Meeting of the Villanova University
Academic Policy Committee

Monday, October 2, 2017
11:00-12:00 Noon
Fedigan Room (SAC 400)

Present
Sepideh Cheheltani, Gordon Coonfield, Marylu Hill, Shelly Howton, Christopher Kilby (chair), Brian King, Adele Lindenmeyr, Eric Lomazoff, Peggy Lyons, Wen Mao, Kimberly Marucci, Christine Palus, Elizabeth Petit de Mange, Michael Posner, Rees Rankin, Joseph Schick, Marguerite Schlag, Andrea Welker, Craig Wheeland, Tina Yang

Absent
Sherry Bowen (NIA), Danai Chasaki (on leave), Jennifer Dixon (on leave), Dennis Wykoff (NIA) [NIA=Notified in Advance]

Administrative Items

1) Eric Lomazoff volunteered to take minutes.
2) Minutes from 9/6/2017 approved with zero votes against and two abstentions.

Old Business

3) Online CATS; Proposed CATS Diversity & Inclusion Questions
    Jim Trainer and Trina Das (OPIR) reported that Spring 2017 saw a shift from 15% of courses employing online CATS (during the Fall 2016 pilot phase) to 85%. The overall response rate for Spring 2017 was 76%, down from 82% during the Fall 2016 pilot phase. Response rates rose with the length of course (highest rates achieved by full semester courses). In response to questions, Jim and Trina said it would be possible to look at response rates by student subgroup (e.g., seniors vs. juniors) but it would be impractical (given the software's current design) to give instructors discretion over the timing of online CATS. Delay in reporting results is largely due to the deficiency of the reporting module of the vendor, requiring OPIR to generate reports the old way within the new online environment. OPIR is working with UNIT to improve and expedite this process.

    Following up on the previous APC meeting, discussion turned to a Fall 2017 piloting of CATS questions pertaining to diversity and inclusion (using a sample of volunteer faculty and focus groups). A concern was raised about whether the decision to move to full incorporation of diversity and inclusion questions has already been made. The case was made that the pilot phase for online CATS was less a true "pilot" and more a small-scale run that was succeeded by university-wide use. In particular, the decision to move to full implementation of online CATS came without APC recommendation (positive or negative) following the pilot. There is concern that the same thing may happen after piloting diversity and inclusion questions. Jim Trainer pointed out that the logistics of adding diversity and inclusion questions are significantly simpler than the move to online CATS,

1

making the two situations different. Craig Wheeland stated that, while it is very important to move forward quickly, "getting it right" (i.e., generating meaningful data) is paramount. APC discussed the logistics of incorporating lessons from the Fall pilot (and follow-up focus groups) in subsequent CATS; because some CATS begin at the start of each semester, Fall 2017 lessons might reasonable be incorporated by Fall 2018 (or Summer 2018).

APC discussion returned to concerns about the details of diversity and inclusion questions (also discussed at the 9/6/2017 meeting) and how OPIR will evaluate pilot results in light of those concerns. Concerns included the use of such questions (especially Likert-scale questions) across a wide range of courses, including courses where diversity and inclusion issues are not directly germane to the course material. OPIR appears prepared to pilot multiple versions to allow comparison of results. One APC member strongly advised against employing only Likert-scale questions, even for comparative purposes on a pilot. The question was also raised as to whether faculty (rather than just students) should be queried about their own assessment of diversity and inclusion-related issues as they arose (or not) during the semester. Echoing points from the previous APC discussion, one suggestion was to include a "not applicable to this course" (NA) option for Likert-scale questions (either in one variant of a pilot study or for any finalized Likert-scale questions) so that students taking this view would not be forced to make an arbitrary choice on a 1 to 5 scale. However, the opposite opinion was also voiced, namely that students understand how the questions apply across a variety of courses (recognizing that questions focus on the faculty member's performance, not the content of the course) and that numerical responses would be no more problematic in this context than in other contexts.

Jim Trainer will send draft pilot questions to Christopher Kilby who will elicit feedback from APC and pass this along to Jim by the end of October.

New Business

4) Academic Opportunities for High Achieving Students
   Jim Trainer discussed materials from the "Our Students and Their Academic Experiences" presentation in the spring. APC focused on content relevant to the experiences of high-achieving students (high combined SAT/ACT scores & top 10% of graduating high school class). Craig Wheeland noted that Villanova is attracting more high-achieving students than in the past. Time constraints limited further discussion

5) New Subcommittees and Assignments
   Christopher Kilby asked that APC members without a current subcommittee assignment e-mail him with their preference for such an assignment. Two subcommittees (Online CATS and Academic Integrity Violations) are continuing. Based on APC survey responses from last year and topics discussed this year, Christopher also recommended the creation of new subcommittees on (1) Diversity & Inclusion, and (2) Improving the Student Academic Experience.

The meeting adjourned at about 12:15 PM.

Drafted from Eric Lomazoff's excellent notes. Thank you!