

**REPORT ON ACADEMIC POLICY TO THE
UNIVERSITY SENATE**

APRIL 20, 2007

Academic Policy Committee (APC) is a standing committee of the University Senate that “Formulates policy on academic matters affecting more than one college; work with the Scholarship, Calendar, University Core Curriculum and Library committees”. For 2006-2007 the committee consisted of 29 members including six students and 23 faculty and administrators. By the end of the academic year the committee will have met six times. Here is the summary of topics discussed in chronological order.

1. Faculty exchange

Sabbatical leaves are an excellent opportunity to broaden ones horizon by working, teaching and learning at other institutions. Sabbaticals, however, do not come around very often. Committee discussed possible models for faculty exchange. A faculty exchange program attempts to facilitate faculty interaction at a frequency more often than what sabbatical leaves allow. Several models were discussed ranging from reciprocal exchanges to individual visits. Although the idea of faculty exchange was worthwhile, it became clear that devising an exchange that is equitable in all aspects is difficult. Issues raised included pay scale differential, housing etc. In the end it was decided that exchange decisions be handled at the college and department level once candidates have expressed interest. With ever increasing rise of Villanova faculty profile, such exchanges may become more common.

2. Outside Work by Faculty

The current university policy on outside work has not kept pace with the times. Faculty is generally allowed one day of consulting a week with relatively weak oversight. Outside teaching, however, is much more regulated. Disciplines that have limited consulting possibilities are therefore at a disadvantage. A specific case was brought up by a faculty member and discussed in committee. Although the particular outside teaching position was indeed a prestigious one, the faculty had difficulty securing necessary approvals. With Villanova’s profile on the rise, such opportunities are bound to come up more. The VPAA informed the committee that there is indeed a major effort underway to revise faculty handbook on outside work by faculty to reflect tremendous changes at Villanova since the original policy was written.

3. Distance Learning

With distance learning becoming more mainstream, the borderlines have become increasingly fuzzy. Many programs are now offering all-distance learning degrees. Should faculty be required to teach in distance learning mode? Should a concurrent distance learning section be counted as part of teaching load even though faculty is not obligated to offer a parallel distance section? Should there be additional compensation for such parallel sections? Formal policies, to the extent that they exist at all, are college or even departmental specific. Much discussion ensued. In the end in light of the variety of programs, courses and compensation models such decisions were left to individual colleges. It should be understood, however, that different policies may apply to very similar conditions depending on the program.

4. Academic Policy Implications of a Pandemic

The university is in the midst of drawing up plans in case a pandemic strikes. There are academic issues if the pandemic results in closing of the university for weeks, perhaps months. The

committee discussed various scenarios including continuing classes via distance education facilities, continuing the semester to make up for lost time, issues of contracts and compensation. The university-wide pandemic policy being developed will have to address these issues at some point. APC will provide input once the draft document is available.

5. Endowed Chairs

The university has seen a considerable rise of the number of endowed chairs. However, many are unaware how the process actually works. This topic was discussed at APC and as a result the VPAA prepared a written explanation detailing the selection process, duration, donors and other pertinent information. This issue was later taken up by COF.

6. CATS: five lowest scoring questions

As a matter of curiosity the committee asked for the five lowest scoring questions on CATS form. Data extracted by OPTIR showed the “bottom 5” to include 7 questions. However, what is noteworthy is that the mean rating of the so called bottom 5 are actually quite high(4 and higher). Only one question appeared in all 5 colleges(Q23- I found the course intellectually stimulating) with mean rating from ranging from 3.95 to 4.54.

7. Common exam scheduling, due dates and incompletes

Scheduling common exams for multiple section courses are always a challenge. Inquiry was made at the Registrar to learn more about the policy. The committee was assured that the every effort is made to accommodate faculty requests. Evidently, all requests have been honored this year. The Registrar also informed the committee that many courses do not hold a final exam thus add to room scheduling problems. As a result of this discussion, the VPAA is now asking faculty to notify the Registrar in advance if no final exams is planned.

Spring due dates are uncomfortably close to the last day of exams. This issue was discussed with the Registrar to see if there is a possibility to have two deadlines, one for the graduating seniors and one for others. The Registrar provided a thorough analysis of the proposal. Considering other deadlines in play such as academic standing, summer school registration as well as complications of managing two grading cycles, it was decided that there is not sufficient grounds to alter current practices. Few courses actually have a final on last day.

Incomplete(N)grades given out in spring have to be removed in the middle of summer. This deadline may be difficult to meet for students who are no longer on campus. The Registrar indicated that it is possible to extend an N grade by another N grade if proper is made with the Registrar.

8. Academic Calendar

Dr. Johannes presented 2009-10 and 1010-11 and 2011-12 tentative calendars. After some discussions the committee approved the calendars.

9. Remaining Agenda

The committee will meet one more time to discuss a process for the evaluation of the academic impact of the laptop program and Speaker and Events policy.

Report submitted by Dr. Bijan G. Mobaserri, Chair