

Meeting of the Villanova University Academic Policy Committee

October 25, 2010
Devon Room 3:00 pm

Present: Susan Mackey-Kallis (chair), Bryan Kerns, Fayette Veverka, Robert Styer, Adele Lindenmeyr, Mark Sullivan, Mary Ann Cantrell, Lesley Perry, Joyce S. Willens, Mike Pagano, Greg Sleasman, Damien Germino, Paul Pasles, Chiji Akoma, Diepiriye Anga, Craig Wheeland, Louise Russo, Farid Zamani, Ed Kresch, Jerry Jones, Kevin Clark

The meeting began at 3 pm.

I. The chair asked for any corrections to the minutes. Some names had typos, and Lesley Perry pointed out that she was not on the CATS subcommittee. Suggestions for future minutes included page numbers.

II. Next meeting will be Nov 15 at 3pm in the Devon Room. The chair asked about various times to meet in the spring. It seems that Monday afternoons at 3 or 3:30 are the best but she will check with APC members who were unable to attend today's meeting.

III. Updates:

1. The General Counsel's Office sent a lengthy response to the query about the new federal textbook regulations (see Appendix 1 below). Essentially, if a faculty member is not able to adopt a course text within the normal time frame or needs to change the text afterwards, there is some flexibility. Members asked how we should disseminate this clarification of the policy. After some discussion, we decided to ask the University Shop textbook manager to include this info in his next email. Craig Wheeland noted that faculty cannot abuse the limited flexibility allowed by the law, or we might fail the next federal audit. Wheeland also stated that the University Shop's book buy-back program depends on faculty submitting their book orders on time so the U-Shop can buy texts used in the next semester back from students. Students save money through this program. Craig Wheeland volunteered to draft a communication re: the textbook policy that the bookstore could send to faculty regarding the potential use of "TBD" on textbook orders. He will provide this draft to APC.

2. The chair next gave the VPAA office's response to the question from the previous meeting about the meaning of "may" in the policy on undergraduates applying up to three graduate courses to a graduate program. Graduate program directors give permission to undergraduates to take graduate courses so long as the students meet the qualifications set by their College. The policy allows up to three graduate courses to double count. The email response from Associate V.P.A.A. Craig Wheeland re: this query was shared with the committee (see Appendix II below).

IV. Subcommittee report on the CATS data analysis:

The subcommittee (M. Pagano, C. Akoma, N. Else-Quest, J. Klein, P. Pasles, F. Veverka, C. Weiss)prepared a four page document outlining how to analyze the CATS data. The subcommittee chair Mike Pagano discussed the document. Kevin Clark pointed out the lack of causal relationship in the self-reported CATS data, and suggested that terms such as “effect” be replaced by more accurate terms such as “associated with”. Some factors that could also be considered are the time of the class, and the class size. Several members pointed out possible complicating factors such as determining class size of combined lecture/lab courses in the sciences or clinical courses in nursing. Other complicating factors are whether students take a lab concurrent with or separate from a science course, and differences in how team-taught courses administer CATS. It is probably not reasonable to separate out each of these complicating factors. After a lot of discussion, the committee decided to concentrate first on regular semester undergraduate courses, then if there is time, the graduate courses, and lastly summer classes.

Adele Lindenmeyr asked for clarification on the ultimate purpose and the desired outcome of the project. The purposes are to disabuse faculty misconceptions about what factors affect the CATS, and to give the rank and tenure committees more information on the strength of various external variables such as gender or age on the CATS scores. The desired outcome is probably a document suitable for rank and tenure committees, and probably another document for the general faculty. The Villanova results can be compared to the published literature. Craig Wheeland said he would revise the information on the Academic Affairs web page named “Guide for New Faculty (CATS).

A long discussion ensued on the purpose of including the professor’s rank as a relevant variable. It partially acts as a surrogate variable to measure years of teaching experience. It also might act as a surrogate variable for the age of the professor (which several members joked is seen by students as somewhere between old and ancient.) Student members pointed out that they are barely aware of the rank of the professor, so they do not think there is any conscious bias of the CATS due to rank.

The 2007 VPAA study showed that adjuncts and full time faculty have similar CATS scores. The recent VSB study showed no association between CATS scores and average grade given. We hope to find correlations between CATS scores and items such as course organization, rigor, student engagement.

The subcommittee will meet with OPIR to see what can be done in a reasonable time frame.

V. Adding a Reading Day:

Bryan Kerns presented the report on the student desire to add a reading day.

Three years ago, the SGA requested the APC to add a reading day. The committee could not agree on how to accomplish this. Last year, the SGA conducted a survey on the Reading Day with a 51% response rate. The long report was presented last spring to the Student Life Committee and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees (see handout / attached file). In a nutshell, the students overwhelmingly want a second reading day. There is no consensus, however, on giving up any of the current holidays to allow a second reading day.

Evidently, the Student Life staff is opposed to having a second reading day. Presumably this is because they do not want to lose any days of the fall break, and also have concerns with student organizations using the reading day for more formals and other parties rather than studying.

Given that the student survey did not identify any particular holiday to give up in order to add a reading day, nor do they wish to begin earlier or end later, the committee decided there is not any reasonable motion we can make. Some members noted other options have been pointed out in the past:

- have 2 hour exam periods and fit an extra exam period on each day (would lead to more students having a conflict of three exams on one day)
- extend each class period by five minutes so the same number of class hours can take place in one less week of classes
- add a reading half-day rather than a full day, perhaps on Tuesday having only the first exam period and the evening exam period.

Several members noted that the survey reports that many students have papers or projects or tests during the last week of class, which violates University policy that no major projects or tests may be given during the last week without explicit approval of the dean. The committee wonders how this can be addressed. The chair requested that Brian Kerns bring the issue back to SGA for further fact finding re: this issue. He agreed to do so and to report our at the November APC meeting.

VI. Librarian Status:

The chair will ask Joe Lucia for more background on this item.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Styer

Members of APC: Susan Mackey-Kallis (chair), Wayne Bremser, Bryan Kerns, Fayette Veverka, Robert Styer, Adele Lindenmeyr, Christopher Haas, Mark Sullivan, Lindsay Waters, Mary Ann Cantrell, Lesley Perry, Louise Fitzpatrick (represented by Lesley Perry), Joyce S. Willens, Mike Pagano, Greg Sleasman, Nicholas Tumolo, Damien Germino, Paul Pasles, Chiji Akoma, Kail Ellis (represented by Craig Wheeland), James Danko (represented by Kevin D. Clark), John Doody (represented by Lowell Gustafson), Gary Gabriele (represented by Gerard Jones), Letizia Modena, Diepiriye Anga, Louise Russo, Farid Zamani, Ed Kresch, Sridhar Santhanam

APPENDIX 1

From: Debra Fickler
Sent: Monday, October 18, 2010 10:37 AM
To: Susan Mackey-Kallis
Cc: Dorothy Malloy; Craig Wheeland; Frank Henninger
Subject: FW: APC question re: textbook federal law

Dear Susan,

Dottie Malloy asked me to respond to the questions posed by APC pertaining to the federal law regarding textbooks.

The federal law requiring universities to provide textbook information is part of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, passed in 2008, which made significant amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA). All universities that receive Title IV federal financial aid, as does Villanova, are required to certify their compliance with the HEA annually. The Department of Education (DOE) may also audit a university for compliance.

The textbook provisions are intended to help students make informed choices about their courses, including the cost of required textbooks, and to allow them sufficient time to find the best price for those textbooks.

The law states that "to the maximum extent practicable" the University is to provide textbook information (e.g., ISBN and retail price) on the course schedule distributed for preregistration and registration. If it is not practicable to provide the information, the course list should indicate "to be determined" for the textbook information.

The law does not address changes in textbook requirements, nor is there any prohibition on making such changes. Given the rationale for the law stated above, it seems to me that if the faculty member expects that she or he will make be making a change in the textbook, it may be preferable to state "to be determined" on the course list, and update with accurate information as soon as it is available. Also, any changes should take into account the cost implications. However, the law also states that "nothing in this section shall be construed to supercede the institutional autonomy or academic freedom of instructors involved in the selection of college textbooks, supplemental materials, and other classroom materials."

As to sanctions for failure to comply with the law, as stated above, the DOE may audit a university for Title IV compliance and make findings of non-compliance. Typically in those situations, the university under audit advises the DOE on how it intends to comply going forward. The ultimate sanction for non-compliance is loss of eligibility for Title IV funding.

Please be aware that there is a bill pending in Pennsylvania that also addresses disclosure of textbook information to students. Both the Pennsylvania Senate and House of Representatives approved the bill and it went to the Governor on October 12th for consideration. He has 10 days to sign or veto it. If he takes no action, it will become law. I will provide an update on the status of this law when available.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Debbie

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Appendix II Email from Craig Wheeland to Susan Mackey-Kallis 10/01/10 re: the interpretation of the word “may” in the policy re: undergraduates taking up to 9 credits of graduate courses

Hi Susan:

The decision to permit double counting up to nine credits or hours is set by the policy for the entire university. The use of the word “may” means that students are permitted to double count that many credits or hours but not more. They may have only three or six graduate credits or hours to double count so that is why the policy states ‘up to’. The policy means that students will no longer be allowed to double count more than 9 graduate credits or hours.

As the rest of the policy states, ultimately the Dean’s level administrators who manage Graduate programs in each College implement the policy. Students have to meet all the other conditions for taking a graduate course and then if they decide to apply to the graduate program, they know up to nine of those graduate credits or hours can double count.

Hope this is helpful,

Craig

