

# **CAS Faculty Meeting**

## **Minutes**

**November 3, 1999**

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Call to order, 3:15 PM, Dean Atkinson presiding. President Mooney is in Seattle today.

Approval of Minutes, October 6, 1999 meeting.

### **Dean's Report**

Thanks to Paulette Bierzychudek for presenting yesterday's colloquium. On Tuesday evenings faculty lectures are being offered for interested student, explicating ideas from Inventing America reading materials. Voluntary attendance has been impressive, at 100-150 students.

All are invited to a Presidential Forum tomorrow, from 4:30-5 PM. Janet Davidson and John Callahan will debate the issue of access to higher education.

Some pending issues, for Academic Council and CAS faculty:

1. Parental Leave. At present there is no set formal policy. A number of female faculty have had leaves after childbirth, but there has been no formal policy. At present there is increased interest in developing such a policy. This Fall, language and terms have been developed for parental leave and several other types of leave. Parental leave policy cannot be specific to CAS, but requires coordination with the Deans of the other schools. Legal and insurance issues, for example, need to be consistent.

Discussion: Why must we coordinate with the other two schools? Retirement benefits, medical benefits, etc need to be consistent and ensure parity. Staff are entitled to 12 weeks family leave by law; but faculty work by semesters and can be seen as another employment category.

2. Assessment. At last year's visit the accrediting team had concerns about assessment of student performance. We received a letter asking that we report about this issue in Fall 2000, with a follow-up visit by one or more team representative(s) in 2001. In 1992 the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges adopted assessment as a standard. Formerly the emphasis was on inputs; emphasis on outputs is now increasing. Schools are scrambling to determine how to measure and vouch for educational "value added." Biggest troubles are for Southeastern schools; their accrediting body is the most concerned with quantitative measures. Our accreditors are more flexible. Recently Reed College has gone through the assessment of assessment process successfully, using as their tools a combination of qualifying exam / senior thesis / oral defense. Whitman also satisfied the Association, using oral exam plus one other senior experience: senior project, thesis, GRE scores, or other method.

Dean Atkinson has heard the following from other schools: University of Puget Sound developed a writing-based assessment method. They collected a sample of student papers, which a faculty team rated, and correlated rankings with time at the University. University of Portland's core program instructors receive assessment training. Pacific University is reviewing program goals at program and college levels.

Our own path involves the following: Develop educational goals, assessment methods, and measures for each department. Meanwhile, curriculum committee is looking at senior "capstone" experiences. Reed and Whitman both have well-developed capstone experiences. We seek to develop methods that have integrity within the Lewis and Clark context.

Discussion:

Q: Will we need a full-blown plan?

A: This will be an ongoing concern, and we need to develop something we can live with in the long term. We need to define and articulate more clearly what we're already doing. Q: Are departments prepared to withhold student graduations based on senior project performance?

A: Yes, we do this already.

Q: Is this concern with assessment an accurate assessment of a flaw in our system?

A: There is value in looking at the issue more closely as a way of improving the education we offer.

### 3. Writing / Speaking / Information Skills across the Curriculum.

Responding to a request for proposals by the Murdock Trust, University of Portland has taken the local lead in evaluating their core program. They may be hiring a faculty member to coordinate the effort; if so, we're willing to consult with that person. Our own proposal responded to the RFP for information retrieval, now renamed "information literacy." We've proposed engaging an information specialist as a consultant to integrate with all departments. Murdock Trust may only be interested in hardware and software, or they may respond positively to our proposal.

Discussion: Q: Will we consider surveying grads as part of assessment?

A: We're considering developing a regular, college-wide alumni survey. Faculty can help by passing alumni updates on to the Alumni Relations office.

Q: Do we have to "buckle under" to the "value added" mentality is anyone resisting?

A: Regional accreditation by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges is far preferable to having the federal government come in and do it. The assessment movement is everywhere, in many categories of institution. As an example, 10% of Ford Foundation project budgets is for assessment. The issue will not be going away.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Hughes Foundation grant proposal for biochemistry has been submitted. Keck proposal to go out in two weeks.

### **Reports of Standing Committees**

**AAAS.** No report, but thanks to those participating in the upcoming academic fair.

**Curriculum Committee,** Jack Hart.

Academic calendar principles were adopted last month. Committee has looked into Roger Nelson's suggestion about averaging days in academic semesters, to have 67 days in Fall and 69 in Spring. Virtually every other west coast school has 17-18 weeks to complete their Spring semester; we do it in 16. Possibilities include starting on Labor Day, not enthusiastically supported; and cutting Fall break to one day. Committee has no recommendation.

Discussion:

Roger Nelson: Extending semester can add only one day to the Spring calendar while saving a week in the Fall. Can we have a straw poll about this idea?

Matt Levinger: Cutting Fall break to one day would only be necessary in 2 of every 6 years, still ending semester no later than December 20.

Jack Hart: Such a solution isn't ad hoc, but provides a regular method.

Dean Atkinson: Some faculty aren't comfortable with unequal semesters.

SAAB reports unanimous support for a two-day Fall break.

Roger Nelson offers motion: "Amend the calendar principles to add the principle that Fall semester will begin the day after Labor Day. When this principle precludes having 68 days in the Fall term, have a 67 day Fall term and a 69 day Spring term." Motion seconded.

Discussion and debate:

This isn't the place to tinker, this should be a committee issue. All the issues have already been examined in committee. This is the proper place, as considerable dissatisfaction remains among faculty.

Pre-Labor Day starts get off poorly, students are missing, etc.

Pre-Labor Day start results in loss of time for research.

Bob Owens: There are three ways of avoiding a pre-Labor Day start: shorten Fall break when necessary; adjust reading days and/or exam periods; use uneven semesters when necessary. Calls for the committee to reconsider the issue and report back. Offers the following motion: "Amend the calendar principles to include the principle that classes will not begin before the day after Labor Day." Roger Nelson accepts substitute motion as friendly.

Ben Westervelt offers substitute motion: "Amend the calendar principles to shorten Fall break when necessary to avoid a pre-Labor Day start." Motion seconded.

Discussion:

This motion does not eliminate all pre-Labor Day starts. In years with an August 28 start date under the existing plan, Fall break can be reduced to one day and the start date would be September 5. Question called, debate closed by voice vote. Ben Westervelt's substitute motion disapproved, 18/28.

Bob Owen's motion is now the motion on the floor: "Amend the calendar principles to include the principle that classes will not begin before the day after Labor Day."

Question called, debate closed by voice vote.

Motion approved, 30/18.

Call for adjournment.

Adjournment, 5:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Kinsella, CAS Faculty Secretary.