

Natural Sciences and Mathematics Council

Meeting Agenda for October 16, 2012

Wolfe Hall 1240 3:30 – 5:00 PM

Call to Order

Roll Call – Secretary Jon Bossenbroek

Present: James Anderson, Brian Ashburner, Bruce Bamber, John Bellizzi, Jon Bossenbroek, Mike Cushing, Fan Dong, Hans Gottgens, Xiche Hu, Edith Kippenhan, David Krantz, Nick Podraza, Tony Quinn, Joe Schmidt, Friedhelm Schwarz, Gerard Thompson, Sibylle Weck-Schwarz, Don White

Absent: JD Smith (excused)

Approval of Minutes from September 4, and September 18, 2012 Meetings

Call – Hans Gottgens, 2nd – Joe Schmidt, unanimous approval

Reports from meetings of Dean and Department Chairs –David Krantz reporting

- Provost Scarborough – 45 issues in 90 days
Resolution in support of Dean Bjorkman
The intent is a letter to the Provost Scarborough in support of Dean Bjorkman to continue as Dean of College of NSM.
Gottgens – question about use of term “researcher”
Should the term be “educator” or a broader term?
Nick – how does that balance with the sentence on limited resources?
Don – change to “educator and research scientist”
All agreed to this language
Send as a memorandum or a letter? Decided letter is more appropriate
One issue is lack of letterhead. If no UT letterhead, use Department of Environmental Sciences letterhead.

Motion by Don White for a Resolution to send letter of support to Scott Scarborough given discussed changes to use phrase “educator and research scientist”.

Friedhelm – 2nd ; unanimous vote in favor of motion.

- Associate Dean Ashburner – unscheduled meeting to discuss the 45 issues and what information the Provost was requesting.
Dean’s office is working to provide feedback in a timely manner and has already submitted a substantial amount of information.
- Krantz – Provost requesting extensive data from each College
Scarborough – Ph.D. in business management, he was the CEO of UT Health Science Campus
From that point of view, has a list of 45 tasks to address by the beginning of January
Examples
Copy of college strategic plan (which is not yet completed)
List of College strengths and weaknesses
College advisory board (which we don’t have presently)

Each college is expected to have a strategic/business plan on what we plan on doing in terms of education and research; the College is beginning to develop this plan.

Provost is having working sessions with Deans and department chairs
Conversations the with Provost of where each college is headed
Our college this week – the first meeting was cancelled because of schedule conflict
A meeting is now scheduled for Thursday Oct. 18 to discuss a strategic plan and budget

Tom Gutteridge of the College of Business hired to be liaison to academic side
Scarborough also recognizes that this is an increased expense
Marcia King-Blandford no longer a Vice-Provost because of this change

Expect a different way of doing business.

Report on Faculty Senate Activities – Faculty Senate Members (Weck-Schwarz, White, Krantz)

- Two Faculty Senate meetings since we last met.

Report by David Krantz

Jacobs addressed Senate

More engaged than previously

Made it through the HLC on-site review in the spring

Now as a University we accumulate information every year and after 4 years have a small review with a full review in 10 years. The intent is to have rolling feedback.

Commented about politics of curricular and assessment issues

Driven from state and federal pressure

Gov. Kasich is speeding up the implementation of changes to state subsidy

Course completion, degree completion, retention are the new metrics of university performance

Statewide move towards 3-year degrees

A goal of 60% of university degrees having such a plan.

However, most that attempt to finish in 3 years do not succeed (<10% success)

Within UT, Jamie Barlow (Dean of LLSS) has worked on a plan for this.

Ashburner – every program is supposed to eventually offer a 3 yr plan.

Many 3 yr degrees use prior credits (e.g., AP credit)

There are already some shorter programs such as the Env. Sci/Public Health 3+2 program

Jacobs has made it known that we are at a disadvantage for such programs, as we do not have a branch campus AND we are open-enrollment.

There is a push to work with Owens in developing a more formal relationship to resemble a “branch” campus.

Tony Quinn – Is there enthusiasm for similar programs in upper tier/private institutions? Because it would affect students perception of our programs.

Krantz – a political move, because we need to have graduates sooner. Our Provost, however, has stated that he values “quality”.

Provost and President Jacobs are pushing back on this initiative.

Edith Kippenhan – Do summer credits work? Krantz – yes.

Tony Quinn – Reason for question... if this is a push by higher tier institutions, that will bring much more pressure.

Krantz – we still need to improve graduation rates in 4 years instead of 5 or 6 years. Political force behind this is rising costs of higher education. Goes back to how to improve retention and success in our college.

Comments by Don White

Jacobs comment on University Council was interesting.

Krantz – The outgoing BOT chair felt this is a legacy issue for him and pushed through the idea of a University Council in a short amount of time. Very little input from faculty. Structure is ~50% admin, ~50% (slightly more) representation from faculty, students, alumni and staff. The Council will have final say on issues of curriculum, policy, and communication between faculty and BOT.

President of University is also President of University Council

Intended to be implemented this fall, but University Council has been put on hold.

New BOT chair does not have same enthusiasm for University Council, and apparently neither does President Jacobs.

As of now, the structure may occur in the first year but perhaps more flexible than has been previously been put forward.

There does not seem to be fervent support of this Council as previous.

Comments by Sibylle Weck-Schwarz

Concern about broader implementation of online education.

Krantz – this is going to be a big issue in the near future

Edith Kippenhan – Concern is that we are not implementing fast enough?

Krantz – Yes

Update from Curriculum Committee – Tony Quinn

Discussion of the proposed degree program BA in General Science

Started to draft a program, but need input/vision from either

Comments by Associate Dean Ashburner – Old Catalog – interdepartmental major already exists

60 hours split equally between 3 departments – essentially 3 minors

This did exist previously and is similar to what we envision now.

Goal is increased retention.

We have one of the weakest retention rates in the University

Can we create a degree that is successful.

Not just retention but another degree option.

Perhaps for those that want to be a science teacher, or business area with the need for a science background.

Intent is not to fill this degree program with 1000/2000 level courses

Looking at BA & BS degrees that are out there. Two typical categories:

BS – includes most of the types of courses we want to teach – Physical and Life Sciences

BA – more suited to teaching primary or middle school

The distinction is that these programs often have limited upper level courses.

What is the target population?

A group as undeclared?

Or a cadre that want to be, for example science teachers.

Ashburner – we currently have 80 students that are undeclared, they could use this degree to move into a more specified degree.

Quinn – Can we generate a series of courses that earns enough credits without taking upper level courses?

- Hans Gottgens – for example in Environmental Sciences

We have a nice tiered structure – Biodiversity (2000 Level) -> Ecology (3000 level) -> upper level (opened by Ecology)

- Krantz – our foundational courses are primarily 2000 level

- You can get well along on the number of credits by taking 2000/3000 level courses.
- Ashburner – We can think about how to design minors or relationships with other colleges, such as business or math/finance. Lots of opportunities for creative options. Currently the degree programs are all contained within particular departments, which requires at least 30 hours within that department. Why not divide these up differently?
 - Schmidt – How do we work into upper level without a lot of prerequisite courses? Is this a numbering issue?
 - Ashburner – For most departments, 1000-level courses are general level, not necessarily meant for majors.
 - Bellizzi – Need to think about breadth vs. depth. One issue is how many departments have to be included in a general degree?
 - What about the inclusion or need for labs or WAC courses?
 - Need to be careful of how much flexibility exists because this will become a tricky problem for advisors.
 - Gottgens – should we have a different name, such as “Integrated Science”?
 - Are we stuck with 60 hours?
 - Ashburner – There are issues concerning “related” areas?
 - Should be all 5 depts.

Quinn – To get a point of clarification - Are we talking about giving multiple Tracks, where for example, the students have to take X credits from 3 departments?

- Ashburner – Need to have depth in 3 departments, and likely 1 or 2 courses from other departments.

Quinn – Do we have a consensus to move forward on this issue?

Motion - Recommendation that current policy on Dual Degrees that requires 20 additional hours for Dual Degree be eliminated.

Edith – moved; Nick – 2nd; Discussion – none; unanimous approval of the motion.

Recommendation will be forwarded to Faculty Senate (Are there University-level issues to address?)

Quinn - Discussion of issues related to the course sequence Big Ideas in Science & Math

Concern from Dept. of Biology that could be onerous for certain population of students.

If mandated for all students in the College, this will be a very heterogeneous population, and how do you deal with this issue?

Concerns:

One suggestion that it be a capstone rather than early on.

Or one portion early in

How many big ideas are there? And how many specifics.

What about pre-professional students that are programmed to focus on the grade and their GPA?

Krantz – one possibility would be to make this a WAC course, which would require the thinking component.

How strong is the push-back?

Ashburner – Part of the argument is that the Biology majors have a breadth that other departments don't have. Biology majors already take chemistry, physics, etc.

Kippenhan – Ideally should be a context course and how these impact other disciplines.
Ashburner – for many majors, this course would reduce some courses from other departments.
Biology has to take all those courses anyway.
Bellizi – The idea should be conceptual (reading/writing based) vs. memory and not designed as a survey course. We don't need a course that combines the intro material of five departments. That is not what this course should be about. The course should have a broader conceptual goal.
Ashburner – When would be the right year to take a Big Ideas course?
It gets to adding more courses and reducing the departmental flexibility.
Bellizi – What about pass/no fail?
Ashburner – One idea is to create modules. Run courses that only run for a couple of weeks.
Gottgens –
(1) We created a lot of room in the curriculum by dropping some A&S requirements. Freed up 14 hours.
(2) We need a WAC outside our major, which would be a good thing.
Kippenhan – maybe not requiring for all students?
Schmidt – Took a lot of hours out of college curriculum. Some departments such as Math had to add a lot.
Quinn – a lot of existing students are switching to the new curriculum because of the flexibility our new curriculum offers.
Ashburner – Need student input.
Krantz – how do we move forward?

To move forward on Big Ideas Course – Associate Dean Ashburner will organize a meeting. And develop some options.

Schedule for next Council meetings

- November 13 (the week before Thanksgiving break)
- Intend to invite Rob Bruno (in charge of instructional computing)
- December 11 (during exam week)

New Business from the floor

None

Announcements

None

Adjournment at 5:00 PM