

## **Curricular Affairs Committee**

### **DRAFT Meeting Minutes for 10 Sept. 2012 (with attachments)**

Voting Members present: Ken Abramowicz; Karen Gustafson; Cindy Hardy; Sarah Hardy; David Henry; Rainer Newberry (convener); Todd Radenbaugh (audio).

Voting Members absent: Retchenda George-Bettisworth; Diane McEachern.

Non-voting members present: Donald Crocker; Libby Eddy; Doug Goering; Linda Hapsmith; Lillian Misel; Andrea (lastname?) from Advising.

Non-voting members absent: Carol Gering; Ginnie Kinne. Jayne Harvie present to take notes.

#### **1. Elect a chairperson**

Rainer Newberry noted that earlier in the year he had emailed the membership, asking if anyone would be willing to chair so he could take on the chairship of the General Ed Revitalization subcommittee of CAC. No one has stepped forward. He offered another opportunity, but no takers. Rainer was unanimously approved to chair the committee, much to everyone's relief.

#### **2. Approve Rainer Newberry as CAC representative to (and chair of) Curriculum Review Committee**

Rainer explained that Curriculum Review Committee (CRC) is another subcommittee of CAC, and its function with the college/school curriculum councils. The committee unanimously approved Rainer to continue as the CAC representative (and chair of) Curriculum Review Committee. He was sincerely thanked by the committee members for being willing to continue in that role, as well.

Future meeting times and locations were discussed. Monday afternoons were suggested and tentatively agreed upon, depending upon faculty schedules.

#### **3. Approval of GERC 'action plan'**

Rainer provided some background about the formation of GERC as a CAC subcommittee, and its continuing work. He described the General Education Revitalization Committee's (GERC) action plan (attached to the agenda) noting the need for its approval by the committee as an overall approach to changing general education (emphasizing that the details of the plan would remain fluid in that they are still being discussed at GERC). He also noted that GERC needs a chairperson as well as representation from CAC.

The approach that GERC wishes to take by means of this plan is to get faculty involved early on in this change process. They do not wish to merely devise a new core and then just foist it on the rest of the faculty.

One of the key parts of this action plan is that faculty will be formally surveyed to see if they wish to move from a Core of 39 credits to one of 34 credits. GERC also wishes to provide faculty with opportunities to contribute to general education changes by means of campus-wide discussions, along with discussions at the department level.

Rainer noted that GERC needs a CAC member to attend its meetings and report back to CAC. This would also serve to provide Faculty Senate representation on the committee. Cindy H. requested to have

a member of the Student Academic Development and Achievement Committee on the GERC. Rainer concurred that this was a good suggestion and would be acted upon.

Rainer reported that the action plan had been examined and approved by Faculty Senate leadership, Dean's Council, and the Chancellor. The Chancellor will mention the project in his convocation tomorrow.

With regard to the position of Dean of University Studies mentioned in the action plan, Cindy asked if this position would replace the existing dean of general studies. Rainer provided some history on general studies (which concerns students who have not yet declared majors) and noted that the new position of dean would preside over "university studies": the baccalaureate core and all related requirements for graduation (i.e., "W" and "O" courses). The long-term position would not be a vice provost. Alex Fitts, now interim vice provost (and former GERC chair), has general studies along with university studies as part of her assignment, but without the accreditation piece.

Ken A. expressed concerns over just rubberstamping the action plan. He noted several items of concern on the action plan, particularly II.e. which is both time-consuming and involves talking to new students who are unfamiliar with the core. He noted that speaking with juniors and seniors would make more sense because they understand what the core means. Rainer agreed that this item could be taken out and that there were many details of the action plan that could be further discussed. But he stressed the overall need to approve the overall concept of the plan so the committee could move forward and approach all the faculty. The details would be refined further down the road. CAC members agreed that the overall concept of the plan could be endorsed, but not necessarily every detail of it at this time.

The committee next discussed item 5 on the agenda.

#### **4. Proposal for revision in probation policy**

Current wording: Students whose semester and cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 after each fall and spring semester will be put on academic probation.

#### **New suggested wording:**

Students whose cumulative and (or) semester GPA falls below 2.0 after any semester including the summer session will be put on academic probation.

Note that, the disqualification entry would remain as it is now, and would refer to fall/spring and spring/fall semesters (two terms in a row).

Doug G. mentioned that Dean's Council had looked at the revised wording and thought it was appropriate.

Ken A. asked how the Mesters and summer session are figured in. Donald C. clarified that Wintermester is rolled into spring semester, and that Maymester and Summer Sessions are rolled into one. Donald asked if a student could be put on probation after Summer Sessions, could they be pulled off as well? Libby responded that probation could occur following Summer Sessions, but not disqualification. There isn't enough turnaround time between summer and fall.

It was clarified that the changed wording of the policy means that probation can occur because of one term with a semester GPA below 2.0, or an overall (cumulative) GPA below 2.0. But disqualification would only be determined on fall/spring or spring/fall semesters. Donald asked about a scenario where the GPA is below 2.0 in spring, OK in summer, and then below 2.0 in fall. The result would be probation (not disqualification). Disqualification occurs on the basis of two semester below 2.0 and an

overall GPA below 2.0. A student might be on probation for two semesters, but with a GPA above 2.0 they would not be disqualified.

A discussion occurred about this change being a correction to the existing Catalog because of a “cut and paste” error made last year that shows in the printed Catalog. The online addendum is correct and in line with current practice.

Donald asked about how financial aid is affected for summer. Libby will check on that.

The need for academic advising in the summer session was noted. Dean Goering noted seeing some bad examples resulting from students not being advised about the summer courses. Everyone seemed to agree the ramifications of this change needs to be addressed by further discussion, and that the Summer Sessions Office should be included (as far as it affects degree-seeking students).

Rainer proposed carrying on this discussion to the next meeting and that financial aid and other ramifications (e.g., being put on probation at the end of the summer; advising and registration issues) be looked into further between now and the next meeting. Libby will look into the financial aid issues.

#### **5. Calendar revision for AY 2013-2014**

Proposed change: grades required by TUESDAY NOON Dec 24 instead of the Usual Weds noon (Dec 25). This would give the AR folks a bit of a holiday...

Rainer described the need to amend the 2013-14 academic calendar because the due date for grades would fall on a holiday or the day after a holiday if left unchanged. The problem affects both faculty and staff. He suggested the committee approve a change to that semester so that the due date would be December 24. The committee agreed that the due date should not be delayed because it adversely affects students, as well as faculty and staff.

Libby E. brought up the problem of Wintermester dates during AY14. There is not enough time to hold Wintermester between Jan. 2 and the first day of spring semester classes. The problem was acknowledged by Rainer, but more time is needed to resolve it. A subcommittee will be specifically examining it. Mid-October would be optimistic for having this problem resolved. Libby will let Marketing know they need to wait on this one before they can publish the calendar.

Ken A. noted problems with Maymester in the past and with when spring semester starts (before or after Alaska Civil Rights Day). This problem is different in that it affects the period of hard closure. Cindy H. asked about holding class on Saturdays and Rainer responded that is one potential solution.

#### **6. Proposed modification of excused absence policy (Catalog pg. 49)**

**Current.** You are expected to attend classes regularly; unexcused absences may result in a failing grade. You must have prior written approval to miss the first class meeting or your instructor may drop you. You are responsible for conferring with your instructor concerning absences and the possibility of making up missed work.

**New suggested wording:** Students are expected to adhere to the attendance policies set by their instructors. Students must have prior written approval to miss the first class meeting; otherwise, they may be dropped. Students are responsible for conferring with their instructors in advance concerning absences and the possibility of arranging alternate ways of learning the missed course material.

Further discussion on this item was postponed until the next meeting.

## **7. Proposed modification of absence notification (Catalog, pg. 49)**

**Current:** You must notify your instructor(s) of all scheduled UAF-required absences for the semester (e.g., travel to athletic events) during the first week of classes.

Suggested modification: You must notify your instructor(s) of all scheduled UAF-required absences for the semester (e.g., travel to athletic events) by the end of the second week of classes (the deadline for late registration).

**Note: the above is apparently what happens now, in violation of the catalog. But should it be further changed????? (Reference the copy of Sine Anahita's memo which was attached to the agenda).**

Ken A. asked the committee to strongly consider not changing the notification by the student to the instructor to the second week of classes, but instead it should remain notification to the instructor on the first day of class. The second week can bring students too close the drop date and create more problems for both students and instructors. Rainer stressed the need for the committee members to look this over for the next meeting.

Karen G. noted that the first day of class for individual courses can vary.

Rainer requested the committee members have at least one sleepless night considering the issues at hand and come prepared for more discussion. He also suggested that online discussion could occur on these issues. He will try to get Athletics involved in the discussion with the committee.

## **8. OLD business that will be rearing its ugly Head.....Wintermester and etc.**

(This item was rolled into the academic calendar discussion earlier in the meeting.)

Meeting was adjourned shortly after 10:00 AM.

## **GERC action plan: an effort to Engage faculty, students, administration in curricular reform in order to generate well integrated general education + major curriculum**

### **I. Request formation of a new Academic Structure, headed by a full-time 'Dean of University Studies'**

a. This person would have the full time job of inspiring, advocating for, leading, supervising, assessing....courses that are part of the University Studies program.

b. This person would play a vital role in making 'University Studies' at UAF something the faculty and students would be proud of.... and would serve as a recruiting tool

### **II. Campus-wide discussion**

- a. Starts with email to faculty articulating a new philosophy of gen ed. and stating "we will be conducting a poll in Oct." Publish materials on the web and in Sun Star and Cornerstone. Finally, we will hold a series of discussion meetings to more fully engage the university community in this process. These will be done on a school/college basis.
- b. Chancellor will announce (and promote!) such in his Convocation address to Faculty
- c. Individual deans will announce (and promote!) such in their Convocation Addresses and they will pass out the referendum (again).
- d. There will be at least one UAF-wide forum. Members of GERC and/or the 'turf valley 5' will attend. One will serve as moderator. In addition, GERC members will volunteer to attend individual department faculty meetings as needed to spread the word. At these sessions we will also identify faculty interested in working on GE curriculum.
- e. We will request 15 minutes of class time during September from each instructor of a current core course to initiate dialog with students. We will start with the "elevator speech" about curriculum revision, and solicit their oral and written feedback. We will also provide them with web addresses for both additional information and opportunities for providing feedback.
- f. Hookups for audioconferencing will be made for the UAF forum.
- g. prepare FAQ ....possibly as a sheet to be given out with the convocations???

### **III. Faculty-wide GEN-ED referendum (early October)**

- a. Formal reason is to determine faculty support for proposed changes to the core curriculum and general education goals and philosophies.
- b. MOTIVE: while reducing credits, faculty will redesign the GEN ED program so as to better meet overall objectives of critical reasoning, analytical thinking, and communication skills as well as incorporate the objectives (globalization, sustainability, civic engagement, diversity appreciation....) expressed in the objectives & student learning outcomes passed by the UAF faculty senate.
- c. Specific Questions on Referendum (will presumably change at least a little)
  1. Should UAF 'core' requirements be reduced from the current 39 credits to the BOR policy minimum of 34? (with the University Regulations distribution of content given, eg. 10 credits of sci/quant including 4 of lab science and 3 of math). Note: we will attach these guidelines to the referendum.
  2. Attached are the UAF faculty senate approved learning objectives for associate of Arts and Sciences and baccalaureate programs. Number three could be addressed in either your major or in the core. Should this objective be addressed in the core, your major, or both?
  3. Should your baccalaureate major program(s) have a capstone experience that all graduates are required to take to meet objective 4?
  4. Should the bulk of Gen Ed (core) classes include a minimum writing and/or reading component?
  5. Should an upper-division writing component (akin to a W) continue to be required for baccalaureate degrees?

6. Should an upper-division oral communication component (akin to an O) continue to be required for baccalaureate degrees?
7. Should students from schools outside of UA be allowed similar in transfer of 'core' courses as students from UA? (Every UA student is guaranteed that if the student has taken a core course applicable to one MAU it is applicable to the core for all MAUs).

**IV. Initiate discussion with departments and colleges about curricular ideas, suggestions, and learning outcomes**

- a. Distributed as follows (with consultation with other departments and colleges) : 15 Credits of 'humanities and social sciences' = College of Liberal Arts (CLA); 10 credits of science/quantification = College of Nat Sci & Math; 6 credits of written communication' = English and Library; 3 credits of Oral communication = Comm dept.
- b. The General Education Reform Committee (GERC) and individual units will be strongly encouraged to seek advice/suggestions from outside of their units for the suggestions about the revised curriculum
- c. GERC will act as 'facilitators' for in discussions with the departments and colleges about each of the 4 BOR blocks (H&SS, SQ, Writ Com; Oral com)
- d. Units will be informed: you've got until X to come up with a plan. This plan will include an assessment mechanism!!! If no plan, then GERC will create one.
- e. GERC will continue meeting through the school year as the members and facilitators discuss progress (and regress?) in the various blocks

**V. A forum? Conference? Among W (written-intensive) course instructors will be created. Faculty at this forum/conference will discuss 'what seems to be working/not working'? What can be done to improve things?**

**VI. Similarly a forum/conference among the O (oral-intensive) course instructors**

**VII. Find way to get upper division students involved in the whole business**

- a. engage ASUAF
- b. peer-mentoring: have upper division students help advise and orient Freshman -- complementary to Freshman seminars
- c. solicit student input in the design of the general education requirements
- d. capture and systematize current student involvement in service learning, civic engagement, co-curricular activities

**VIII. Conference among departmental assessment chairpersons--perhaps especially related to University Studies aspects of the assessment...**

**IX. GERC gets the Curriculum proposals for the 34 credits by some date—spring 2013?? and reviews....makes suggestions...**

**Cycles back for several rounds?**

**X. Faculty referendum on revised core by late 2013?**

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## Memo

To: Jordan Titus, chair of Sociology  
Anita Hartmann, interim dean of CLA  
Dani Sheppard, faculty liaison to Athletics  
Kristina Giddings, Associate Athletic Director  
Jennifer Reynolds, President of UAF Faculty Senate  
David Valentine, President-Elect of UAF Faculty Senate

From: Sine Anahita, associate professor of Sociology  
sine.anahita@alaska.edu

Re: student athlete issues

Date: May 7, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to request assistance in resolving long-standing issues concerning student-athletes. Issues occurred this semester that are emblematic of the ongoing problem with the way UAF treats our student-athletes and the faculty who teach them. The problems I outline here have been ongoing since at least 2003, when I first came to UAF, but became most acute over the last year in my SOC 100x classes.

### **The Form**

Faculty Senate policy requires that student-athletes notify instructors of their planned absences within the first week of class. My students tell me that their coach gives them a form to give to instructors, but the form seems to originate from Kristina Giddings, Associate Athletic Director. Because the form is untitled, here I will simply refer to it as The Form. However, I suggest that in the future the form bear a title, e.g. "Notification of Scheduled Absences."

### **Timeliness of The Form**

In my experience, coaches often fail to give The Form to student athletes in a timely manner. The Form is the only notification that instructors receive about the special accommodations they are required to provide to student-athletes, and its timely receipt is imperative for planning. I have had student-athletes bring me the form during the second, third, and even fourth week of classes. Last year when I complained to Athletics, I was told that the coach was new and did not know about the requirement. New athletic personnel need to be supported through a comprehensive orientation to academic requirements.

The previous faculty liaison to Athletics told me that Athletics considers the second week of class to actually be the first week of class. If Faculty Senate agrees, then Faculty Senate policy (and The Form) should state that fact. For example, Faculty Senate policy could state "You must notify your instructor(s) of all scheduled UAF-required absences for the semester (e.g. travel to athletic events) by the end of the second week of classes during the first week of classes. Of course, one problem with this policy would be that students would have missed up to 10% of a class if they needed to transfer into a different class because of being unable to make suitable arrangements for making up missed classes. When I discussed this issue with Dr. Sheppard, she suggested that student-athletes be required to meet with faculty in advance of class to discuss the planned absences, to organize opportunities to make up missed work, and to obtain signatures acknowledging the scheduled absences. I think her idea should be considered by Faculty Senate and compliance assured by Athletics through appropriate advising and support.

## **Content of The Form**

There are several problems with the content of The Form. I attach a Form that I received this past spring that is particularly problematic. Please note these problems:

- the letter is not dated
- the name of the team is left blank
- the name of the student is not highlighted-instead, all of the team members are listed on one form, requiring faculty to go through our entire class list (60+/- students in SOC 100X) to determine which of those listed are our students
- the name and number of the class is not listed-requiring instructors who teach multiple classes to go through several class lists
- the contact phone number for the letter writer is incorrect (the phone listed goes to an HR technician, not to Kristina Giddings)

## **Excused absences**

I would like to see Faculty Senate, Athletics, and the administration discuss which campus entity has the authority to declare an absence as "excused." I suggest that individual faculty hold this authority, as we are the ones who set our course attendance policies. I have had several student-athletes demand special treatment from me who cite the "excused absence" language to me as evidence of their entitlement. I suggest that Faculty Senate revise the language of the policy to acknowledge that faculty hold the prerogative of establishing their class attendance policies. For example: "Students are expected to adhere to the attendance policies set by your instructors; unexcused absences may result in a failing grade. Students are responsible for conferring with their instructors concerning absences and the possibility of arranging alternate ways of learning the missed course material to make up missed work.... [see also the third paragraph of this section, pg. 48 of the catalog]

## **Excessive absences**

On February 27, one of my students informed me that he would be missing the next four to six weeks of class in addition to previously scheduled absences. This would have meant that the student would miss a total of 16 class periods. He would have missed more than a third of class (38%). There is no way that students can adequately "make up" this much class. Class discussions, in-class activities, small-group work, films that are not available in the library-these cannot be made up. Additionally, the announcement that the student would miss additional classes came long after it would have been possible for the student to switch to another section, e.g. a distance section. The student did not provide me with written documentation of his absences, and told me the day before he would start the additional travel. There was no time to arrange anything in terms of a missed exam, missed assignments, or missed participation in group work.

## **Where does the burden rightfully belong?**

A conversation that I would like to see Faculty Senate, Department of Athletics, and the university administration have is how to fairly distribute the burden associated with student-athletics. For example, I discussed the attendance issue above with Dani Sheppard, faculty liaison to Athletics, and Anita Hartmann, then associate dean of CLA. Their suggestions included:

- my tutoring students outside of class
- my assigning "make-up" work. e.g. outlines of chapter readings
- teaching students by distance, e.g. skype, e-Live, or Bb
- provide my lecture notes to student-athletes
- getting another student in the class to take notes for student-athletes
- getting other students in my class to tutor student-athletes



Besides the fact that none of these activities would provide an adequate substitute for in-class learning, in my opinion, all of these suggestions place the burden of making "suitable arrangements" for "making up" missed class onto faculty and classmates of student-athletes.

The question emerges: what would be a fair way to distribute the burden of "suitable arrangements"? Other universities provide special tutors, advisors, support for student-athlete study groups, distance- delivered sections, and other academic support for their student-athletes. Should our Department of Athletics do the same? One of my student-athletes told me this semester that she did not bring her texts on the road because she was told that there would be no time to study. Whose responsibility was it to advise this student about how she could be both a successful student and a successful athlete?

### **Special privileges**

I also am concerned about the perception that student-athletes get special privileges that are not available to other students. For example, over the years, I have had several students complain to me that student-athletes get special treatment such as extended deadlines, alternative exams, lax attendance requirements, and exemptions from group work. The complaining students believe that having separate class policies and practices that apply only to student-athletes is unfair to ordinary students.

### **Focus on learning**

Perhaps most important of all, I urge UAF to shift our thinking from focusing on "allowing make-up work" and "not penalizing" students for absences and instead focus on being concerned about student learning. Is it fair for us to expect student-athletes to settle for a second-rate college education in exchange for playing sports for the university? Students who chronically miss class, who must do busy-work to "make up" missed class activities, and who do not get to benefit from in-class learning activities are not receiving the same quality of education that we provide to our other students. We should be concerned about this, and we should discuss it. I urge Faculty Senate to reconsider policies regarding student-athletes, and put in place mechanisms for ensuring that all students get the same quality of education regardless of their status as student-athletes.

Thank you for reading. And thanks in advance for participating in this conversation.

Sincerely,

Sine Anahita

sine.anahita@alaska.edu