Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Arts & Sciences Council

Thursday, February 14, 2019

Call to Order (3:30 pm)

José María Rodríguez García (Chair) welcomed those in attendance and summarized the full agenda, which includes an informational session on admissions and a focused conversation on student pathways and diverging enrollments. First, though, Council needed to approve the January minutes. There being no corrections or amendments, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Rodríguez García then said that before addressing the first item on the agenda, he wanted to provide an opportunity for a Council member to read a very short statement on the regrettable episode in linguistic intolerance that happened recently in Duke’s graduate professional program in Biostatistics. He reminded Council that the incident is being investigated by the Office for Institutional Equity. The Academic Council, the governance body under which faculty input on this incident would fall because AC interprets and makes changes to the Faculty Handbook jointly with the Provost’s Office, has allocated time to discuss the situation at its February 21st meeting. But today, AMES representative Aimee Kwon would like to read a brief statement that captures succinctly the feelings, impressions, and layered responses generated not just among Asian American students or students of Asian descent but also among larger cohorts of students, faculty and staff. Because this item isn’t on the agenda, we won’t have time for comments. We just want to record a summary of these remarks in the minutes.

Aimee Kwon (AMES) thanked Rodríguez García and ECASC for this opportunity to speak and referred Council members to the handout she provided. While a full conversation will occur at the Academic Council next week, she wanted to lay out the issues before the A&S Council. She urged others to attend the Academic Council meeting to continue this discussion.

Summary of Statement for Arts & Sciences Council

Nayoung Aimee Kwon

(Asian American Studies Program/Department of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies)

This statement is an urgent call to action to each of us, the faculty of Arts & Sciences, and to the Duke leadership, as a direct response in the wake of the discriminatory Biostatistics incident. This incident, which was all over local and global news by Sat Jan 26, 2019 should need no introduction to this body. Briefly, the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Biostatistics in the School of Medicine, sent an email to the Masters students in the program, warning them about potential consequences to their access to professional
opportunities within and beyond the department for speaking a language other than English in a social setting and outside of the classroom.

The Biostatistics incident is not an isolated one, but one in a line of many such discriminatory acts targeting different groups that have occurred on our campus in recent months and years. While there is also a national (and global) uptick in these types of discriminatory incidents, Duke has had more than its share. Some of the incidents that afflicted our community were more widely publicized and discussed than others: e.g., the hanging of a noose near the Bryan Center; the scrawling of a racial slur on a sign at the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture; the defacement of a mural celebrating Latinx Heritage Month; and the engraving of swastikas in a bathroom stall on West Campus.

Since I only have five minutes, my main points are as follows:

- There is a tremendous opportunity now to harness this crisis (and numerous others) toward making effective and lasting structural changes in the Duke’s campus-wide culture.
- We can be successful if and only if we have both (1) A strong vision and resources provided by University leaders and (2) Active buy-in from programs and faculty.
- We need do more toward: (A) implementing training and support for all faculty, staff and students; (B) letting teaching and advising be informed by the very issues of diversity and inclusion that were at the center of the Biostatistics incident; and (C) reevaluating and strengthening the implementation of existing and future policies involving diversity, inclusion, and equity of access to a Duke education. (B) and (C) will be further discussed at the upcoming Academic Council meeting (next Thursday 2/21/19).

The Biostatistics incident is a symptom of broader societal problems with deep historical roots, and their legacies manifest themselves as structural inequalities in the very fabric of our institution. What is clear from the multiple cases of bias and discrimination we have witnessed in recent years is that the status quo at Duke is not working and there is need to reexamine it. True, we have at our disposal the reports from multiple task forces such as Duke University Task Force on Bias and Hate Issues (2016) and others. While acknowledging the tremendous efforts made by the Duke community at large in the wake of various prior occurrences, we note that many of these recommendations are still to be circulated widely or implemented in visible ways, sometimes years after the submission of these reports. What is clear is that we all need to build on these results, follow up on them, hold each other accountable, and do more now.

Rodríguez García thanked Kwon for her remarks, which will have to be shortened with her input to some 500 words for the minutes as she had previously agreed to reading only a 200-300-word statement because this item wasn’t on the agenda for today’s meeting. He again invited everyone who’s concerned about these diversity and inclusion issues to attend the Academic Council meeting on Feb. 21. On the part of the A&S Council, the recently activated Committee on Undergraduate Teaching, Academic Standards and Honors may in the future consider taking up issues of inclusion in the classroom and beyond under its purview, but only as they involve the undergraduate learning and academic experience in Trinity. That committee will convene for the first time at the end of February. He’ll continue reporting on the newly activated committees at the March meeting.

Rodríguez García then introduced the participants in a segment led by ECASC member John Supko in conversation with Dean of Undergraduate Admissions Christoph Guttentag. The purpose of this informational session is to update the faculty at large on recent trends in admissions and to identify some
ways in which the Admissions Office and A&S units can work together to advance each other’s priorities and better address some shared concerns.

**Focused Q&A with Dean of Undergraduate Admissions Christoph Guttentag**

**John Supko (Music)** said they have 15 minutes to arrive at profound conclusions, so he’ll try to be economical in the way he ask questions. He began by asking for the profile of a successful applicant to Duke. How has this profile changed in the last half-decade or so?

**Christoph Guttentag (Dean of Undergraduate Admissions)** began by thanking Council for the opportunity to speak. He will try to be brief and is happy to continue this conversation in other venues or in private meetings at any time other than February and March because decisions will be posted on March 28. They received 41,500 applications this year, with the entering class being roughly 1,720 students. They anticipate a regular decision rate of roughly 6 percent. While he isn’t a huge fan of standardized tests, he recognizes the value of them as one measure. At this point, Duke’s pool is so large and so robust that a minimum of 75 percent of students we admit now score in the 99th percentile on standardized tests. We’re fortunate in that we have the luxury of choosing the interesting students from among the smart students, and it’s a wonderful position to be in. The successful student now starts with very strong academic credentials, plus an indication of the ability to achieve success also at Duke and to become engaged in the wide array of curricular and extracurricular opportunities we offer. When we talk about what we look for and how a person stands out, we look for someone who’s interesting, someone who’s intellectual and enjoys learning, and someone with an ability to have an impact and make a difference.

Guttentag has found that students repeatedly mention a handful of things that attract them to Duke and this is different than it used to be. So what’s changed is that to a much larger degree, students talk about their academic interests. They’ve become more adept at identifying specific faculty and programs and courses. They’re much more specific in terms of their academic interests, and this provides Admissions with an avenue for recruitment. Students also talk about research opportunities, and interdisciplinarity and the fact that the barriers between disciplines and departments are so much lower here than they’re at many of our peer institutions. They love the freedom to explore and that they don’t have to choose one or the other. They also talk about programs like FOCUS and Duke Engage. They talk about the sense of community, support, and responsiveness of the institution. We talk a lot about how this institution is more responsive on an academic, cultural, and social level to student interests. And while Duke students are ambitious, they’re much more supportive of each other and less competitive with each other than students at peer institutions. Finally, students are practical. They’re worried about debt and making a living.

**Supko**, following up on the trend that applicants know more about what faculty do, asked Guttentag how much he’d attribute that awareness to the availability and use of private advisers and what they’re telling applicants to say in their applications.

**Guttentag** said that Duke’s applicant pool is diverse, but like our peer schools, that pool includes a lot of financially advantaged students. The selective college admissions process in general isn’t known for being a level playing field. One thing families of means do, particularly in an environment that feels increasingly high stakes, is leverage their resources by hiring independent educational consultants to make sure the advice their children receive is personal, is tailored, is individual, is accessible. This is
particularly true for families of students attending large public schools. We’re aware of this and are challenged to discover a sufficient element of authenticity in applicants. We want students who’re willing to be themselves and who’re willing to make decisions on what matters to them instead of what they think matters to us. Those applicants tend to stand out more in process.

Supko then asked what recent cohorts of incoming freshmen have said about balancing aspects of a liberal arts education while also weighing concerns about their future professional trajectory.

Guttentag said they want it all and have grown up wanting it all. He thanked Supko for sharing the questions ahead of time because he was able to ask his staff for their insights. Very consistently, they mentioned that students want to study at Duke because they can pursue both practical and personal interests here. The fact that interdisciplinary work is encouraged here draws students who understand they need to make a living but that their time at Duke is also an opportunity to explore their interests.

Supko then shifted to the role of faculty in the admissions process. What have we been doing and what could we do better in terms of attracting the most compelling applicants?

Guttentag said that Admissions loves your help and appreciates the work you do. He likes to acknowledge that nobody understands the interaction between faculty and students and the role of faculty in moving students intellectually forward than faculty themselves. You have a unique insight and perspective on what you want to accomplish with undergraduates, as well as how that’s possible. You’re best able explain that path to students, and you know how they can get to a point where they can benefit practically but also intellectually, culturally, and socially from a Duke education.

He has a couple of practical suggestions for faculty who want to assist with recruitment. One is to participate in recruitment functions. At the beginning of every year, Admissions sends a list of these functions to DUS’s, and they would love more faculty participation in those. Admissions is flexible and is happy to hear what you’re interested in doing. Another suggestion is to keep communications with students short. Admissions can help you tailor your message in a more succinct fashion. Many applicants live in the Internet subculture known as TLDR (Too long; didn’t read.) When thinking about communicating with prospective students, Guttentag said it might be worth talking with current undergraduates to find out what drew them to Duke and the department. What did they want to know that we didn’t tell them? Also ask recent alumni what they’re doing. Students want to envision the practical impact of what they’re learning. The overwhelming majority of students who come to Duke and places like Duke have a practical bent and Duke students want to make an impact. The degree to which you can talk about how your students had an impact while at Duke as well as after they graduated is a very powerful message, and he encouraged faculty to do this.

Finally, he said, Admissions has been encouraged to look at their communications from a prospective student’s perspective, not what we want to tell them. What do they need to know? What are they interested in? They don’t know enough to understand the significance of a 300-level course you’re offering, but they know what kind of impact they want to have and what kind of research they want to do. How can Duke help them with their goals?

Supko asked if in thinking creatively and strategically about the faculty’s role in recruiting smart motivated interesting students, there’s anything we can learn from the athletic recruitment process.

Guttentag said yes, there is. The coaches are pretty good at identifying the subset of students who are capable of success at Duke and who also have something to offer their team. That’s a culling process that begins way early in the process. What they understand is that developing the relationship between the
coach and the student drives the decision. While faculty don’t have the luxury of the kind of contact coaches have, they can develop personal relationships and ensure that students feel like they’ll get an answer to a question. Plus, parents want to feel that their children are in good hands, so if parents feel like they know someone who’ll know who their child is, not that you’re going to watch out for them all the time, but the idea that there’re adults who’ll know who my child is and is committed to my child’s growth and development.

Rodríguez García said there was time for a few questions for Guttentag, whose remarks implicitly made the case about the importance of strengthening student advising as well as encouraging department to find ways in which they may offer a “pre-advising” of sorts to students who’re considering attending Duke.

Alex Rosenberg (Philosophy) asked how important it is that we may have increases in financial aid for the students we want the most.

Guttentag said there’re two levels to the question. There’re schools not in our immediate cohort but who aspire to be us, who offer more merit scholarships than we do. That’s a reality as well as an expensive proposition. He’s grateful that he’s the dean of admissions and not the dean of admissions and undergraduate financial aid. He said the real challenge with financial aid lies in the group of families that are earning roughly $125,000 to about $275,000 a year. Those families are generally not eligible for much financial aid, yet to pay over $70,000 is a stretch for them. The families that are wealthier than that generally have the resources and the planning to make it possible to pay Duke’s tuition. Families earning $100,000 a year or less generally find that the financial aid is generous enough for them to afford Duke. So it’s trying to figure out how to help the first cohort. Different schools do different things. Some schools say they don’t offer loans in their financial aid package, some don’t take home equity into account when totaling assets. So there’re ways to help plug the gap but we need to be very cognizant of the fact that the better job we do of bringing in lower income, first generation students, we’re costing the institution more money in terms of financial aid. These are difficult issues.

Chris Walter (Physics) said it seems there’re things under Guttentag’s purview that could make a difference structurally. One example is that early decision students can’t compare financial aid packages. He’s read that about 30 percent of the incoming class is comprised by these students.

Guttentag said that the work of Admissions is all about tradeoffs and multiple goals that always don’t mesh easily. Duke does have a binding early decision process, where students apply by November 1 and hear back by December 15. If they’re admitted, they don’t have the ability to compare financial aid packages, but we do explain that their financial aid package will be no different whether they’re early decision or regular decision. That’s one of the commitments we make. He said that Duke admitted 889 students in early decision and enrolled 884, with 46 percent of that cohort being students of color. If you look at the percentage of students applying for financial aid during early decision, that number is lower than students applying using the regular admission process. We can say whatever we want, but the leap of faith for a school that costs over $70,000 is tough for some families. He added that Duke tries to have it both ways by being responsive to high-quality students that have Duke as a first choice and understanding that the overwhelming majority of students aren’t in that position. He thinks we do a good job in regular admission, selective though it may be, in the end to create a class that’s balanced and takes into account Duke’s interest in diversity. He added that of the schools having a binding early decision process, including Columbia, Brown, Penn, and Dartmouth, their percentages are within one to two percent of ours in terms of the percent of class they’re filling. So it’s something we wrestle with.

Rodríguez García thanked Guttentag for his time, then addressed the next item on the agenda.
Rodríguez García said that the conversation on student pathways is structurally and intellectually related to the previous interview with Dean Guttentag. However, ECASC wanted to keep both events separate. As Dean Guttentag explained, we attract students who want to reconcile personal interests with their practical interests in preparing for a future career. There’s a lot of concern in departments whose enrollments are less robust than they used to be with how student choices correlate with the visibility of our disciplines and how we present the plethora of disciplines that constitute the liberal arts to prospective students and first-year students in particular. So ECASC decided to invite three department chairs to Council to share what their departments are doing to address these issues. He welcomed the first presenter, Scott Huettel.

Scott Huettel (Psychology & Neuroscience) said he’s basing his comments on faculty conversations his department has had during the past three years. They had some of the same issues arise, not just because of students choices of classes but because they were thinking of what they wanted to do with their majors and what experiences they wanted their students to have. They first decided to invest in foundational courses. This was fortuitous because Dean Ashby and others later decided to invest in foundational courses across the college. Huettel then highlighted the introduction to psychology course, which is a large course but frankly wasn’t what it needed to be. So the department invested by bringing in experts for that course. So instead of discussing mental illness in traditional ways, they would bring in other Duke students for a reading of the play “Proof,” and they used that as a way to dialogue about mental illness in their recitation sessions. So this technique works well in their classes and also connects their department to other areas of campus.

Huettel said they’ve been very interested in the science and practice of teaching. This allows them to be evidence based and try out different formats of teaching their introductory classes. They’ve found that some of the things they try don’t actually work, or don’t work well for every student, or don’t work well for the style of the faculty member. However, they’re willing to experiment and, in some cases, fail.

Psychology & Neuroscience has also engaged graduate students in mentoring. Their graduate students decided they wanted a better handle of mentoring students through the department’s pathways, so they took it upon themselves to create a graduate mentoring handbook to teach other peer graduate students how to effectively engage undergraduates. While faculty weren’t involved in this, they created a departmental culture where graduate students felt enough agency to create such a handbook.

Huettel paraphrased a quote that he heard from a student, “I’m pre-med, but I decided to major in neuroscience because I wanted a liberal-arts education.” This quote warmed his heart because the student chose to major in neuroscience because it allowed her to take the sorts of courses she wanted while still pursuing her professional goals. Going forward, the department is trying to emphasize discovery in its courses. They’re also trying to build co-curricular connections, such as a neurohumanities program with Romance Studies. They’re also trying to promote research since this is one thing Duke does really well. One way to get students out of the pre-professional mindset is to engage them in the process of discovery while they’re at Duke. Hopefully if we’re doing that right, students are doing research because they want to learn something, not just because they want to add something to their resume.
Rodríguez García thanked Huettel for his insightful remarks, especially on the strategies his department is implementing “to get students out of the pre-professional mindset,” and welcomed the second presenter, William Johnson.

William Johnson (Classical Studies) said that Classical Studies comprises three areas: ancient Greek, ancient and medieval Latin, and Classical Studies proper (CLST), which engages literature in translation, history and society, and material culture including archaeology. His comments will be divided amongst the three disciplines.

Classical Studies began looking at what was working in its curriculum when it was preparing for its recent external review. Also about that time, Dean Ashby had announced that she wanted to focus on first- and second-year students. So, the Department looked at each component of its curriculum and tried to make strategic adjustments. In Greek, they suspended the use of their graduate instructors since Greek is such a heavily vertical curriculum. They tried to create some buzz by taking their students to New York to see a performance at Columbia University. They also tried various ways of getting graduate and undergraduate students together. In Latin, there wasn’t as much adjustment, but they designed a very specific course to make students from high school comfortable. While there’re a number of students coming to Duke with some knowledge of Latin, it doesn’t mean they’re ready to walk into an intermediate or advanced Latin class. This dovetails with Guttentag’s comments about the need for small departments like ours to be able to offer that sense of nurturing support that’s often associated with selective liberal arts colleges.

The Department has placed a lot of emphasis on its first- and second-year students. They took the old idea of signature courses and developed magnet courses, with a number of courses that attach to them. Right now, they have a course in Democracy: Ancient and Modern, which connects to courses like Ancient Law and Ancient Liberty and Equality. They’re developing another course on ancient and modern slavery. He emphasized that the magnet courses are based on topics that someone with no known interest in antiquity can take and they can then figure out that the ancient part of that subject has something to do with what’s going on today. They’ve also added quite a few seminars for first- and second-year students with topics like ancient mind, ethics in leadership, wisdom and self-knowledge, and heroes.

Johnson said Department leaders also met with Guttentag and initiated a pilot program where they’re fed curated information and they contact those students. While they don’t know yet if this program will be an overall success, there’s recent positive anecdotal evidence. They had three students who contacted the Department and with whom faculty spent a significant amount of time, an amount similar to the time spent on graduate students. One even visited his class and while she didn’t understand everything that was going on, she found the topic engaging. All three of these students were accepted to Duke during early decision and all three are coming in as defined Classics majors.

Another strategy for increasing enrollments is acting like Netflix and Amazon. Departmental staff pulled together lists of students who’ve taken one or more of our courses, then sent out emails to the effect of, “if you like this course, maybe take that course.” This turned out to be not that much work, and, while they can’t say this practice was the reason, their enrollments this year were very strong.

In sum, his advice is to focus on the high-touch business of recruiting and guiding entering students, to use social media to create a buzz, and to host events that might attract top students. Johnson also said to focus on second-year students. Because departments can control who enrolls in their classes, they’ve taken small seminars and make them first- and second-year students only. Then you don’t have the
problem of a senior who has checked out and ruining the dynamics of the course. Earlier students tend to be more involved.

A third suggestion is to create more visible pathways, such as the magnet cluster of classes.

He also wanted to encourage our administration to get away from one size fits all for all the departments. He referenced the course validator issue and the problem of students all wanting to classes in three periods. His best students can’t take his courses because they always have to take a required class in Math or Computer Science that can only be taken in that one time period. Is there a way to offer the large required classes at less popular times? That would go a long way to help the elective-driven departments increase enrollments.

Rodríguez García thanked Johnson and hen introduced Reeve Huston, who’s filling in for the History Department Chair, John Martin, who has taken ill. After Huston, ECASC member Jeff Forbes will present some data to provide additional context for the conversation.

Reeve Huston (History) began by giving a sense of where History stands regarding enrollments. History had a graduating class of 135 majors in 2006-07 and 50 graduating majors last year. So they have lost more than half of their majors and went from fifth largest major to ninth largest major. That trend has been clear since the financial crisis. The Department has had a number of long discussions, which also started around the time of their external review. They’ve come up with a number of solutions, all of which are partial. One solution is to encourage faculty to develop signature courses, similar to those developed by Classical Studies, which are courses that would appeal to non specialist, non majors because the topics speak to current or classic themes that people can identify as important. Some courses are old but rebranded, such as “American Dreams, American Realities.” Some are new, such as Pete Sigal’s “Sexual Pleasure in the Modern World.” Most of these are 100-level courses, with a few 200- and 300-level courses. Most are also large courses and meant to draw large number of students.

A second solution came from focus groups run by the DUS as well as less formal conversations with undergraduates. Students indicated that the major seemed random because there were no required courses, only required types of courses. There’s no introduction to history, and specialists saw the courses as interchangeable parts. However, undergraduates wanted a clearer pathway through the major, so the Department came up with one. Students start with larger lectures and some smaller interactive seminars. Those are meant to draw people in, then everyone is required to take, preferably by the end of their sophomore year, a gateway seminar to introduce people to the discipline and to develop skills to critically engage with primary sources and perform research. Then, there’re the courses that students can take at random based on their interests. Finally, everyone’s expected to have a research experience, the most common being a capstone seminar focused on writing a research paper. History also has a robust honors seminar and is currently developing a third alternative, which would allow a student to expand on their capstone research without the time commitment of an honors seminar.

While History was redesigning its major, it also worked on the issue of course planning so students now know a three-year plan of when courses will be taught. The Department’s also doing a fair amount of outreach, including creating public events that speak to current concerns, such as the government shutdown and issues surrounding border security. They’ve been lucky to have an active undergraduate student group that plans the events and recruits faculty to participate.

History’s also experimenting with intensive graduate student mentoring. For example, they’re now having the same graduate student serve in three or four courses as a research or writing mentor.
Rodríguez García thanked Huston and welcomed Forbes to the podium.

Jeff Forbes (Computer Science) said he was asked to identify the most popular majors and the trends of majors at Duke. In order to do this, many assumptions were made. They tried to think about this in the sense of the department’s load and who is coming into the classes. That being said, he’s counting everyone who is a first or second major earning either a BA or a BS as well as all majors in a department. They’re also looking at graduating classes since that is the best way to get reasonably consistent data. He said that all data comes from Trinity College of Assessment, with special thanks to Jennifer Hill, Val Konczal, Matt Serra and Frank Blalark. One of his majors, Nat Huffman, was able to help out with the analysis.

So what are the top majors over time? Going back to 2007, Economics was the most popular major, followed by Psychology & Neuroscience, Biology, Public Policy, and History. In 2010, Econ remained quite popular, International Comparative Studies came on scene and became the ninth most popular major, and a bunch of majors like Computer Science dropped out of the top 10. By 2014, Computer Science, following a national trend, moved up to the sixth most popular major. Psychology & Neuroscience became more popular because of the combination of the two disciplines is powerful and attractive in itself. Then in 2018, Computer Science became the most popular major. Through the years, Econ, Biology, and Public Policy have remained in the top five.

ECASC wanted to know if students were increasingly choosing a smaller number of majors. Forbes said not really. Since 2008, about 75 percent or less of students chose the top 10 majors and about half chose the top five majors. Looking at the data by division, Social Sciences is the most popular division for student majors. Natural Sciences is also popular. Though if you subtract out Statistics and Computer Science, it appears that the Natural Sciences Division is somewhat flat. But if you add those two majors, it looks like it’s growing. One can see that Humanities majors are trending downward.

Forbes said there wasn’t a lot to say about certificates, since the top two certificates have remained the most popular over time.

ECASC wanted to look at how Duke compares to national trends, focusing on the Humanities. Ara Wilson found a graph that looked at the share of Humanities majors in the US across institutions. Her data revealed that English, History, Religion, Philosophy and Languages and Literature are trending downward as much as 50 percent. Looking at Duke from 2008 to now, Forbes said that Religion has gone down about 75 percent, English has gone down about 60 percent. Foreign languages, which includes all language departments, have cumulatively gone up a bit.

Rodríguez García thanked all the presenters and said there were a few minutes for questions.

Walter asked, if we think of ourselves as a liberal arts institution, how good a proxy is the major in that. Are we concerned about keeping students in liberal arts majors or that all students, regardless of major and school, learning the material and profit from it in all of our course?

Forbes said that methodologically the presentation of data focused on majors because it’s harder to identify a class in a particular department due to cross listings. So in a short period of time, that information was hard to come up with. It was much easier to come up with the data about majors.

Huston said that from History’s point of view, after 2008 and especially after about 2012, both enrollments and majors went way down. But in the last two to three years, course enrollments have been going up without the number of majors going up.
David Malone (Education) asked to what degree do course enrollments and majors drive resource allocations?

Valerie Ashby (Dean) said they don’t, from the way you’re thinking about. We never have discussions about finances and the number of students in your majors in the same conversation. We’re concerned about the number of students because we want students to engage fully in what we’re offering. Resources are only discussed during budget meetings when people are on leave. While she likes hearing that the study of classics is attracting more students, and number matters, she cares even more about having a strong Classical Studies Department that’s delivering an exceptional education to all the students to whom they provide instruction at any given time.

However, she said, the conversation sometimes revolves around the size of the curriculum. We teach a lot of classes. The Curriculum Committee trusts faculty who put forward classes, so the chairs then have to figure out what they want to deliver with the faculty they have, with Trinity’s help backfilling for leaves.

Rodríguez García said that today’s conversation highlighted the need to separate the immediate challenge of maintaining or increasing course enrollments, which all three featured departments have addressed very well, from the diverging numbers of majors across units and divisions, which seems a more complex challenge and calls for different strategies and solutions in different departments. The faculty appreciate the administration’s efforts at nurturing the symbolic capital accrued over time by smaller and highly ranked departments such as Classical Studies, which contribute a lot to the university’s prestige in the public sphere. As Johnson explained to us, pedagogically and existentially Classical Studies is also pushing students to engage in historically informed reflections on such key concepts and institutions as democracy, slavery, and colonialism. Faculty are also happy to hear that larger departments such as Psychology & Neuroscience are encouraged to implement strategies to attract students to their major instead of quietly losing them to the pre-professional track in the health sciences. That History’s still among the most popular majors is indeed a testament to its faculty’s inventive ability to reconcile the present-oriented focus of many of Duke’s undergraduates with exciting learning and research opportunities for them to venture into the past. He wished more departments in the humanities could offer an honor’s thesis seminar, like History does, to enhance our advanced undergraduates’ ability to write in a scholarly fashion and to provide them with a greater sense of departmental community.

Turning to Dean Ashby, he said he was recently asked by a senior faculty member in Economics whether sponsoring the first- and second-year initiative is taking away resources from upper level courses or other departmental needs, especially for units that are larger in size and have to attend to many students.

Ashby said no. The “why not” in practice is because we don’t have the luxury of excess budget and she values what we are already doing. This isn’t a tradeoff because what we’re already doing is required. So she’s been having conversations with Arlie Petters and John Blackshear about how we’re going to fund some of the activities related to the first- and second-year initiative. Some funding will come from the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), which is tied to accreditation and looks at planning for undergraduates. Duke, thank goodness, has decided to use this initiative as its QEP. She hears from initial responses that the initiative is receiving great reviews and that the accreditation agency love a that we committed to this plan before beginning the QEP. There will be some funds available from the QEP. She heard that perhaps $.5 million will be available, though that number is smaller than what Duke invested in previous QEP’s. Another way to fund this is through philanthropy. We have donors on the Trinity Board who were delighted to learn about what departments are already doing for the initiative. This is a really popular topic among parents and alums because they want their children engaged and to have access to
great teaching from day one. She added that if what you need is resources in the form of more people, we’ll pilot that on soft dollars, but eventually that means the salaries will have to go in the departmental budget. So the budget will either have to be bigger or departments will choose to trade something else. She’s not going to force that trade, though. Trinity’s well aware that there’s nothing worse than getting people excited about a project and then not providing funding. We’re very careful about how we’re rolling this out and what’s going to be sustainable.

**Gunther Peck (History)** asked if we as a faculty have been keeping track of senior theses by department. That could be another way of viewing change over time as well as the more intensive people we work with and how that’s changed over time. The numbers in History have been pretty constant and in some ways, that’s where our most aspirational work goes. Enrollments may go up and down but if we’re dropping our key work in mentoring, then that’s the biggest problem.

**Matt Serra (Assessment)** said all programs have access to all the data and information you’re asking for. The chairs and DUSs have access to departmental and program dashboards that not only detail who the majors are, but also what the majors are for all the students who’re taking classes in the department. Faculty who want access to that should contact his office.

**Ashby** wanted to add that each department has someone in addition to the DUS assigned to this initiative. Matt’s office has met with them multiple times and answered questions about your students. So if you have questions, you should contact the departmental representatives. If you need more data, we’re willing to design something specific for your department.

**Rodríguez García** said that Council is working with the deans to create a better flow of information between the groups that the deans convene, such as assessment and the first- and second-year initiative. He’s happy to report that, following the request he made of Dean Ashby and Dean Petters at the December meeting of Council, we now have a Council representative to the group working on the first- and second-year initiative: Dick MacPhail of Chemistry. He’ll provide more information on these coordination efforts in March. As time had run out, the meeting was adjourned.