

Academic Priorities Council
Friday, December 21, 2007

Attendees: Margaret Allard, Richard Bogartz, Curt Conner, Bryan Harvey, Anne C. Moore, Eliot Moss

1. Minutes from November 20th meeting were approved.

2. Announcements: Pamela Marsh-Williams and John Cunningham will attend the January 15th meeting to continue our discussion of Supply and Demand issues from the advising and administration perspectives. Kathy Debevec Witz will moderate this portion of the meeting.

3. Certificate Approval Reviews

A certificate is 15+ credits in a coherent area of study that delves into an area that does not overlap with the requirements of an existing degree program.

- A. Certificate in Multicultural Theater Practice: We were to reconsider this undergraduate certificate proposal that was originally submitted last year, but it has been withdrawn again for reformulation.
- B. Graduate Certificate in Film Studies: APC decided to return the proposal to the Graduate Council (as the lead decision-making body) with these questions: 1) Is this proposal comparable to other certificate proposals? What is the evidence of student demand for this certificate? Some of the courses listed are older and might not be currently taught? Are the course enrollments sufficient to justify running these courses and offering this certificate? Is it clear to students what they are getting if they pursue this certificate? The proposal seems confusing. 2) Are all of the elements included in this proposal required for a certificate? 3) What are the ramifications of the fact that we don't have an interdepartmental program or graduate degree in Film Studies, but there is an undergraduate certificate? 4) Who are the faculty associated with the undergraduate certificate? 5) What types of people will be members of the Advisory Committee? What is their current role? 6) Are the courses listed under curriculum currently offered by existing faculty and stable to ensure the viability of the certificate?
- C. Graduate Certificate in Public History: APC decided to return the proposal to the Graduate Council (as the lead decision-making body) with these questions: 1) Are these courses going to be taught? Do other departments support these courses? Will the students be able to get into the courses? 2) Please clarify if this a concentration in history or something additional? We can't have both a degree and a certificate. 3) Why are journalism and English courses listed under iii.3.? 4) How can candidates for the M.A. in history get a certificate in Public History when there is a concentration? 5) Is it acceptable and standard procedure to receive a certificate for dedicating one of the three comprehensive exams to that subject? 6) How can the certificate not stand alone apart from a current degree program?
- D. Graduate Certificate in African Diaspora Studies: Committee concerns centered around the anticipatory nature of the proposal. Faculty are not yet in place and the proposal is

vague, so we are unable to determine the viability of the certificate. APC recommends the proposal be tabled until faculty are hired to teach the courses for the certificate and they have taught the courses provisionally. Once the structure is in place to support the certificate, it will be easier for the department to describe and for councils to approve. APC did not approve the proposal, but decided to return the proposal to the Graduate Council (as the lead decision-making body) with these questions: 1) How can applicants be expected to “demonstrate basic familiarity with the scholarship in Diaspora Studies”? Isn’t developing that familiarity the purpose of the certificate? 2) Are undergraduate juniors from other Five College schools eligible for a certificate program such as this? 3) Are the two required Afro-Am foundational courses existing and taught on a regular basis, so students can complete the certificate in a timely fashion? 4) Why are the courses 4 rather than 3 credits? How do these 4 credit courses impact the ability of students to fit these courses into their schedules? 5) Why is the Diaspora research course worth a span of 2-4 credits? 6) How do students fulfill the requirement of a completed independent research project? 7) What support is required for the African Diaspora/Pan-Africanism in the U.S., 1619-Present: Theories and Concepts course? Are the materials available within the Five Colleges?

APC was uncomfortable with the proposed certificates because tying them to theses and dissertations is a big deal. Is it clear to students what they are getting when they pursue a certificate? Why are we establishing certificates rather than degree programs?

Anne will forward APC questions and concerns to the Graduate Council.

4. AQAD reports

Conner presented a concern that the new administration will ask for a new way to assess programs. Harvey said the format might change, but the content of the reports will likely remain stable. NEASC reaccreditation will take place in fall 2009. APC reviewed how to insert comments in Buzzword. APC discussed creating a themes and issues grid as a starting point for analyzing the AQAD reports. Harvey observed that AQAD has not been a standards-based review in the past. Departments do not have to respond to each topic and deans have broad latitude in shaping the review process. The dean is the nexus of the AQAD; hence, the wide variability in the reports. It has been a contextual rather than a directive process to this point. It is a slice or snapshot of the department.

Questions we should consider regarding the AQAD process:

1. What are our impressions of the reports and the process?
2. Does the AQAD process work?
3. How could it be improved?
4. Should it be more standardized? More directive? If so, how?
5. Would creating a list of “best practices” or sample(s) of AQAD reports improve the utility and impact of the process?
6. Should we share what has worked?
7. Should we design a specific structure?

APC will attempt to evaluate the AQAD process from the reports and begin with a grid of the issues that surface repeatedly.

Next meeting: January 15 from 1-2 p.m. in CC805-09.