MINUTES
Faculty of Arts & Sciences
December 7, 2021, 3:30 – 5:00 pm
Via Zoom teleconference

Dean Maria Donoghue Velleca called the meeting to order.

I. Approval of minutes from meeting of faculty on November 9, 2021.
https://www.wm.edu/as/facultyresources/fas/minutes/20211109.pdf
The FAS Secretary noted that the November Minutes as distributed contained an error in the spelling of Sophy Feng’s name that needed to be corrected. The minutes were approved with this correction.

II. Report from the Dean (Maria Donoghue Velleca)
Dean Donoghue Velleca noted that she and her team in Ewell Hall had been working with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC) on the advice of Chief Diversity Officer Chon Glover. She said that her team had held helpful conversations as a result and that a select group of programs and departments would be involved in a pilot project with the VCIC in the fall.

Dean Donoghue Velleca commented on the meeting her office had recently held with 60 administrative and fiscal staff in Arts & Sciences. She said that her office would seek ways to consolidate work across departments. She noted that 19 NTE faculty with contracts expiring in 2022 have been told that A&S would like to give them new contracts, which will mostly be two years. Her office has asked that departments come back with paperwork needed for rehiring by December 17th to reinforce to NTE colleagues that A&S appreciates them and that they have some job security. By the end of the week, chairs and directors will have to fill out a survey for Visiting Professor positions for next year.

Dean Donoghue Velleca said that she would be exploring the possibility of a phased retirement program, which is not currently available at W&M, which has a return-to-work program permitting retired faculty to be hired back after six months. She said that she has advocated for a phased retirement program and has asked Peter McHenry (Economics) and David Feldman (Economics) to draft a model plan. She said that she was exploring the possibility of a phased retirement (not an incentivized retirement) and noted that she was concerned about productive faculty who have become less productive and whose merit scores had been falling. She added that if a faculty member’s merit scores fell dramatically below the mean for a certain number of years, the shortfall would trigger a periodic review, and suggested that a phased retirement program might help faculty avoid this review process.

Dean Donoghue Velleca said that W&M students are currently experiencing a great deal of stress, and that the stressors were different than earlier in the pandemic but of a similar magnitude. She noted the mental health programs and well-being programs available to help students experiencing difficulties. She said that she would appreciate hearing from faculty on how best to support students and encouraged them to e-mail her with suggestions.

Dean Donoghue Velleca said that A&S had submitted four recommendations for W&M’s new Vision 2026 strategic plan that were being considered, and that some
suggestions from A&S might end up being implemented university wide. Finally, she noted that the usual end-of-semester celebration in the dean’s office had been modified to a start of semester celebration scheduled for January 26th and told the faculty to look forward to an indoor and outdoor celebration including fire pits and mulled wine. She asked for questions.

Suzanne Hagedorn (English) noted that the dean had mentioned her office’s diversity work and asked whether the report that Chon Glover had commissioned from the Ivy Planning Group consultants had been issued yet. Dean Donoghue Velleca said it was her understanding that the consultants had completed the interviews they needed to hold with focus groups of W&M students this fall and said that she would check on the status of the final report and get back to her.

Emily Wilcox (Modern Languages) thanked Dean Donoghue Velleca for her recent e-mail update regarding discussions about frameworks for NTE faculty and asked when faculty would receive more information. The dean replied that the group was looking through information on what had occurred with respect to NTE faculty during Michael Halleran’s (Classical Studies) term as provost as well as Peggy Agouris’s. She noted that VIMS was considering a research track, a teaching track, and a hybrid model, and noted that at VIMS some proportion of research faculty salaries are funded by grants. Dean Donoghue Velleca noted that there would be conversations regarding NTE faculty during the spring semester. She said that W&M wants talented instructional faculty to stay here for their career and that it was necessary to attend to salary levels of NTE faculty as well as their rights and responsibilities in faculty governance.

Prof. Hagedorn asked for a clarification of who was making decisions regarding the Vision 2026 strategic plan and whether the group determining priorities would be the strategic planning group for 2019-20 listed on the website, President’s Cabinet, or some other group. Dean Donoghue Velleca noted that she had just received a communication from President Katherine Rowe’s chief of staff Jeremy Martin that each unit should refine its recommendations to be considered by the President’s Cabinet next week. She emphasized that the planning process was very broad and included everything from updating business processes to academic planning.

III. Report from Academic Advising (Tom Linneman)
2020-2021 Office of Academic Advising Annual Report:

Tom Linneman (Sociology) presented the report, which had been previously distributed to faculty with the meeting agenda. He said that the Office of Academic Advising is changing its name to the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs (OUAA) and would be providing a more holistic set of services for all students. He presented a schematic showing the new organizational structure and said that the process of bringing three new staff members was continuing. He noted that the goal of reorganization is to offer comprehensive support for students from advising to postgraduate fellowships. He thanked Janice Zeman (Psychological Sciences) for her previous supervision of the office and noted that she has now gone on research leave. Shelly Laurenzo will now be Assistant Dean and will be supervising the OUAA.
Prof. Linneman noted student petitions to the Committee on Degrees are now available online and could be signed virtually through DocuSign, streamlining the process. The OUAA had a 75% increase in staff meetings with students over the past year. In Spring 2022, a much larger group of students than usual will be enrolling, approximately 300. He thanked department chairs and program directors for recruiting new faculty advisors for these students and said that a training session for advisors would occur in January.

Finally, Prof. Linneman noted that the deadline for Incomplete grades changing to F grades had been changed by the Registrar’s Office and apologized for some confusion in this regard. He announced that the correct deadline for faculty to submit change-of-grade forms is 9 a.m. on Tuesday, December 21. He thanked advisors and asked for questions. Seeing none, Dean Donoghue Velleca thanked Prof. Linneman for his report and faculty advisors for their service.

V. EPC motion on changes to the Pass/Fail policy (Josh Erlich)

Josh Erlich (Physics) noted that this motion would be his last as chair of the Educational Policy Committee; he had stayed on for an additional semester, but Kristin Wustholz (Chemistry) would take over as chair of EPC next semester. He shared the motion, which had been circulated to faculty with the meeting agenda, on Zoom and after briefly reviewing the language of the motion provided some background.

Prof. Erlich said that Provost Agouris had launched a task force on pass fail options that included students, faculty members, and administrators, on which he had served as a representative of the EPC. The task force had voted 9-2 in favor of the current motion. He said the task force had discussed the intent of letter grades, student mental health concerns, the P/F policies of peer institutions, data from W&M showing how students use P/F options and the lessons from the pandemic P/F policy intended to address students dealing with extenuating circumstances.

The Task Force consulted with Vice President for Student Affairs Ginger Ambler, Career Services Director Kathleen Powell regarding the effect of changes on career prospects and Kelly Crace of the Wellness Center regarding mental health. The Task Force also met with students from the Student Assembly to discuss how a new P/F policy would benefit not only students who were suffering but also students who are thriving by allowing students with grade concerns to experiment with courses that they might not take otherwise. The Task Force met with faculty from the Mason School of Business; Jim Barber of the School of Education served on it. The P/F Task Force spoke with the EPC, who also met with the registrar of Davidson College, which has a retroactive P/F policy.

Prof. Erlich addressed the reasons for changing the policy, citing extenuating circumstances that students encounter during the semester. He noted that the current policy requires students to designate all P/F courses in advance, while the new policy enacted by the EPC motion permits students to convert two grades retroactively. He said that Kelly Crace of the Wellness Center pointed out that the proposed revision gives students the time and space to reflect on circumstances and helps them manage stress.
Prof. Erlich noted that W&M’s present policy only permits juniors and seniors to take courses P/F and requires them to designate this grading option early in the semester; it only applies to electives, not courses taken in the major. The current policy limits students to taking four courses P/F, up to two in any one semester. Prof. Erlich noted that sometimes extenuating circumstances occur well into the semester; the advantage of the new policy is that it takes account of this problem with the previous policy by allowing students to designate P/F courses retroactively. He noted that the proposed policy would only apply to electives and that students would designate courses P/F after receiving advice from their academic advisors. Dean Donoghue Velleca indicated her support for the proposed changes and asked for questions.

Marc Sher (Physics) said he had initially been skeptical of the proposed policy but now supported it and noted the benefits for first generation college students who may have trouble adjusting at first to W&M’s academic challenges. Elizabeth Harbrow (Chemistry) asked for a clarification about which courses a student could designate P/F. Prof. Erlich replied that the intent of the policy was that the student would consult during the junior or senior year and could retroactively designate course they had taken during the freshman and sophomore years P/F. He noted that there could be small revisions to the policy as it was implemented as well as clarifications, such as the deadline for designating courses P/F. Dean Donoghue Velleca noted that faculty could send suggestions for revision to Prof. Erlich.

David Feldman (Economics) asked about grade inflation and compression and expressed the concern that students who did not have mental health or other concerns would use the P/F option to “game the system” to receive a higher GPA. Prof. Erlich noted the mental health benefits for students in terms of resolving student stress. He said that the Davidson registrar had seen a small increase in grades, and that students asked about their reason for using it said that they wanted to improve their GPA to allow them to take advantage of internship and study abroad opportunities.

Dean Donoghue Velleca noted the reality of grade inflation, saying that at Georgetown, the average grade had increased from a 3.0 to a 3.7 over time. She observed that students go through a process of trial and error in selecting their major and that the new policy would not penalize them as much for mistakes.

Arthur Knight (English & American Studies) expressed support, noting that the number of courses students would be allowed to designate P/F was the same in the revised policy as the present policy, and that it would help students whose families pressured them to study fields in which they were not necessarily interested. Stephen Hanson, Vice Provost for Academic and International Affairs, noted that in Davidson’s policy all four courses were designated P/F retroactively; in the proposed policy only two courses may be designated P/F retroactively, which may help to mitigate grade inflation effect.

Phil Daileader (History) expressed his support for the policy as written but recommended expanding it further to permit P/F for five courses so that a student who experienced a tragic event such as the death of a parent could designate all the courses in a semester P/F. Prof. Erlich noted that the EPC had discussed other possibilities but noted that there were other alternatives for students in such circumstances, including medical withdrawal. Matthew Haug (Philosophy) expressed concern that the retroactive portion
of the proposal would provide more of an opportunity for grade inflation as juniors and seniors would have the incentive to change any course lower than their usual GPA.

Prof. Donoghue Velleca noted that unless there were objections, the motion would move to a vote. Voting was conducted via a Zoom poll. Sarah Day (Mathematics) said the motion passed, reporting that 77 meeting attendees had voted in favor, 12 had voted against, 8 had abstained and 4 had designated themselves as nonvoting participants. Dean Donoghue Velleca thanked the committee for its work on the motion.

VI. Nominations & Elections (Rani Mullen)

Rani Mullen (Government) said that the committee was having difficulty finding faculty volunteers, adding that one election had to be moved to February’s meeting due to a lack of volunteers to run for the position. She said that another survey soliciting volunteers for committees would be circulated during the spring semester and encouraged faculty to take part. She announced the nominees for three elections and asked for nominations from the floor:

REGULAR ELECTIONS
International Studies Advisory Committee
Area II
Admasu Shiferaw (Economics)
Iyabo Obasanjo (KINE)

Area III
Jiajia Li (Comp Sci)
Junping Shi (Math)

SPRING LEAVE REPLACEMENTS ELECTION
Procedural Review Committee
Area II Spring 2022 replacement
Danielle Dallaire (Psychology)
Eric Han (History)

There were no nominations from the floor. Peter Piers (Computer Science) will send out electronic ballots.

VII. Discussion on anticipated student growth (Henry Broaddus)

Henry Broaddus, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Public Affairs at W&M gave a PowerPoint presentation relating to conversations that the Board of Visitors had been having relating to enrollment growth. He said that in 2016, the Board had conversations relating to W&M’s plans for 2026. He mentioned the “demographic cliff” as fewer college-age students will be seeking to enroll and also noted the tensions between W&M’s operating model and its financial model: the university operates more like a private university though its funding model is that of a public university.

Mr. Broaddus noted that the Faculty Assembly had appointed a committee that delivered a report on enrollment growth in October 2018. At that point, the administration planned to scale up to 600 more undergraduates by adding 160 more
students per semester. He said that one of the ways that W&M could grow without harming quality was to think of pathways to entry during the spring semester for waitlisted students, citing VERTO education as a turnkey option for gap-year study abroad experiences, that provided these programs at a lower cost. Likewise students entering a two-year degree program in the fall would also be guaranteed admission in the spring. He said that while the students participating in programs are not W&M students, they are a good cultural fit for W&M, with its focus on international experiences and cited the article the Wall Street Journal ran about these opportunities over the summer. He added that in 2021 due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19, there were only 67 students taking advantage of this opportunity, though others had opted to defer admission for a semester due to concerns about COVID-19.

Mr. Broaddus pointed out a 23% increase in applications and said that dropping standardized tests had attracted more applicants. He said that the Admissions Office had made 400 more offers this past year than in years prior and that the student yield went up 1%. At present, he said that 200 more students were forecasted. He said he would pause for questions.

Prof. Erlich asked how the anticipated increase in enrollment would affect the curriculum and expressed concerns about the Physics department as well as the general education curriculum. He noted that he was questioning the “smart” in the “smart growth” that had been put forward by the administration. He said he was also concerned about hearing conversations about changing the present COLL curriculum based on resource constraints.

Mr. Broaddus said that with 600 additional students, W&M would not see deterioration of the student/faculty ratio. He noted that the BoV had held tuition flat for four years, and that enrollment growth was needed to increase financial resources. He acknowledged that over-enrollment problems were real and that he was working with Dean Donoghue Velleca to make sure that they were addressed.

Dean Donoghue Velleca commented that she admired the COLL curriculum but was surprised at how many low-enrollment courses there were. She noted that only 1/3 of students at her previous institution, Georgetown, were required to take a small seminar, and said she was surprised that W&M required two such seminars. She said that there may need to be curricular changes.

Lu Ann Homza (History) expressed concerns that a transfer student who was a first generation college student was having difficulties fulfilling the language proficiency requirement because there were not enough seats available in language courses. Mr. Broaddus noted that there were more first generation college students in the entering class as well as Pell Grant recipients. He said that growth would not be coming at the expense of academic quality. Prof. Homza agreed that students were excellent, but that this particular one would not be able to graduate on time because of the lack of available classes.

Anne Blazer (Religion) asked whether W&M would remain test-optional next year. Mr. Broaddus said that W&M had committed to a three-year pilot of the standardized test-optional policy.

Prof. Sher noted that John Littel, Rector of the Board of Visitors had been saying that W&M’s enrollment should be raised to 8,000 students and asked where that number came from. Mr. Broaddus replied that by adding 600 students to the traditional
undergraduate enrollment, total enrollment would be just shy of 7,000. He said that the 8,000 number that Rector Littel had been discussing included other types of students enrolled in certificate programs.

Dean Donoghue Velleca acknowledged the challenges in delivering the COLL curriculum to an expanded student body but said that sustainable curriculum work would allow A&S to do things more efficiently. She asked for a motion to adjourn.

David Feldman (Economics) one of the authors of the Faculty Assembly report noted that the FA report had discussed growth in student enrollment alongside growth in the tenured and tenure eligible faculty.

Prof. Knight observed that space was at a premium on campus and that we cannot increase the number of classes offered or their size without also planning for the space that required. He said that many classrooms only hold 15 to 20 students, and it would be impossible to simply increase enrollments in those classes to 25.

Due to time constraints, Dean Donoghue Velleca asked the Chair of the Council of Chairs and Program Directors, the Faculty Assembly representative and the Chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee to send her brief written reports that she would distribute to the faculty with her weekly e-mail message. (See Appendix 2 below for these written reports.)

VIII. Adjourn

Dean Donoghue Velleca asked for a motion to adjourn; Prof. Sher made the motion, which was seconded. The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Hagedorn, Secretary to the Faculty of Arts & Sciences.
Motion by the Educational Policy Committee to the Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Pass/Fail Policy Proposal

Actively enrolled Bachelor’s degree-seeking undergraduate students may select up to four standard-grade elective courses in Arts & Sciences and Education as Pass/Fail. This selection occurs when a student is a social Junior or Senior.

A maximum of two courses may change to Pass/Fail from any one semester. Up to two of the four Pass/Fail selections may be applied retroactively to courses that have already received a letter grade. The remainder must be selected by the published deadline of the current semester. The selection of any retroactive Pass/Fail grades must occur by the published deadline of the student’s last semester. The published deadlines shall not be earlier than the withdrawal deadline in the given semester.

A student’s decision to designate courses as Pass/Fail is irrevocable. For this reason, when changing a graded course to a Pass, students are required to consult with their Major Advisor or Department Chair/Program Director.

The following guidelines apply to Pass/Fail designations:

• COLL curriculum requirements, proficiency requirements (Arts, Math, and Foreign Language), and Major/Minor course requirements are ineligible for Pass/Fail.
• Pass/Fail courses count toward the minimum enrollment requirement of 12 credits, but do not count toward the 12-credit hour Dean’s List requirement. Retroactive grade changes could, therefore, result in a change to Dean’s List status for a prior semester.
• Students may not elect Pass/Fail when found responsible for an Honor Code violation in that course if the student receives a grade consequence because of the violation.
• A successful Pass will not count toward a student’s GPA. However, a Fail will count toward the GPA.

Exceptions to this policy should be submitted to the Committee on Degrees.
Rationale:
According to the current P/F policy, in the Junior and Senior years, students may take a maximum of one course per semester P/F. The decision is made before the end of Add/Drop period each semester.

The course grade is intended to reflect a student’s knowledge in a discipline, their general academic ability, and their dedication to their studies. In times of extenuating circumstances, such as illness and other personal circumstances, the grade might not serve its intended function. Fear of this possibility can cause sustained mental stress on students, leading to poor outcomes. One goal of the Pass/Fail option is to mitigate this stress, and to allow for grades inconsistent with student knowledge and ability to have less of an impact on the student’s transcript. A second goal of the Pass/Fail option is to encourage greater exploration by students in their course selection and to avoid decisions based solely on the perception of risk to the student’s GPA.

- The restrictive nature of the current policy limits its effectiveness in mitigating student stress and supporting exploration and risk-taking in course selection.
- In the current system with P/F decisions made by Add/Drop date in the same semester as the course is taken, students who ultimately perform well in those courses lose the opportunity to have that performance reflected on the transcript.
- In the current system, which forces the P/F decision early in the semester, students may be less inclined to focus on the coursework in that class.

- The opportunity to retroactively convert courses to P/F is intended to apply the benefits of a P/F option throughout the degree and in cases where extenuating circumstances arise late in a course.
- The increase from a maximum of one to two P/F courses in a semester is to recognize that certain circumstances, such as pandemic or other illness, may create temporary challenges that still do not warrant withdrawal of the student from the program.
- The restriction to decisions made in the Junior/Senior years, and the requirement to confer with an advisor, is to avoid premature decisions that could harm employment and graduate/professional school opportunities.
- The limit to four courses total is consistent with current policy, and intends to avoid diminishing the value of the degree.
This motion was brought to EPC by the Pass/Fail Task Force, and was approved in a 9-2 vote by EPC on November 19, 2021.

**Background of the Pass/Fail Task Force**

Charged by Provost Agouris to analyze and make recommendations regarding W&M’s long-term Pass/Fail policy — September, 2021

**Members**

- **Rachel Li**, Student, former EPC
- **Alex Johnson**, Student, former EPC
- **Mary Kardos**, Student Assembly
- **Kristin Wustholz**, Chemistry, EPC
- **Elizabeth Mead**, Art & Art History, former EPC
- **Josh Erlich**, Physics, EPC
- **Sallie Marchello**, Associate Provost & University Registrar, ex-officio EPC
- **Ben Boone**, Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Education, Faculty of Arts & Sciences
- **Amy Xia**, Mason School of Business representative, EPC
- **Jim Barber**, School of Education, EPC
- **Brad Weiss**, Faculty Assembly
- **Steve Hanson**, Vice Provost for Academic and International Affairs

**Activities**

- Considered the intent of the letter grade and of the P/F option
- Considered student mental health concerns
- Studied P/F policies of a dozen of our peer institutions
- Considered data on W&M student use of the P/F option
- Considered lessons from the pandemic

**Consulted with:**

- Ginger Ambler (VP for Student Affairs)
- Kathleen Powell (Associate VP for Career Development)
- Kelly Crace (Associate VP for Health and Wellness)
- Student Assembly
- Mason School of Business representatives
- A&S Educational Policy Committee
- Registrar of Davidson College (which has a retroactive P/F option)
- FAS faculty
Appendix 2: Written Reports from Committees, sent by Dean Donoghue Vellica via e-mail on December 10:

From the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC), A&S governance:

- FAC continues to discuss edits to the A&S Bylaws, focused on the Committee on Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies, as the responsibilities of that committee have changed with the new structures in the Dean’s Office and Charles Center.
- FAC is also working on next steps with the A&S joint appointment policy, in coordination with the university-wide joint appointment policy that was recently approved by Faculty Assembly.
- FAC has also discussed with Maria the possibility of a phased retirement plan.
- At our final FAC meeting of the semester, we will be meeting with representatives from the Dean of Students Office to better understand the process for student classroom accommodations and how Student Accessibility Services and faculty can work together regarding these accommodations.

From the A&S Council of Chairs and Program Directors (CCPD), A&S Academic Leadership:

- Last month, CCPD met with the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CDEI) to continue work on revising diversity plans for A&S academic units. We also discussed the sustainable curriculum project in detail, giving feedback to the Dean's Office.
- This month, we're continuing our work responding to the faculty hiring pilot, developing a letter to be submitted to Dean Donoghue Velleca and Provost Agouris in the next month. We voted for next year's CCPD co-chairs and discussed ways that administrative and fiscal coordinators can work more closely with the Dean's Office. Finally, we are soliciting feedback on Student Accessibility Services and how accommodations are working this fall, for both faculty and students.

From Faculty Assembly (FA), W&M governance:

Provost Agouris made some remarks and took questions:

- She reminded us that the faculty hiring plan is a three-year pilot that will be reassessed again.
- She understands the importance of spousal hires. They are now done on a case-by-case basis. She would like W&M to have a consistent policy and will rely on the FA for advice.
- Tuition remission was discussed. Public funds can't be used for this in Virginia. Some institutions might be able to use private funds. This is being examined.
The SSRL report is waiting for the new Assoc. Prov. for Fac. Affairs position to be filled.

President of the FA, Mark Brush, then made some remarks:

- A more efficient mechanism for bylaws revisions will allow the president to approve minor revisions without needing BoV approval.
- The growth of the undergraduate population was discussed (Henry Broaddus discussed this at the FAS meeting).
- After several years, the joint appointment policy was voted on by the FA and approved. It now goes to PRC and PPC. The A&S joint appointment policy is being revised after PPC suggested changes.
- W&M’s Personnel Policy Committee has commented on the paid non-academic leave policies, which will be discussed at the next meeting.