student highlights for May Senate Meeting due 4/28/14 (to Jay Oddi at jodd@albany.edu)
- Council of Chairs Reception is 5/14/14, 6:00 p.m., Dean’s Residence. (reply before 5/6/14 to Cindy Endres at cendres@albany.edu or by calling 442-4654)
- CAS Ice Cream Social is Tuesday, 5/20/14, 2:30-4:00 p.m., Campus Center West Lounge (invitations forthcoming)
- HOLD THE DATE: Chairs retreat for returning and new Department Chairs is 8/20/14 from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Thank you to all who participated in the recent Open Houses for Accepted Students.
- Campus Clean-Up Day is Thursday, 4/24/14. Please volunteer by signing up at: www.albany.edu/cleanup/signup. (Rain date is Monday, 4/28/14.)
- Commencement Weekend is 5/17-5/18/14.
- Participating faculty and volunteers must sign up at: www.albany.edu/commencement (follow links to faculty and volunteer sign-up forms)
- Graduate Ceremony Rehearsal is Wednesday, 5/7/14, 10:00 a.m. in the CC Assembly Hall.
- The Undergraduate Ceremony Volunteer Rehearsal is Wednesday, 5/7/14, 11:00 a.m. in the CC Assembly Hall.

Old Business

None

New Business

Online Education (Peter Shea, Associate Provost for Online Education, and Sheila Mahan, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs)

Dr. Shea went over data about the growth of online learning (OLL) in the US, the aggressive approach to OLL of other large public institutions, and the online degree programs and courses at UAlbany compared to the other SUNY university centers. Some Chairs raised concerns about online enrollment cutting into regular course enrollments, but Dr. Shea stated that the outcome of online courses is an expansion of
student access to higher education, and so enrollment actually expands. About half of the students enrolled in UAlbany’s online course offerings are not UAlbany students.

Dr. Shea presented a sample of the literature available on online learning effectiveness. In most cases, there were no significant differences in student outcomes for those enrolled in online courses vs. traditional courses. Just as in traditional courses, though, course design likely plays a significant part in determining student success.

Another issue raised was exam security. To address this issue, Dr. Shea stated that courses could be designed to use low-stakes assessments that unfold over time. Another option is ProctorU (www.proctoru.com), an online exam proctoring service to which students or institutions can subscribe.

Some Chairs raised concerns over scaling-up small courses to accommodate greater numbers of students online especially in light of the Chancellor’s goal of offering a fully-online GenEd program. Dr. Shea stated that even though the seat caps on courses are arbitrary, we could not simply raise them and expect to deliver the same quality instruction. Large online courses require significant redesign, so progress will be incremental.

N. Denton stated that the department used to use summer session teaching as part of graduate student training. With the popularity of online summer courses, though, the place-based courses became under-enrolled and had to be canceled. This results in graduate students failing to acquire in-class teaching experience before being deployed as instructors of record for regular academic-year courses.

N. Kizenko stated that some groups of the population do worse than others in online courses. Dr. Shea stated that though those data are concerning, a national study using matched pairs suggested that students who took online courses had slightly better outcomes than those who did not. A. Lyons stated that online interaction with faculty members in some cases may not be as effective at motivating students as face-to-face interaction.

**Change in Assistant to the Chair Title**

Assistant to Chairs raised concerns that the title does not accurately represent their responsibilities. Several ideas were brought forward and the majority of individuals agreed to change the title to “Administrative Manager, Department of X.” It is a change to the campus title only; the budget title Senior Staff Assistant will remain unchanged. The title change does not imply that the faculty cedes its authority over any academic departmental functions. Rather, it acknowledges the myriad responsibilities that have become part of the professional obligations of Assistants to the Chair.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

**Handouts**

- Agenda
- Minutes of April 2, 2014 meeting
- Handouts from “Update on Online Learning” Slideshow
- Evidence of Effectiveness of Online Learning