

College of Liberal Arts Council
October 2, 2007 meeting minutes

Members present: Bardhan, Baertsch, Benti, Bird, Breznikar, Burnside, Cáceres, Chonez, Cook, Curtis, Gadzekpo, Giblin (proxy for Leonard), Gray, Lapham, Morshed, Lowery (proxy for Nadler), Netzley, Ojewuyi (proxy for Kidd), Pattisapu, Poquette, Rodriguez, Rivera, Schoof, Silver, Sloboda, Spaulding, Venable, Wang, Ward.

Members absent: Beardsworth, Boyd, Kidd, Leonard, Ludwig.

1. Welcome, Chair Alejandro Cáceres

Cáceres called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Approval of Sept. 4, 2007, meeting minutes

Motion to approve by Netzley. Seconded by Rodriguez. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Chair's remarks and announcements

Cáceres reported that Chancellor Treviño will address the Council during its November meeting.

Next, he discussed the revision of the operating papers. Language is needed on how to appoint a dean, associate dean and interim positions. Procedure for representation of CoLA units on the Council also needs to be updated. He suggested that the Grievance and Selection & Election committees be combined for this task. The combined committees would bring suggestions for change to the entire Council. He called for a motion to vote. Netzley motioned to accept, Chonez and Sloboda seconded. The Council voted unanimously in favor of combining the two committees for this task. Mahbub noted that a time frame for this task would be helpful. Chonez said the chairs of the committees could decide on this. Selection & Election Committee Chair Rodriguez suggested that changes could be brought to the Council at the Feb. 2008 meeting for a vote in March. Silver inquired how long the approval process takes after it leaves the Council and moves to the provost's office. Dean Vaux clarified that it could be as fast as a month.

Cáceres next brought up the WAC statement that was prepared by the Council last year, and said that as a follow-up on that, he had suggested that the Council review the state of critical thinking in the CoLA curriculum this year. Chonez sought clarification about the changes to WAC course requirements made by the Council, and whether any special note had been made of resources needed for foreign language students. Dean Vaux clarified that writing requirements had been made more flexible in order to designate more courses as WAC (3500 words instead of the previous 5000 words), and Cáceres said that no special resources for foreign language students had been specifically discussed.

4. Committee Reports

Academic Policy – Gray stated that the committee voted in favor of the the RME for a Professional Development MA degree in English which would create the option of earning an MA without having to write a thesis or take a foreign language. Gray noted that although the committee approved the RME, it had some ‘friendly concerns’ – this change could create an ‘MA lite’ model that could turn into a precedent for a two-tier ‘caste system’ within graduate programs. The question also arose about the population that would need such an MA. Although the RME doesn’t include this, Gray said that this population could include those who do not want to teach at the college level but perhaps at the secondary school level. Netzley noted that high school teachers with bachelor’s degrees would also be interested.

Sloboda inquired what would happen if those with the Professional Development MA wanted to earn a Ph.D. Netzley clarified that this would be considered a terminal degree at SIUC’s English Department. Sloboda expressed that this could lead other institutions to think negatively about SIUC’s degree. Dean Vaux clarified that the new degree is not weak, but is designed more for a population that seeks additional graduate work but is not necessarily Ph.D. oriented. Ojewuyi noted that this is a need that is State-driven, and that there are similar programs in other departments.

Silver stated that he didn’t feel comfortable voting for an RME he didn’t feel he understood completely, and Cáceres requested Netzley to elaborate. Netzley said that degree is geared toward high school teachers who would like to get a college level master’s degree without the Ph.D. orientation. This is an opportunity for the English Department to extend its program, and that the additional tuition would also be a plus (he noted, however, that this decision is not driven solely by monetary concerns). Gray clarified that the number of credit hours required to complete the degree would remain the same for both MAs. Netzley noted that while there is the concern that this MA might create a two-tier ‘caste system,’ the hope is that the benefits will outweigh the concerns. Pattisapu inquired if this degree would be in competition with the education teaching certificate program, and Netzley responded that it wouldn’t. Ward expressed concern that this could be seen as a backdoor way of admitting tuition paying graduate students, and could be a negative precedent for other departments. Dean Vaux noted that there already exist graduate students who pay tuition, and those who don’t. He added the there is currently an initiative at SIUC to increase the number of tuition paying students. He further noted that several departments have various models for MAs, and that what the English Department is suggesting is not new. Ojewuyi also noted that there are various models for Ph.D.s as well. Chonez suggested that the language about this being a terminal degree be taken out since it would be perceived as such only at SIUC and not at other institutions. Silver noted that the disclosure that the degree is a terminal one at the SIUC English Department should be made clear.

The Council voted unanimously to approve the RME.

Promotions – No report.

Teaching and Learning – Netzley reported on the results of a survey of CoLA departments on the state of critical thinking instruction at SIUC (see handout for details). Overall, most respondents felt that there is no need for additional courses, that critical thinking is incorporated into several courses already, and that critical thinking is different from disciplinary thinking. There was a wide gamut of responses on whether or not a core curriculum course on critical thinking is needed.

Cáceres noted that incoming freshmen would benefit from such a core course. Burnside inquired why students were not surveyed. Cáceres added that new students cannot answer that question and Burnside added that this is something students pick up through the major. Ward added that thinking in terms of diversity is a part of critical thinking, and that this aspect should also be included. Curtis noted that students do need to be surveyed. Pattisapu added that she did not feel that critical thinking was being incorporated in upper level classes and should be included in the core curriculum.

Gray noted that critical thinking components are assessed for the core curriculum courses, that assessment reports are available, and that the Council need not do additional work in this area. He also advised that the Council should really ask why it is focusing on critical thinking? Is there really a problem with the state of critical thinking in the curriculum? Rodriguez suggested that the Council could look at what peer institutions are doing in this regard. Dean Vaux noted that the point about duplicating data that is already available is important. Silver cautioned that if there is a problem in the core curriculum it should be addressed. Gray said that given that he is the director for the public speaking core course, he can only speak for that course – and critical thinking is prominent in that course. He emphasized that if the assessment reports indicate there is a problem, then it should be followed up on, and that we cannot assume there is a problem. Dean Vaux suggested that Cáceres could follow up with core curriculum director Jim Allen on the matter of assessment reports. Burnside offered that critical thinking was a ‘sticking point’ when he proposed a core class, and that there are mechanisms already in place that require core courses to include critical thinking components. Ward noted that Jim Allen could perhaps address the Council, and that some of the Council members could perhaps acquire assessment reports for core courses offered through their departments.

Grievance – No report.

Elections & Selection – Rodriguez reported that the Council is still short by one undergraduate student member.

5. Dean’s Remarks, Alan Vaux

Dean Vaux noted that the work on WAC last year was very productive, that the WAC statement was widely distributed, and as a result the provost’s office granted funds to conduct workshops on WAC related issues.

In terms of kudos, the dean noted that the School of Music wind ensemble was competitively selected to play at Carnegie Hall next month. On other CoLA

matters, he said that the chairs and directors had met with the chancellor. He added that the Council could benefit from learning about the chancellor's vision at the next CoLA Council meeting, however, it is also equally important for the Council to influence the shaping of CoLA's role in this vision.

The dean next made various announcements regarding upcoming CoLA events (see CoLA website for details).

6. Associate Dean's Remarks, David DiLalla

Associate Dean DiLalla made announcements regarding teaching and scholarship awards. Professor Robbie Lieberman has been selected as the CoLA candidate for the university-wide outstanding scholar award. The deadline for the faculty teaching enhancement awards has not been announced yet. The calls for the CoLA- level teacher and scholar awards will go out in December

On other matters, the sabbatical leave requests are coming in and being processed; the searches for next year (fewer than last year due to budget cuts) are on; and provost Don Rice has met with the search committees of all departments to emphasize the need to proactively recruit more candidates from underrepresented minority groups. DiLalla added that CoLA is also committed to gender diversity. Dean Vaux noted that CoLA will have a table at the Inspiring Women Gala event, and DiLalla added that Dr. Michelle Miller, associate professor of sociology, is now heading UWPA (University Women's Professional Association).

7. Dean's Office Business, Anita Hutton

Hutton reminded Council members about the Distinguished Alumni Awards ceremony to be held at 2:30 pm at the Recreation Center on Oct. 5. Two of the awardees are CoLA alum. On Oct.6, CoLA will have a tent for Homecoming, and this would be a good opportunity to meet with alumni and parents of students. The first open house of the semester will be held on Oct. 8, and the second one will be on Nov. 8. She also added that the Chicago Downer' Grove recruitment as well as Family Weekend are scheduled for the coming weekends. To date, recruitment visits have been made to eight high schools and three community colleges.

8. Old Business

None

9. New Business

Cáceres announced that Virginia Rinella, director of the Pre-Major Advisement Center, will address the Council regarding recruitment and retention at the December meeting. He added that she may be able to shed some more light on the state of critical thinking instruction at SIUC.

10. Announcements

None

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Rodriguez at 7:28 p.m. Seconded by Burnside.

Submitted by Nilanjana Bardhan/Vice-Chair (2007-08)