

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences The College of William and Mary
November 4, 1997

The meeting was called to order at 3:33 p.m., Dean Geoffrey Feiss presiding.

I. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the October 7, 1997 meeting were approved as submitted.

II. Reports of Administrative Officers

Dean Feiss announced that Martha Sheets will convene the group reviewing the physical condition of classrooms. Anyone with concerns regarding a room's configuration or available technology should contact either Dean Feiss or the department chair who oversees the room. Laboratories and department seminar rooms are not currently included in the review.

The Budget Planning Advisory Committee (BPAC) process has two parts. The first part, which is already completed, is to convey to Richmond the college's new programmatic funding requests ("decision packages"). The State Council submits "generic," system-wide funding requests, but each college also submits its own requests to the governor's budget committee. A budget is then sent to the General Assembly for its consideration. The SCHEV request includes a 9.4% increase in William and Mary faculty salaries, an increase in undergraduate scholarships, a 2.8% increase for nonpersonnel services and an initiative for technology (hardware). BPAC's proposal includes the following ranked categories: 1) technology operating support (including 13 FTEs), 2) teaching and learning initiative, 3) materials processing research program, 4) nonpersonnel service support (including library materials), 5) technology preparation for K-12 teachers, 6) expansion of the William and Mary Peninsula Center, 7) Graduate/Professional Student Financial Assistance, 8) buildings and grounds maintenance, 9) employee development, and 10) the Virginia Microelectronics Consortium. This request forms the basis on which the college can lobby for funding. Next week BPAC begins the budget reallocation process.

Randy Coleman reported on research he undertook in response to perceptions that students are declaring concentrations earlier than they had previously done. Coleman found that although incoming students' Advanced Placement credits have decreased 15% over the past five years, incoming students' transfer credits from community colleges have increased by 65% over the same period. The trend is for the community college to hire high school teachers to teach courses in their own high schools, for which students get concurrent high school and college credit. While this approach is more expensive for the students than AP courses, it is also more secure, since they need earn only a C to get college credit. The State Council has urged senior institutions to accept these credits. Coleman serves on the State Committee on Transfer, which will be considering this issue during the coming year. The faculty discussed a number of questions related to this trend, including the possibility of putting a cap on the number of transfer credits an incoming

student may bring. Dean Feiss pointed out that the transfer of community college credits earned concurrently with high school credits is a national trend. An anticipated 1.5% increase in the number of college students over the next twenty years will continue to make this an attractive solution to public officials. At the same time, the accrediting institutions are voicing increasing concern over the credentials of college teachers, and may challenge this practice.

In response to a request to send meeting notices to all faculty via email, the dean replied, "Maybe." This is a more difficult task than it might appear.

III. Report of the Faculty Affairs Committee

Jack Willis led discussion of Section II.A.9 of the proposed Faculty Manual. FAC has deleted the hotly contested final sentence of the introductory statement, having decided to make a statement of principle only, rather than attempting to legislate procedures. The expectation remains clear that except in stated cases, final exams will be given. George Harris expressed concern that the statement now falls short of requiring final exams, and moved that the following sentence be added to the statement: "Exceptions to requiring final exams in courses other than seminars, colloquia, studio, and writing courses require the permission of the department chair." Members of FAC pointed out that they had proceeded in accordance with last month's straw vote against requiring the chair's permission. Most of the manual is written at this same level--setting forth standards without specifying the punishments for violating them. Concern was expressed that the proposed amendment effectively gives chairs permission to grant exceptions to the policy of requiring the final exam. The amendment failed by voice vote; a show of hands confirmed that the amendment had failed.

In Section II.A.9.a., Examination Schedule, the provision allowing for an instructor and class to change the class's examination time, which had been inadvertently omitted from a previous draft, has been reinstated. It was pointed out that while II.A.9.a. states that schedule changes will be allowed "only" in cases of conflict, in fact changes may be made under other circumstances as well. A suggestion to delete "only" was accepted as a friendly amendment. In Section II.A.9.a.ii. it was suggested that the language specifying that a student may "be permitted with the instructor's approval to choose" in which period to take the final be changed to "may, with the instructor's approval, choose in which" of the sections to take the exam. It was pointed out, however, that this policy is likely to be circulated to students. In order to avoid the appearance of giving the student the right to choose his or her exam section, the FAC's suggested wording was retained.

Discussion turned to the reinstated language allowing instructors and classes to change their own examination times. Has this in fact been our practice (regardless of whether it has been our official policy)? Answer: It has come up extremely rarely. Discussion focused on the question of whether this policy really serves the students and whether a student's right not to support a suggested change can be adequately protected. All faculty who spoke agreed that the student vote should always be by secret ballot.

It was pointed out that we have no policies regulating multiple section courses whose exams are scheduled several days apart. This may put the kind of unrealistic pressure on students' honesty that the Honor Code prohibits.

A friendly amendment was made to Section II.A.9.a., adding the word "only" to the second sentence as follows: "The time of a final examination . . . may only be changed. . . ."

In Section II.A.9.a.iii., End of Semester, language lab exams are specifically included as exams that may be given in the last week of classes. The phrase "and kinesiology activity classes" was added as a friendly amendment.

In Section II.A.9.a.iv., Take-Home Examinations, the adjective "final" has been added ("take-home final examinations").

In Section II.A.9.b., Administering Examinations, the provision allowing instructors to be present during exams in order to answer questions was added on the recommendation of EPC. Discussion focused on the need to proctor exams. Venerable but undocumented tradition holds that the Honor Code prohibits proctoring, and EPC did not intend the new language as a way of circumventing this tradition. The language was left in place, pending further research as to the source of this understanding of the Honor Code.

In Section II.A.9.b.i., Re-examination, a friendly amendment was accepted, changing "The College does not" to "The faculty of Arts and Sciences does not."

Section II.A.9.b.ii., Retention of Examinations, now specifies that exams must be available to students through the sixth week of the following semester because of the change in the appeals procedure, which allows appeals to be initiated through the sixth week of the semester. Additional language states that exams must be retained or returned and that instructors on leave must file the exams in the department office.

Section II.A.9.c., Deferred Examinations, states only the general policy, particularly since FAC disagrees with at least one of the reasons for deferral judged acceptable by EPC.

In discussion of Section II.A.9.d., Length of Examinations, the question arose whether take-home final examinations are limited to three hours, as are in-class finals. Issues included the problem of enforcing a three hour limit on a take-home exam and the question of whether the time allotted to a take-home exam or project may factor in the time that would otherwise have been (presumably) devoted to studying for the in-class final. Ought EPC to address this? An amendment to add the phrase "in class" ("in-class final examinations") was passed by voice vote.

The entire Section II.A.9., Final Examinations, was passed by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Galambush
Assistant Professor of Religion