

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences The College of William and Mary
April 7, 1998 Millington Hall 150

The meeting was called to order at 3:38 p.m., Dean P. Geoffrey Feiss, presiding.

I. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the March 3, 1998 meeting were approved as submitted.

II. Reports of Administrative Officers

Provost Cell reported on the very positive results of the "virtual visit" for prospective students, in which approximately five hundred visitors contacted the campus via the Internet. In regard to the budget, we have thus far heard nothing that gives us concern. It was brought to the provost's and the faculty's attention that the state has granted us salary raises but "told us to pay for them ourselves" through increases in graduate school and out-of-state tuition. This makes the college less affordable and therefore less attractive to students, resulting in a drop in our overall calibre. The provost agreed that this is a serious problem and that one response must be to put student financial aid at the top of our list for private fundraising.

Dean Feiss announced that Gina Hoatson will chair a newly appointed task force to review existing policies and procedures affecting learning climate for graduate students and to explore options for future action and future assessment. The dean altered the agenda, putting elections next and limiting discussion of the new Faculty Manual to one half hour.

III. Nominations and Elections

Steve Knudson presented the following slate of nominees, which was approved without further nominations from the floor:

Procedural Review Committee

X Robert Orwoll (Chem)

Ronald Rapoport (Govt)

Degrees Committee

Christopher Carone (Phys)

X Martin Mathes (Bio)

Retention, Promotion, and Tenure Committee X Marc Sher (Phys)

Stewart Ware (Bio)

Candidates whose names are marked with "X" were elected.

IV. Report of the Faculty Affairs Committee

Jack Willis led discussion of Section II.A. Conduct of Classes from the proposed revision of the Faculty Manual. [Note: Those attempting to follow this discussion based on any version of the manual other than that distributed prior to the March 3, 1998 faculty meeting do so at their peril. However, a complete version of the manual as revised, re-revised, and voted on will be distributed prior to a vote ratifying the revised manual as a whole.] Willis noted that the title of Section A should be changed to "Conduct of Undergraduate Classes"; CoGS will prepare a statement on the conduct of graduate classes. Discussion began with II.A.1. Class Rolls. Willis agreed that "are noted" should be dropped from the most recent version. Add/Drop Policies has been subsumed under III.A.1. Class Rolls. FAC proposes to change the sentence ending "only with the instructor's permission" to: "A student may add a course after the add period only in unusual circumstances, and must have the consent of the instructor before a petition is considered by the Committee on Academic Status."

Under Section III.A.1.b. Course Withdrawal Willis agreed that in the first sentence "throughout" should be changed to "through." Section III.A.3. Meeting Classes has been reorganized; "Student Responsibilities" now forms subsection "a." In the first sentence, "predicted" was corrected to "predicated." Under Section III.A.3.b. Faculty Responsibilities, the second sentence, FAC proposes changing "this" to "the regular": "Any changes in the regular schedule must be approved" In regard to III.A.4. Faculty Accessibility and Office Hours, the question was raised of whether faculty members need to be available after the end of the exam period, since degree status is decided at this time. The faculty member may be called upon to provide relevant documentation, but there is no expectation that the faculty member would show up in person. It was clarified that evening hours may be used for rescheduling classes when this does not cause undue hardship for the students. The FAC considered the question of "electronic availability" and concluded that some but not all office hours may be conducted by email.

Section III.A.1-4 of the revised Faculty Manual was approved by unanimous voice vote.

V. Educational Policy Committee

Larry Ventis led continued discussion of the Proposal for Changing Arts and Sciences Continuance Standards. Ventis began with discussion of Part I, the Mid-semester Reporting System. In light of last month's discussion and other faculty input EPC has revised the proposal in the following ways: all students doing marginal or unsatisfactory work will be reported; students will have access to their reports; the reports will be given shortly before advising for pre-registration; advisors of non-first year students will be notified if two or more reports of unsatisfactory work are submitted. Randy Coleman showed a model of how a professor would go about entering and obtaining the results of mid-semester reports. Access to the reports would be via the WORCS, using email i.d. and PIN. Although a deadline for submission of reports would be set, students and professors would also be informed of any reports not yet submitted. In response to questions about the grade equivalents of "marginal" and "unsatisfactory" work, a C- or below is "unsatisfactory." The definition of "marginal" is intentionally left vague.

Part I of the revised EPC proposal to implement a mid-semester reporting system in the fall of 1998 was passed by voice vote (with opposition).

The department next turned to consideration of Part II of the EPC proposal, the new continuance standards themselves. EPC has revised the proposal in the following ways: at the end of the first semester a student must have earned 9 credits (12 in the original proposal) with a 1.7 QPA; students on academic probation must meet with both the Dean of Students Office and with their Academic Advisor, and are not allowed to register for the subsequent semester until these two meetings have occurred; EPC will report to the faculty in the spring of 1999 on how the new support services are functioning and whether they have concerns about implementing the new continuance standards in the fall of 1999. Professor Ventis reiterated that the current standards allow students to linger even after it has become impossible for them to graduate. The proposed standards allow for earlier intervention for students in academic trouble, but higher standards also encourage the entire student body to achieve at a higher level.

Robert Archibald proposed that section II.C.b be amended so that the third sentence ("They will have one regular semester . . .") be amended to: "They will have two regular semesters to bring their work up to or beyond the minimum standards" This amendment would allow for a lag in the improvement of a student's cumulative QPA, effectively permitting two semesters of probation for a student achieving at least 2.00 in their first semester of probation. In fact, CAS often does allow a second probationary semester; this amendment would simply formalize a frequent practice. No data was available at the meeting to compare our current students' QPAs in their sophomore and freshman years with their junior and senior years; it was pointed out that we should find out when students tend to improve their QPAs. If they do so late in their careers, then it may be inappropriate to force out students for not improving substantially during their first few semesters. It was further noted that our currently high graduation rate is a selling point for the school. Why should we tamper with success? Ventis responded that EPC will project the outcomes of the new standards based on data gathered during the 1998-99 year; modifications can be made at that time. Question: Ought we then to wait a year before voting on the new continuance standards? Answer: No. If the new standards are passed they will be published before being implemented, thus giving students a goal toward which to work in the interim. The amendment, giving students two semesters to bring their work up to minimum standards, was passed by voice vote (with opposition). It was agreed that the second sentence of II.C.b should read "While on probation, they must earn at least a C average while passing 12 credits."

A call for a quorum, which was lacking, ended the meeting at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Galambush
Assistant Professor of Religion