

Faculty of Arts & Sciences
March 5th, 2024, 3:30 – 5:00 pm
McGlothlin-Street 20 and Zoom

DRAFT version 2 from emailed notes (3/30/24)

I. Approval of minutes from meeting on February 5, 2024

Minutes approved by unanimous consent

II. SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation (Matt Smith)

1. Timeline. SACSCOC has revised their standards since our last accreditation process to include 72 standards in 14 domains. Matt describes the SACSCOC 2023-2026 timeline for reaffirmation of accreditation.
 - a. Phase 1 – Self-Study. Matt will conduct a self-study from summer 2024 to summer 2025 and submit a report.
 - b. Phase 2 – Off-site review and response. In Fall 2025, the SACSCOC off-site review committee reads the report to determine areas in and out of compliance.
 - c. Phase 3 – On-site review. SACSCOC visits campus Mar 16, 2026. If anything remains out of compliance, we have 5 months to address.
 - d. Phases 4 & 5 – Report on Phase 3; BOV reaffirms accreditation in December 2026.
2. Faculty-related standards
 - a. We'll need to demonstrate highly qualified and appropriately qualified faculty. Faculty are required to provide transcripts from their degree-granting institutions to demonstrate their degrees are aligned with what they teach.
 - b. Faculty evaluation policies in A&S and departments should be reviewed this year. A&S demonstrates we are complying with our own policies.
 - c. SACSCOC reviews academic freedom and faculty professional development. Chairs and directors will be asked to provide specific information on development opportunities.
 - d. SACSCOC reviews PIEs, program external reviews, the COLL curriculum and academic governance. We'll show evidence that the faculty own the curriculum. The Faculty Handbook Committee has been encouraged to include language to that effect.
 - e. SACSCOC will review evidence that we adhere to and implement policies of the university, Faculty Handbook, and A&S Faculty Manual.
3. The Reaffirmation Leadership Team will work with Ben Boone, (the A&S point of contact), EPC, COGS, Institutional Change Committee and Assessment Steering Committee for this process. Faculty can contact any of these groups for updates.

4. Quality Enhancement Process – Ideas were solicited from faculty and staff for the next QEP. Three groups of finalists presented their ideas to the university community two weeks ago. Each project aligned with the university’s vision and the selected project will need to demonstrate compliance with SACSCOC.
5. Questions and discussion.
 - a. A faculty member asks who picks the QEP. Matt responds that it will be picked from the three finalists, by the President and 15 or so members of the Executive Leadership Team, the 8 members of the Reaffirmation Team, Jeremy Martin, a few relevant others. These groups will incorporate faculty feedback.
 - b. Suzanne asks how many QEPs are selected. Matt confirms one project is selected but the other finalists’ projects may be implemented in other ways.
 - c. Suzanne asks who the SACSCOC reviewers are. Matt responds that the off- and on-site reviewers are two different groups. They are from peer institutions but not from the state of Virginia. The members are executive administrators.
 - d. A faculty member asks what “ownership of curriculum” means. Matt responds this means we can demonstrate faculty hold primary responsibility for the curriculum of the institution. For example, a change in the curriculum requires faculty-driven procedures. We demonstrate that changes start at the department level, go through EPC or COGS, the Dean, A&S, Matt’s office and the BOV, etc.
 - e. Another faculty member asks about the recent state requirement to review individual syllabi at Mason and VCU and the Governor’s recent statements that universities and BOVs serve the state and not only students. Matt responds that statements such as these seem to be at odds with SACSCOC principles. While the Governor has the sole right to appoint members of BOVs, Mason (at the time) demonstrated they complied with the SACSCOC principle, stating that BOVs must be isolated from external influence. Matt doesn’t believe we need to change any governing documents to state this. Suzanne asks Matt to specify the role of the BOV is in determining curriculum. Matt says the BOV Bylaws provide types of curricular changes they must approve. These include establishing a new program, closing a program, and renaming departments. These items still start with instructional faculty, then administrative faculty, the Dean’s Office, the college, and Provost. The checkmark at the BOV is a required oversight.
 - f. A faculty member asks if this process is only for A&S. Matt affirms reaccreditation is university-wide at all levels, including content, degree requirements, undergraduate, graduate, administrative assessment, general education, assessment, QEP, academic policies, the libraries, fiscal resources, safety, athletics, and so on.

III. Report from the Dean (Suzanne Raitt)

1. Suzanne encourages faculty to send in feedback on the QEP finalist projects to help the BOV, SCHEV, and SACSCOC understand faculty priorities. The recordings of the QEP presentations and the survey are still available for those who wish to respond.
2. A&S Faculty will vote on a new Marine Science major at the next A&S meeting in April.
 - a. VIMS and A&S currently jointly manage the marine sciences minor, but the new major will be housed at VIMS.
 - b. Majors will spend a semester in residency at VIMS.
 - c. This exceptional opportunity will provide new opportunities for current and future undergraduate students.
3. Tarikul Islam, our new Senior Associate Dean of Finance & Administration, is becoming acclimated with assistance from Sherri Powers. A&S administrative staff, who will work closely with Tarikul and his team, have been invited to meet Tarikul at an upcoming event.
4. Many hiring searches are ongoing, and a memo will go out soon asking for requests for new hires.
5. Merit Update.
 - a. All Chairs and Directors should plan to use their current departmental or program merit procedures for TTE faculty and teaching faculty.
 - i. Although the general merit guidelines were approved at the February A&S meeting, they have not been approved by PPC or been elaborated for each unit.
 - ii. A concern in the Dean's Office was that some teaching faculty were not accustomed to doing service although it's in the current contracts beginning on the 10th of August 2023. If departments are using their old policies, they may not have a way to give credit to their teaching faculty for service. This is a transitional year, so Suzanne is asking Chairs and Directors to be alert to the fact that scores may need to be refined for teaching faculty if they've done a great deal of service.
 - iii. Suzanne understands any frustration with the pace of adoption and is grateful to the Teaching Faculty Committee who have worked hard to get the recommendations right. She hopes to have the recommendations distributed by April, but it was never going to be in place for this academic year.
6. Kent Erdahl, Director of Internal Audit, has been reviewing business processes in the Dean's Office and will provide a report next week which will be of use to the Chairs and Directors.
7. Update on the transition to the new school.
 - a. SCHEV hasn't yet approved the school, but once the implementation team and new dean are named there will be movement. Both units staying in A&S and

units going to the new school will experience areas of uncertainty as the blueprint is constructed.

- b. Once the Dean of the new school is identified, we will have a better sense of support for the grad programs that will stay in A&S as well as those that go to the new school.
8. Questions and discussion on the Dean's report.
 - a. A faculty member asks a question regarding when Teaching Faculty Committee's recommendations will be available so faculty can review before the vote planned for the April A&S meeting. Suzanne will send them as soon as possible.
 - b. A second question asked who needs to approve the recommendations besides A&S. Suzanne responds that the original 2023 version went to the PPC which is PRC plus deans. Then it went to the Provost and President, but it doesn't have to go to the Board. Some of the recommendations of the Teaching Faculty Committee were incorporated into the revised Teaching Framework, so those documents were aligned. In a discussion with Carrie Nee, General Counsel, Suzanne described the changes as operational and therefore not needing to go beyond A&S, and Carrie will look them over to determine if that is the case.
 9. **Suzanne asks Ben to provide an update on the PATH registration system.**
 - a. Instructors can provide instructor overrides anytime from when the carts open until the first day of classes. Only maximum capacity overrides are going away. Courseleaf assigns courses based on student priorities.
 - b. The Registrar will be doing out-and-about conversations for student training, especially after spring break
 - c. Questions and discussion.
 - i. A faculty member asks if there are no max cap overrides, will there ever be an over-capacity class. Ben says if faculty can accept students from a waitlist, those instructors might consider upping the capacity. Ben says the goal is to try to wait as long as possible before taking people from the waitlist. A&S will find ways to help students who need one class to graduate.
 - ii. A faculty member asks how this works for athletes or people with jobs. Ben answers students can create blackout periods so the program won't put them in courses they can't get to. It also tells athletes if they need an exception from the coach.

IV. February Elections (Danielle Dallaire, N&E)

1. Danielle thanks faculty for volunteering and will take nominations from the floor after reading the slates.

EPC

Area I

Matthew Allar (Theater/Dance)

Andrew Tobolowsky (Religious Studies)

Area II

Scott Ickes (Kinesiology)

Tate Twinam (Economics)

Area III

There are two open positions; the top two candidates will be elected.

John Bedford (Chemistry)

Eric Swartz (Mathematics)

Mark Forsyth (Biology)

RPT

Area I

John Donahue (Classical Studies)

Alexander (Sasha) Prokhorov (MLL)

Area II

Audrey Horning (Anthropology)

John Parman (Economics)

CAS

There are two open positions: one from any area and one from Area II.

The top two candidates that satisfy this requirement will be elected.

Area II candidates are indicated with an asterisk.

Ashleigh Queen* (Kinesiology)

Junping Shi (Mathematics)

Matthew Wawersik (Biology)

Xiaowen Xu* (Psychological Sciences)

CDEI

Area III

Bill McNamara (Chemistry)

Ahn Ninh (Mathematics)

2. There are no nominations from the floor.

Tyler Meldrum will send out the ballot.

V. FAC motion on Faculty on Leave Merit Policy (Suzanne Raitt on behalf of the Chair of FAC)

1. An across-the-board policy is proposed.

- a. The proposed policy tries to align policies according to all the types of leave defined in the Faculty Handbook.
 - b. These definitions are unlikely to change even with upcoming changes to the Handbook.
2. The goal is to find an equitable way to allocate merit after someone has been on leave.
3. As the proposed policy comes from a committee, it doesn't need a second.
4. Questions and discussion.
 - a. A faculty member asks if the faculty decides which of the two alternative ways will be used to determine merit for periods of leave. Suzanne responds that this is the case.
 - b. A faculty member comments that it's excellent these policies will be aligned across units.
 - c. A faculty member suggests an amendment to change "she/he" to "they." Suzanne will change that.
 - d. A faculty member asks if one is on leave without pay, does the policy hold? Suzanne answers yes, that faculty member is still eligible for merit. Silvia Tandeciarz says she has been told by a fiscal administrator that faculty members on leave without pay are excluded from merit because there's nothing to assess and furthermore, they are not eligible for developmental support.
 - e. A faculty member suggests that faculty on leave without pay to conduct research for W&M should be eligible for merit. Suzanne will come back to faculty on that issue. She is setting up a meeting with HR to clarify and standardize leave policies for faculty who have not accrued enough leave to take off an entire semester to care for family members.
 - f. A faculty member asks if there is a required deadline for affected faculty to make a decision on which merit option they would like to use. What guidance is there for the faculty? Suzanne doesn't think the faculty should wait to figure out the unit's normalized score, so suggests that faculty in this situation make the decision about which option they choose by the standard deadline for merit in their unit.
Suzanne proposes an amendment to change to the proposed language to read "Faculty should let their Chair/Director know which option they would like to choose prior to the deadline for the submission of merit materials for the year under review." "
5. The question is called and seconded. The vote is by unanimous consent, including the change to the pronouns and the amended sentence. There are no objections to the proposed policy and the motion is approved.

VI. Update from Future of Arts and Sciences Committee (Hannah Rosen & Matthias Leu)

1. Matthias thanks the group for the opportunity to provide an update.
 - a. The committee has revised their timeline based on a steep learning curve and is studying other institutions which have undertaken a reorganization within A&S and between A&S and the university. They are collecting feedback and will provide a preliminary report by the end of the semester. They will continue the work in Fall 2024.
 - b. The committee is holding listening sessions with various groups including students, Staff Assembly, and CCPD. They will hold additional sessions after spring break and possibly in April to hear from faculty. They have an anonymous online form to submit questions or comments. They welcome feedback via email from individuals and will be happy to meet with groups.
2. The committee has been organized into subcommittees.
 - a. Data subcommittee – will collate qualitative and quantitative data on W&M peer institutes.
 - b. Town Hall subcommittee – will organize meetings with different groups
 - c. Grad School subcommittee – will investigate how students are situated administratively within W&M’s peer institutions and here.
 - d. Some members are considering restructuring at other universities or their mission statements.
 - e. Interdisciplinary program subcommittee – consider how interdisciplinary programs are organized here and at other places.
 - f. Another subgroup will determine how deans’ offices are structured here and other places.
 - g. New school subcommittee - issues to consider.
 - h. Undergraduate application process subcommittee – will investigate the application process here and elsewhere.
3. Matthias describes the webpage, which will have regular updates.

VI. Report from Faculty Assembly (Josh Burk)

1. All faculty should have received an email to complete the faculty survey. These surveys do lead to outcomes; the previous survey led to seven one-page letters delivered to appropriate administrators. The deadline for this survey is March 19.
2. Assembly discussed a student proposal to maintain a syllabi repository to be made accessible to students. Assembly is generally in favor, though disadvantages include giving the mistaken impression that syllabi for particular courses never change. A specific syllabus might have been created by a faculty member who has since left the university..
3. Questions and discussion.

- a. A faculty member asks why students want syllabi. They get information from the syllabus to help them make the decision about whether or not to take a particular course. Not all students are comfortable reaching out directly to faculty to request to see a syllabus, especially First-Gen-Low-Income students.
- b. A faculty member asks if there is information on the proposed retirement incentive. Assembly doesn't have any update.
- c. A faculty member asks if Assembly has a committee on political diversity in an apolitical university and was hoping to get more information on that. Where did the committee originate? Aaron Griffith (Philosophy) is working on it. Assembly brainstormed 15 or so different topics to work on this year, and that was one of them. Scott Swan and Aaron are good people to answer that question.

VII. Report from FAC (J.C. Poutsma)

1. FAC speaks about most of the things that are already on the A&S agenda (TF framework, merit, VIMS MS major, etc.).

VIII. New Business - none

2. A faculty member asked about the guidelines for expressive events such as peaceful protests which were developed with faculty and posted on a university website. The links have been taken down. Can we get information on why they were taken down? Suzanne answers that the Office of Compliance manages that website and made the decisions. Suzanne will ask Compliance and update the faculty.

IX. Motion to adjourn is made and seconded. The next meeting is April 9.