Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Arts & Sciences Council

Thursday, April 12, 2018

Call to Order

**Anita Layton (Chair)** welcomed the committee, then asked for any changes or corrections to the March minutes. There being none, the minutes were then voted on as approved.

**Interdepartmental Majors**

**Jeff Forbes (Computer Science)** summarized past discussions about the interdepartmental majors proposal. He pointed out that the Curriculum Committee has proposed a change of wording to the current interdepartmental major (IDM) policy. It would like to add a department-originated IDM, while also still allowing student-originated IDMs. He then opened the floor to questions.

**Chris Walter (Physics)** asked who makes decisions on the proposals.

**Forbes** said that the Dean for Curriculum will send the proposal to the Curriculum Committee. The committee looks to ensure that the proposal fulfills the requirements of IDMs and does not duplicate any already existing majors.

**Sherryl Broverman (Biology)** asked what happens after five years? Does the IDM become a permanent major?

**Forbes** said no, not unless the departments propose it as such.

**Broverman** asked if there would be costs associated with a switch to a permanent major, such as adding a DUS and staff?

**Forbes** said potentially.

**Charlotte Clark (NSOE)** asked about the relationship between an IDM and Program II.

**Forbes** said there is no relationship. There had been talk about Program II being an option for students whose departments weren’t going to propose and IDM, but since the Curriculum Committee is not eliminating the student-proposed IDM, it didn’t think there was any need to change Program II.

**Karen Murphy (Trinity)** said the Program II has received the proposal but due to a miscommunication regarding voting, has not been able to meet and provide feedback. They are going to wait for a year and monitor how this new proposal affects the flux of student-authored IDMS and whether or not it would make sense to have a separate body evaluate them.
Karin Shapiro (AAAS) asked for clarification on the current model.

Forbes said a student goes to the DUSs of two departments and explains the academic plan. If the DUSs sign off, then the student takes a list of 14 courses to Karen Murphy, who will sign it. Each student argues why the course of study makes sense, but there is no scrutiny by a committee. The new proposal introduces a departmentally created major, the Curriculum Committee is made aware of it, and it is posted so that others can also declare that major.

Lee Willard (Trinity) asked who monitors the degree for graduation?

Forbes said with the current model, the two DUSs must monitor. With the departmental major, students will be monitored through the advisement portal.

Willard asked what happens if a student doesn’t follow the proposed plan?

Forbes said with the department-originated major, the process is the same as any other major: they would need to get an exception from the DUSs that they would see the student hadn’t fulfilled a requirement and that would have to be negotiated.

Catherine Admay (Sanford) wanted to understand the differential accountability between the two IDMs. She was concerned that students say they are going to do one thing, then they do something else and there’s no way to track that.

Forbes said that department-originated IDMs should be able to be tracked the same way as current majors.

Murphy agreed, saying the plan is to have the department-originated IDMs in the advisement portal so they would show up in all the reports. With student-originated IDMs, it’s up to the DUSs to have the list of proposed courses and make sure students took them.

Forbes clarified that the student-originated IDMs require a list of 14 courses and we know that courses aren’t always offered, so it creates more work for the student and DUS. With departmental IDMs, there will be a list of required courses and electives from which students choose.

Micaela Janan (Classics) asked what power departments/DUSs have to withdraw a program if it is not adequate?

Forbes said a department could decide the major doesn’t make sense and could kill it, though any student who’s enrolled will have the opportunity to do any program that is advertised in the Bulletin the year they show up. So the amount of time a student could continue in that major could be rather large. Other than that, there’s no reason a department couldn’t cancel a major or make changes at any point.

José María Rodríguez García (Romance Studies) asked if the Curriculum Committee has received feedback about the proposal?

Forbes said there’s a range. Some departments will simply not do interdepartmental majors and instead insist on students earning a double major. Some departments like the idea of being able to innovate the majors they create without having to go through the relatively substantial process of
declaring a new major. There are also faculty who want to make sure that students still have the option to create their own degrees.

**David Malone (Education)** recommended that if the proposal were to pass, Forbes come back to Council with data. It seems appropriate to monitor any unintended consequences this might have on Program II and student-generated IDMs. His fear is departments will say, “we created one and that’s the only one,” and will no longer accept student-generated IDMs.

**Forbes** agreed they would monitor and report back to Council.

**Kim Lamm (GSFS)** asked which department gets credit for the student? Or will both?

**Forbes** said currently the Registrar counts student-generated IDMs as one department or the other, and that seems wrong. The Curriculum Committee would like to see that IDMs are counted as their own category in the system, much like Biophysics is not counted in Physics or Biology. He was unclear how it would be counted in terms of the dean lavishing resources upon departments.

**Clark** said her understanding is that we don’t have a major in Program II. This is something that will have two majors. Students will need to understand all three options, so in the monitoring process, she suggested the Curriculum Committee be in close contact with the Program II Committee to keep them in the mix.

**Forbes** said they will do that.

**Val Konczal (Trinity)** said that students may flock to IDMs because they don’t take the same amount of time as a single departmental major does. Has there been talk about any negative repercussions?

**Forbes** said they did discuss what would happen if the number of students enrolled in IDMs grew significantly, and that’s part of what spurred the discussion to begin with. If that’s going to happen, at least have some reasonable monitoring system where the two departments decide on the requirements. Duke already has interdisciplinary majors and it’s a good idea. This proposal would strengthen interdepartmental majors.

**Konczal** said she thought one reason why current numbers are low is because it takes preparation by the student.

**Forbes** said he was not sure, but from what he can tell, it’s not a high bar for a student to get over. But in the interest of equity, if there’s a good idea that makes sense, it should be accessible to anyone who wants to do it. But it shouldn’t be “can you find a DUS on the right day, etc.” The Curriculum Committee will absolutely monitor to determine if there’s a huge shift in student enrollment.

**Steve Asher (Psychology and Neuroscience)** said that there could potentially be a number of students doing an IDM for a five-year period in a program that if the Curriculum Committee had looked at, it wouldn’t have approved.

**Forbes** said this already may be happening with the student-generated IDMs, so the Curriculum Committee views this proposal as an improvement on that situation.

**Asher** asked what reasons might be used to not approve a departmental IDM after five years?
Forbes said it is hard to predict, but one could imagine a reason being the lack of a cohesive intellectual direction in a proposal to the Curriculum Committee. That issue would be easier to address in an IDM proposal. There might also be more pointed questions about why courses are required for the regular major but not the IDM.

Randy Matory (Cultural Anthropology) said a typical example of a rejection would be that we would generate too scatter-shot a program to count as integrated the way a major is expected to be. He wondered if the requirements should be emended to require a student to take a capstone that integrates the two majors?

Broverman said with the current student-generated IDM, the onus of creating a cohesive program lies with the student. With the new proposal, the onus is now shifted to the department, so the faculty are the ones creating the major. Presumably if they are invested in its longevity, they are going to start thinking about how to set it up from the beginning, and they presumably have some idea of what a major should look like.

Forbes said capstones are not required for any major. Do we want to put a restriction on IDMs that we don’t currently put on majors?

Michael Munger (Political Science) reminded Council that the original proposal was to change IDMs to department-originated precisely because of the monitoring issues that have been raised. It was decided that we wanted to keep the student-generated options, so that’s the status quo. He has two seniors enrolled in IDMs and one student currently proposing an IDM. Of the 14 courses, one senior changed seven and one changed nine and just presented him with the changes and assumed it would be okay. So it’s incoherent and if you get a change across DUSs, it’s a really big problem. He has four meetings with one of the students and during the fourth meeting, the student finally said, “I just thought you’d give up.” The student who is applying for a new IDM just wants to take courses he’s interested in without taking the requirements that departments have identified as constituting an education. So student IDMs are a big burden on DUSs and are vehicles for some students to avoid departmental requirements. We decided not to get rid of student-generated IDMs, and department-generated IDMs are just an option, and departments may choose not to do them. But they could potentially get rid of some of the difficulties DUSs currently face with the student-generated ones.

Jesse Hunt (Armed Forces) said that when students decide where they want to attend college, they need programs that are bound to something that’s predictable and specific. Students applying to his program wanting to study a pathway tied to scholarship dollars may often choose another institution if Duke doesn’t offer a bounded and predictable pathway to a degree.

Forbes said another issue that comes up with IDMs is that STEM majors are tagged for visa purposes. So being able to say that an IDM is a STEM major has an impact on certain students.

Clark asked if at the five-year point, departments would be allowed to modify their proposal?

Forbes said that proposals are very much conversations.

Cary Moskovitz (TWP) clarified that this proposal allows departments to pilot an IDM. After five years, if departments want to continue the IDM, they go through the same process as they would for any other major. It’s not a matter of the Curriculum Committee approving or not approving the pilot.

Layton asked if the committee were comfortable enough to vote. There being no objections, the committee voted 21-4-1 in favor of the proposal.
Report on First/Second Year Student Experience

Layton then said she liked today’s agenda because of its theme of undergraduate education. She then welcomed Trinity Dean Valerie Ashby to report on first and second year courses.

Valerie Ashby (Dean) began by saying she will miss most of all the energy Layton brings to meetings and she commended Layton on her enthusiasm for serving as chair.

She then went on to update Council on the conversation regarding introductory courses. The issue is being talked about among 650 faculty across divisions, plus DUSs, plus liaisons, plus A&S Council. The hope is to have all faculty informed and able to ask questions along the way.

Ashby started by walking through the timeline of where we’ve been up until where we expect to be in early fall:

On Sept. 11, 2017, in her address to the A&S Council, Ashby first mentioned the idea that had been circulating amongst chairs about the student experience and particularly how are students being introduced into our fields. What is that experience like for them in the classroom?

The chairs continued to talk about this issue and generated the questions that she recently sent to all faculty members. Many of those questions were also generated among the DUS board. She is energized reading John Martin's thoughts: When we think about what we want to do here, in looking at our introduction to the discipline, if this is the only course that a student takes in our discipline, is that the experience that we want to have left with them about what it is we do. We’ve added to that: If the mission of Trinity is to deliver a world-class education, then do your introductory courses line up with that mission? Do you see the mission magnified/exemplified in the way you deliver that course? Is it exciting to students intellectually? Is it having them ask questions about what they might do next in your field?

We’re also taking a shift away from emphasis on majors-minors-certificates and toward education of every single student. Last time she talked with Council, she gave the example of the 1,100 or so first-year students who take math. Not one of them is a math major, but every single one of them ought to feel like a math student. If they are only going to take one class, am I addressing them the same way I would a major?

Going back to the timeline, she said that chairs continued the discussion through October. The DUS advisory board met in November and began its own discussion. They started to think about how to implement change in departments. By December 11, chairs were clear that they liked this discussion and wanted to continue it and try to formalize some structure to make it happen.

On December 14, Ashby came back to the A&S Council to talk about what they are going to do. She emphasized this is not about the first and second years, but rather the introduction to the disciplines, which could happen in later years for many disciplines. As such, they have started using the terminology “what is the student experience upon the introduction to your field.”

Since then, they’ve decided to put some structure around this idea. On January 23, she wrote to department chairs to ask them to designate, by February 1, a liaison to work with Arlie Petters. On March 8, Arlie wrote to the liaisons and gave them access to a dashboard with data from Assessment. They have since had two meetings on March 20 and 26 to walk through the dashboard.
Ashby said she’s very impressed with the liaisons’ level of engagement. Their question to her was, “What shouldn’t we do?” Her response was, “Tell me what you want for your department and your students and let us figure out on the back end how we’re going to help you do that.”

Ashby had asked for drafts of first thoughts and by April 1, 35 programs had turned theirs in. She and Arlie will spend the summer figuring out how to help departments implement their plans and then will report back in the fall. The process will continue to be iterative. Some departmental strategies will be piloted this fall, others need continued discussion.

The beauty of this, she said, is that no department is tied to any others success in the sense that all departments can be successful working on their own timeline doing what’s best for their students.

Examples of the departmental suggestions include creating more obvious pathways into and out of the discipline; creating tracks within disciplines; improving the quality of teaching assistants; and redesigning the entry course. She’s excited to hear all ideas because they deal with how to engage with the wonderful cohort of students Duke brings in. Ashby added that there were almost 38,000 applications this year, up about 2,000 from last year. Applicants are more diverse than they’ve ever been, with wider ranges of experiences, and the fact that departments are willing to engage that brilliance is pretty amazing.

Going forward, some pilots will begin in the fall. For departments that aren’t quite ready to launch, conversations will continue. After pilots are launched and assessed, departments may choose to tweak their plans. So this is not a short process but it’s a worthwhile goal for Trinity to have its students have the very best experience, particularly in the introduction to the disciplines.

Ashby said this work also fits into the University’s future priorities. She’s been traveling with President Price quite a bit, and every time President Price talks about his priorities, he talks about this project. She loves how he talks about it because he says we’re really just asking our faculty how do we deliver the very best to our students and become our very best selves? This idea also resonates with our boards of visitors.

She also mentioned that it is also time to produce a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for the university as part of the SACS accreditation process. The previous QEP was a global initiative and one of the signature items created out of that process was Winter Forum. The new QEP will focus on the introductory experience since all schools with undergraduate programs are looking at their introductory experiences. The good news is that there are financial resources tied to the QEP since it is a commitment by the university. This is the reason why she wants departmental plans to outline the resources necessary to implement their plans.

Ashby then welcomed questions or comments from the Council. She reiterated that there will ongoing conversations with department chairs and DUSs and sometimes they will be invited to report to Council.

Matory said one of the program’s greatest virtues is that it respects each department’s independent judgment and will to improve its first-year courses. He wanted to offer some cross-departmental feedback that he hoped would enhance the conversation. He is currently teaching a course, “The University as a Culture,” in which he hears students’ experiences across Duke. Many students experience some departments’ introductory courses as extremely difficult, as intended to weed them out, as graded very hard arbitrarily. Many students arrive at Duke with various levels of preparation, since not all students go to elite prep schools or have access to AP courses. Some students feel these experiences are necessary to perform at the most basic level in introductory courses. How do we
make sure that those students who are not prepared at that most elite of levels can take a course that introduces them to a field and can major in it?

Ashby said that question is a lot of the heart of what we’re trying to get to. In the previous discussion she had with Council, she talked about access. We say we want any student who is intellectually capable of coming to Duke to be able to attend. Now that we are talking about increasing our first-generation students, we are seeing diversity of all kinds. She believes that all students who attend Duke can be successful, but those students are entering Duke with different experiences. Sometimes that experience is just social capital and the knowledge of how to navigate Duke. She wants programs to think about all students who are introduced to your discipline as being your students, not just the ones that make it through and become your majors. She is concerned about student experience. Sixty percent of students coming to Duke say they want to study science; sixty percent of white males finish; for women and underrepresented students, by the second year that number has dropped to 30 percent. We can look at students who are intellectually identical, so something happened. Some of that might be what Matory is talking about. Her question is what talent is Duke not maximizing by not understanding that our student population has changed.

Willard said she’s read the departmental reports and wanted to assure Matory that people are proposing ways to address this issue. Some are suggesting a differential way of entry based on experience and many are infusing a multidisciplinary approach to their introductory courses.

Ashby noted that there was no restriction on proposing interdisciplinary things. Her goal is to be able to ask a first-year student what course she is taking and get a different answer than what she currently receives, which is, “wow, it’s killing me.” She wants to keep the rigor while realizing that students arrive at Duke with different levels of preparation. Also, she said, if departments are doing a good job with this, she wants them to think about how to do an even better job.

Matory emphasized information from a New York Times article that stated male and female students at identical performance levels evaluate their performance relative to other students very differently. Female students think they aren’t doing as well, while male students think they are doing much better. How do we address those self confidence issues? He’s not qualified to do that.

Ashby said there is data that shows when a female student doesn’t do well on an exam, she takes that in as “I am incapable.” When men don’t do well, they generally think that was a fluke. So while departments need to focus on classroom experience, A&S is thinking about what else students need outside of class academically. For example, we launched SPIRE, a pilot program for women and underrepresented minorities in STEM. It’s a cohort-based model and the first group of students had GPA’s that were .3 higher than comparable students who were equally as prepared.

Broverman said many departments, particularly in STEM, distinguish between courses for majors and non-majors. That seems philosophically antithetical to what Ashby is proposing. Has this issue been discussed with chairs and DUSs?

Ashby said some departments make that separation and it works incredibly well for their students because every student is addressed equally as a student but with different pathways. So this summer she’ll have time to study the proposals. Every department is truly different so it’s important to give them opportunities to do things that fit their individual situations.

Lamm suggested we also think about different ways of learning and the fact that students with different levels of mastery can learn from each other.
Ashby agreed, adding that the Program in Education and the Center for Learning Innovation are valuable resources and can be possible partners in departmental plans.

She also wanted to think about how we evaluate teaching. She would like to partner with ECASC and either the proposed teaching committee or the Curriculum Committee to use the expertise in our faculty to figure out how to do a better job assessing how we do our teaching.

Teaching for Equity Program

Layton then welcomed members of the Teaching for Equity Program who were going to give a brief report.

Malone began by saying he participated in the Teaching for Equity faculty fellowship program in Fall 2015. The program had a powerful impact on his teaching and his interactions with students. He introduced Emily Stewart who, along with Barbara Lau, founded the program.

Emily Stewart (Teaching for Equity) said the Teaching for Equity Fellowship is an opportunity to learn and practice strategies that better engage all students in our classrooms, labs and learning spaces. Faculty learn concrete skills and tools to strengthen their ability to teach and support students from all backgrounds. They develop knowledge on how to handle challenging topics around race and identity that may arise in learning environments, and enhance their teaching abilities by building curricular design and facilitation skills. In addition, faculty gain a deep awareness about student experience in Duke classrooms, and a cohort of faculty to collaborate and network with that have a shared language and analytical framework about the dynamics of power, privilege and oppression.

Being able to teach in ways that are accessible for all students becomes even more critical as the classroom and campus population becomes more diverse. Stewart shared statistics about the changing demographic of students entering Duke. Over the past six years, the first-year class has grown from 43 percent students of color in 2011 to this year’s current first-year class being over half students of color. In addition, 14 percent are international students, 9 percent are first generation college students, and half receive financial aid.

Faculty in this program delve into culturally relevant teaching and look at how they can deepen and build on students’ prior knowledge, practice varied teaching approaches, and understand institutional aspects of oppression that helps them know more about their students’ lives and their learning.

In its third year, the program has grown to include 75 fellows. This year they created a cohort of health educators, and plans are to add a third cohort of faculty in NSOE, Divinity, Pratt and Sanford.

Stewart said he Fellowship includes a two-and-a-half-day orientation in August or September and monthly four-hour sessions during the academic year. I have flyers that give more information about how to apply for the program.

She thanked Dean Ashby and Provost Kornbluth for their ongoing support, and introduced Tema Okun.

Tema Okun (Teaching for Equity) said the program starts with a 2 ½ day orientation to get everyone on the same page regarding shared language around the subject of equity. The work is based on critical race theory and a program she helped develop called Barriers and Bridges. The rest of the program addresses issues regarding theories of teaching and instruction as well as application of those theories.
This curriculum is based on the idea that we’re trying to do the best for our students. They are not trying to fix or change anyone or assume they are doing something wrong. Its real strength is that faculty get to convene with other faculty who care about teaching and want to help each other.

Bethzaida Fernandez (Romance Studies) said she was in the 2016 cohort and enjoying interacting and learning with faculty from other disciplines and whom she would not have met otherwise. She has been teaching at Duke for more than 20 years and had seen the student population change tremendously during that time. The program helped her learn new skills and strategies to engage a more diverse population.

Matory said the irony he often faces in an environment and a discipline that’s very tolerant of diversity is that there are some students from majorities who have reactionary views that they might not feel free to speak in class. How does he produce a transformation? The elephant in the room is that Duke has produced some of the leaders of the alt-right movement despite our years of efforts to create a tolerant and open-minded discussion in the classroom. He wasn’t sure if critical race theory dealt with the issue of allowing such students to speak in class but also how to educate them.

Okun said that’s the kind of question that faculty in the program come up with and we try to figure out how to deal with. So while the curriculum is set in the sense that there’s a way of circling through theory and application, we’re also doing that within our own context of learning as a community. So at the point that that question would surface, we’d be talking about what it means to create a learning community, what’s the difference between a student’s opinion and fact, how do we handle that, what’s the emotional component of that challenge, how do we serve all our students? So it’s not like we’re offering critical race theory and then walking away. To answer questions, we pull on critical race theory, each other’s experiences and other sources.

Layton thanked the visitors and moved to the next item on the agenda.

**Introduction of new Council Chair**

Munger interrupted to ask if, by a vote for affirmation, the Council moved to congratulate its outgoing president on a job well done. Council approved.

Layton said it is time for her to pass the baton, but before she did, she wanted to express her gratitude to Council. Last night she wrote down a list of people she should thank and the list grew so long that she realized it would be easier to tell Council the people she would not thank. That is a very short list. She doesn’t feel particularly grateful for whomever decided Council meetings should be held late in the afternoon because she has to leave to pick up her children from school. She feels a tremendous amount of gratitude toward Council, she made a lot of good friends and learned a lot. She then welcomed the new Council chair, José María Rodríguez García.

Rodríguez García thanked Layton for her generosity of time and service as chair of A&S Council and said he hoped to continue her level of service and leadership. As many Council members know, he ran for the office under unusual terms because he published a program that was circulated amongst the faculty. He wants to motivate larger numbers of faculty to serve on A&S committees and become more engaged in faculty governance. One of the ways he wants to do that is by reviving some of the committees which have been dormant lately. He would like to hear more voices and generate as many ideas as possible. Another important issue in his program is to assist and support Dean Ashby in the introduction to the disciplines initiative. This is one way to rethink the nature of our disciplines and the way we present them to the students on a smaller scale. Hopefully this will be a stepping stone to more ambitious projects. He would like to put off discussion about restarting a new curriculum for the coming
year. He would like to talk about advising and have conversations about the university’s new strategic plan, including the emphasis on natural sciences and the restructuring of financial aid. He welcomes Council’s input and remarks and would like to reflect on immediate concerns regarding our undergraduates and faculty governance.

He then adjourned the meeting.