Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Arts & Sciences Council

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Call to Order

Anita Layton (A&S Council Chair): Welcome everybody. So I hope you’ve all had a wonderful semester, because I know I have. I had the best group of students this year ever, which almost makes me a little sad that classes are ending. Almost. I am ready for the holidays, yes! So let’s get this started so we can wrap this up and all go home.

We will begin by approving the November meeting minutes. [The minutes were approved, with one abstention.]

Veto Referendum

Layton: As you may recall at the last meeting, I introduced a proposal for a faculty veto referenda and at the end of the discussion, I had this epiphany, which said, “Anita, you need help.” We need somebody who knows what he is talking about to guide us through this process. So I went to find our best expert, Mike Munger, and I asked Mike please help us and bless his heart, he said yes. So Mike, thank you very much, and here are your slides for you.

Mike Munger (Political Science): Thank you. Thanks very much. I learned when I was running for governor the only way I could get applause was to lead them myself. In the ECASC meeting which I attended after the last Council meeting, we talked at some length about what is the question or problem to which this is a solution. And this (slide) is the charge on the web for what the Arts & Sciences Council is supposed to do. Now there’s a lot more information in this PowerPoint presentation than what I’m going to go over today because I want it to be self-contained when we put it up on Sakai for people who weren’t here at the meeting so they could understand something about the discussion.

But with particular respect to Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, the council determines and implements the broad objectives of undergraduate education and considers all matters affecting the academic and residential environments of students, making recommendations and adopting regulations where appropriate. Sometimes our votes are advisory and sometimes our votes have the force of a statute or regulation. Now that means that our job is to “represent” the will of the faculty, because anyone who’s ever worked with a group of faculty know that the idea of a singular will of a group of faculty is nonsense. Still, though, we have to choose from mutually exclusive alternatives, a single alternative which, even for the people who disagreed with it in the discussion, they’re willing to support it afterwards because they think the process was fair and
they think their dissenting views were fairly heard. So the usual rule for process is for the
majority to have its way and the minority to have its say. That is, my view was not persuasive
and so we decided something and I’m going to go along with it.

Groups don’t generally have preferences. The question is how do we create consensus around an
outcome where there is disagreement? Now on narrow, routine, business-as-usual matters, the
majority rule may be sufficient. But for larger questions, especially when the minority must be
counted on for the success of the policy chosen, we need more legitimacy than simple majority
rule affords, and the reason is with faculty, much of the work we do is voluntary. If in fact we
only do things that we are obliged by our contracts to do, that’s not going to work. The
administration, your chair, other people in your field all depend on your enthusiasm, not just
your compliance, with the rules they’ve made up. And so the question is how to make people
who think, “I’m not sure that’s what I would have done,” particularly reacting in the way faculty
often do, “having now thought about this for 30 seconds, I’m not sure that your solution that
took months to arrive at is what I would have done.” Which is often very frustrating for the
people who spent months doing it, but nonetheless there needs to be some alternative way of
deciding to increase both the legitimacy and the fact of the way that we’re choosing.

So there’s really two different problems. One is we want to ensure that the decisions of the
Council represent the will of the faculty. The problem is the Council is like the U.S. Senate.
Each department, each unit gets one vote. That may have pretty different consequences than a
vote of the entire faculty. Now that’s fine, that’s the way that we do business but it means, that in
a system with equal voting power regardless of the population, there might be a very different
sense of the faculty and the question is how to take that into account.

The other problem is we need that perception and fact of legitimacy for those who disagree,
regardless of the proportion. Now most people, and I know I’m not different, when we look in
the mirror, we see the embodiment of the will of the people. My views are what the majority
would believe if they were as smart and informed as I. Now what often happens is they aren’t as
smart and informed as I. The evidence is they don’t agree with me. So the question is how can
all of us, and I honestly and y’all secretly, believe that, how can we account for that in the
decisions we make, knowing that we’re going to make some decisions that people don’t agree
with?

A solution that many geo-political units use is a “veto referendum.” That is, if a legislative unit
makes a decision, it is possible to trigger a process by which a vote of the electorate is taken. So
it’s simpler and less radical than a full referendum process. Is Lee Baker here? Lee Baker last
time did raise an interesting point, why didn’t we have an actual referendum process? In some
ways, that’s more radical because it means that there could be an entire going-around of the
Council and the Council is our deliberative body. Not just our decision-making body, we don’t
just cast votes, we also deliberate. But it still might be useful to have, if it turns out that a large
majority of faculty disagree with the decision the Council makes have some mechanism by
which that disagreement could be registered. So a veto referendum is a bylaws provision that
protects the status quo. Now one of the problems, one of the frustrations of trying to lead is
always that you’re trying to change things and the response that people will have is, “well that’s
not the way we do things.” That’s right because the way we do things sucks but it’s hard to get
people to say we’re going to change this. So many legislative and electoral procedures privilege the status quo. This is one that will, in a sense, preserve the status quo if the Council wants to make some change if the majority of the faculty think, “no, no, we like the way it was. We don’t like that change.” Then it would restore the status quo.

It should only be, though, for changes that are controversial; that people might believe are the product of arbitrary representation, that is, somehow the people who were at the Council that week weren’t fully informed … yes?

(question was not loud enough to be captured on audio- audio completely blank)

**Munger:** We are not proposing an alternative referendum process for affirmative choices by the Council. We could do that, but that’s not what a veto referendum is.

If it’s the product of arbitrary representation, it’s likely not to be implemented successfully anyway because large numbers of faculty oppose it. So it’s pretty easy for us to sabotage by inaction or by lack of enthusiasm. We want people to say, “Maybe I disagree but I’m going to go along with this.” So we want actual consensus.

What if a legislative body enacts a new policy, if enough of the citizens oppose the adoption of the policy, they have the option of calling a veto referendum. If a majority vote to reject the policy, then it’s vetoed. If a majority vote to endorse the policy or if the vote is too small to satisfy quorum requirements, then the policy is enacted. So if someone thinks this is really important and I think we should have a vote on it, nobody else agrees, nothing will happen. The majority of the seven people who voted wouldn’t be enough to overturn it. It needs to be a majority of a quorum, which leads us to the four issues: the domain, the trigger, the outcome and the decision rule.

Here is the language and it is up on Sakai for you to look at.

**III. K. Faculty Referenda**

The Arts & Sciences Faculty can, by a vote of the members at large, veto motions passed by the Arts & Sciences Council. A veto referendum is required when a petition containing valid signatures (actual or electronic) of at least 10% A&S faculty eligible to vote is received by ECASC within 10 business days of the vote. An announcement will be made that the referendum process has been triggered within 3 business days of the submission of a successful petition.

The wording of the referendum shall take the following form:

“Policy X (date passed by Council) should be nullified.”

“[Policy X: Text of measure passed by Council]”
A "yes" vote signifies that the voter believes that the challenged legislation should be nullified.

A "no" vote means that the voter approves the challenged legislation and wants it to become law. A vote of “Abstain” counts toward the Quorum but is neither yes nor no.

Faculty will be allowed 10 business days to vote. A valid quorum is 40% of the Arts and Sciences faculty eligible to vote. Any total number of votes less than 40% affirms the policy as passed.

If a valid quorum was attained, then the votes—yes, no, or ballots cast as “abstain”—will be tallied. If the proportion of the “yes” votes, calculated as 

\[
\frac{(#\text{yes})}{(#\text{yes} + #\text{no} + #\text{abstain})},
\]

is at least 50% + 1 person, the original resolution is nullified. Else, the original resolution is affirmed.

We’re not going to vote today. This is just a discussion but I want to talk about the four parts as they are embodied in this proposal.

First is the trigger. Arts & Sciences faculty can, but a vote of the members at large, veto motions passed by the Arts & Sciences Council. So to your question, this has to be some action that is passed by the Council. It can then be vetoed. So the domain of decisions is only things that Council has done, some change in the status quo. The trigger is it will be required when a petition containing valid signatures -- actual or electronic and this is a process to be worked out, we talked about some of the difficulties in ECASC but that’s an implementation problem. Petition containing valid signatures of at least 10% of Arts & Sciences faculty eligible to vote is received by ECASC within 10 business days of the vote. That is, Council vote, clock starts, 10 business days later if no valid petition has been received, the bill is enacted, the legislation, the policy is enacted. We can’t have it drawn out for months in limbo not being sure it’s going to be implemented or not.

**Chris Walter (Physics):** What of the Arts & Sciences faculty are actually allowed to vote and how did you come up with 10%? You obviously don’t want one person to be able to start it but…

**Munger:** We decided, like any arbitrary number, that 10%, because it ended with a zero, appealed to us. It’s also a pretty common rule for other organizations to use to trigger this sort of thing, but like any convention, it’s arbitrary.

Walter: And what about the vote?

Munger: That would have to be written out, that’s an implementation problem. I agree that that’s a problem.

Walter: Oh, this is not something which is defined already? It would have to be decided…
Munger: It’s an interesting question. In ECASC we actually worked on a number of things about that, and that’s going to have to be more clearly specified before the vote, but I don’t think we have an answer for it completely.

Layton: The bylaws currently defines Arts & Sciences faculty eligible to vote as Arts & Sciences regular rank faculty.

Munger: So it would not include – I don’t want to just derail the discussion by having a discussion but – it would not include people who are represented on the Council but are not part of Arts & Sciences faculty.

Catherine Admay (Sanford): I’m sorry but does that mean that the School of the Environment and the Sanford School of Public Policy would not be able to vote?

Munger: That’s exactly what it means because that’s our bylaws. That could be changed. The reason I don’t want to have this discussion is that’s a really interesting and important question, but that’s what the bylaws say at present, and we might want to change that because that means that there are enfranchisement problems with the current bylaws.

Walter: And it’s regular rank faculty?

Munger: Yes. So the trigger is we have to receive a valid petition within 10 business days and so the way that breaks are going to be handled is an implementation problem. If we were to pass something today, then 10 business days from now, that’s sometime in January because we’re on break.

So, form and vote procedure. We want to make it clear what it is we are voting on. I admit that this is cumbersome but we are paying in cumbersoness to achieve clarity. Policy X should be nullified, that’s what we are voting on. Right underneath it, it should say what Policy X is, the exact text that was passed by the Council. A “yes” vote then signifies that the voter believes that the challenged legislation should be nullified. So “yes” means “no” because it’s a veto. We’re voting on a veto. A “no” vote means that the voter approves the challenged legislation and wants it law. “Abstain” would then count towards the quorum but is neither yes nor no.

There’s two issues here. One is what is the size of the group that is required to say no and the other is what is the size of the group that is required to say anything, and people might not feel strongly yes or no but might want to cast an abstain vote which would then count towards the quorum but would not count toward the actual yes vote. The question is how to handle that in the denominator and we’ll come to that in a minute.

Faculty will be allowed 10 business days to vote, so we are now 20 business days out from the passage of the policy in Council, which is a month. We believe that’s arbitrary too, just like the 10%, we believe that was a reasonable compromise and this would only happen if it’s something very controversial.
So if a valid quorum was attained, which means that there were 10% of the faculty who signed the petition and then 40% voted either yes, no or abstain, we would tally the yes’s and no’s and what would be required is that number of yes divided by the number of yes plus the number of no plus the number of abstain would have to be at least 50%, so this is a pretty conservative policy in the policy sense in that it privileges the status quo. A majority of those who voted would have to say yes. Abstains would count towards the quorum but they are also in the denominator, so it’s as if an abstain is a no vote in terms of the way it’s being calculated.

I’m going to leave this up and then ask for general questions or comments. The reason that we’re putting this up is to let you think about it until the next Council meeting, take it back to your units and discuss it so you’re welcome to make comments on whether you like it or not but it would be better to just have clarifying questions.

**Walter:** One question I have is, and people might tell me I’m a moron and I should know how to do this, but I have to tell you that after we have votes, especially if I would miss the meeting or if I didn’t hear what was happening when people were tallying up at the end, I actually don’t know how to find out what happened. I usually look at The Chronicle and I find the undergraduate article to find out what happened. So I’m sure there’s a way …

**Munger:** That’s a good way, but that’s not a great way.

**Walter:** I’m sure there’s some right way to do it, but it occurs to me that looking at this, aside from somebody on the Council who’s unhappy with what’s going on and goes out and tries to start a petition, there’s no easy way for the rest of the faculty to easily know what’s going on, to know that they should do something in 10 days, so have you thought about that along with this, there would be some better bulletin that lets people know—it has to be right after the meeting happens because there’s a time cut that the following was decided by the Council today and you have until the following day to veto.

**Munger:** The set of things that would have to be true for that to be a problem would have to be that there’s an enormously controversial policy that’s passed and the faculty are not aware of it. That’s possible but it’s unlikely. Full stop. Separately, why not have a better system for informing people about the votes of the Council? Things are available on Sakai. We could make it available in other ways. I think that’s a legitimate problem whether we pass this or not, the fact that people aren’t sure what the Council has done, we should improve on. But I think what’s most likely is something like the 2U vote that everybody knows about, that people are anticipating and then when it happens, everybody knows right after it happens. That doesn’t mean that you are wrong, but I think we can separate those two things, and your concern we should solve whether we pass this or not. Other questions?

**Ron Grunwald (Biology):** This is a question about context. Presumably this emerges in part from the challenges we had last year dealing with the curriculum. (inaudible) But with 2U, we voted down the proposal.

**Munger:** Right, but what if we hadn’t?
Grunwald: So it’s a question of narrowly we missed it by (inaudible)

Munger: If we had passed it, I think many people had the sense that they were going to try to sabotage it or do some other way of protesting and that just seemed pretty scary, so one of the advantages of this if we have this process and it’s not used, it means that we must agree.

Jose María Rodríguez García (Romance Studies): My question, Mike, is about the 40% (inaudible) and how they are also used by our governing process. I think if I’m not mistaken I heard you speaking about the importance of what you call the democracy of the interested. So I think that what you have 40% of the regular rank faculty that would be who would want to make their voices heard one way or another, that’s really a very high number. Have you thought of what it means to say hypothetically (inaudible) let’s say 59% around faculty who actually become engaged in governance in the way they so choose and then that has no effect because (inaudible).

Munger: Last time it was proposed that it had to be 50% by Professor Alex Rosenberg. Many people are concerned that this will just be done frivolously and it will constantly hold things up so they want to have it pretty high. Others would like to have it relatively low. Forty is relatively difficult, forty is difficulty enough that – of the entire faculty and it’s hard to get people’s attention. Again, we talked about this. So something like your concern about knowing the vote. People are on leave. How are we going to contact them? People ignore the emails that we send. Forty percent is very high. That may not be the right number and so that’s something that maybe you can think about, talk to your unit and we’ll work on that when it comes time. So those are implementation problems, all of these actual numbers. Perhaps I should have put “X0” because we usually aren’t committed to the artificial. Things that end in zero are somehow sacred, but the number that comes before the zero is certainly arbitrary.

Karin Shapiro (AAAS): I’m sorry, I’ve been teaching Thursday afternoons so I’ve been missing. If this is part of a longer discussion, I apologize, but it seems to me that this is constructed to retain the status quo …

Munger: Absolutely. It is.

Shapiro: Because within 10 business days, we haven’t even had a faculty meeting, necessarily, so as to inform our faculty of what’s going on, and then the 40% is high, so between the combination of the 10 business days, the quick trigger, plus this high vote, high percentage, means this has really been constructed to maintain …

Munger: I have to ask, compared to what? Now there’s no such procedure, so whatever we do, that’s what it is. So what happens is, we announce a vote, and then a month later we take the vote. There’s at least five weeks out where you could be talking to your unit about this controversial vote that’s going to happen, so representatives have already talked to their unit for the previous two months about this before the time to vote comes up. Or members of the Council haven’t done their job and you’re entitled to do that, but it is the obligation of members of Council to make sure that the units are informed about this. That’s what we’re here for. So then the vote happens and then you have 10 business days. You’re absolutely right about the
A number of people said they wanted more than 40% last time. Maybe it should be less. But I’m not as concerned about the problem of the amount of time because there’s been months of discussion leading up to this. Or the vote for the curriculum, there were months of discussion leading up to it, so the department should know about that. Some may not, but I think there’s plenty of information.

Shapiro: A follow-up. If you take the curriculum, that was an ever-moving target that we were constantly shifting the curriculum so when it came to voting, it wasn’t quite as … yes, it was months for the entire process, but not the amount of time that we had a crystal clear “this is what we’re voting on.”

Munger: Compared to the status quo, this gives us a way of changing the status quo, of changing something that Council does, whereas now we have no way of changing. So if you’re worried about that, this is an improvement. Maybe it’s not an improvement enough, and I think we can talk about that next time.

Cary Moskovitz (TWP): Two questions. One a procedural one. I could see us getting hung up on the specifics at this point, arbitrary numbers versus the principle. Is it reasonable that we might vote on this in principle with a variable in place and then if it passes, we can come back and then hopefully have a not very long discussion to figure out what those numbers are.

Munger: I can’t speak for Anita. I believe there would be a concern that this group … a lot of people are on leave, they happen not to be here, so I think a vote would be premature.

Moskovitz: Oh no, I didn’t mean today. When it’s voted on, could it be voted on with variables in play so that people would not get hung up on that. The second questions is on the size of the quorum necessary, right now the 40%, is it theoretically possible to determine that number based on something like not having two departments reach the quorum. Some departments are so big and some are so small, we might say we want at least to have the equivalent of four departments or something, right. So that something that might be advantageous to say Economics and Biology to deal with the representation issue.

Munger: Well we talked about that in ECASC and we’ll talk about it more, but I actually think that might be a feature rather than a bug. Suppose that two of our largest departments are fiercely opposed to this. That means that there’s probably a problem. It might not be a bad thing for that to trigger a vote because they’re really concerned about it. So I agree that that’s possible but I think that’s a feature of the 10% and not a bug. Two or three of the largest departments could say, “Look, we really disagree with this and we only got, with our 150 faculty, three votes in the Council. We would like to revisit this.” I may be wrong about that, but at least there’s an argument that it’s a feature instead of a bug.

Mark Chaves (Sociology): Following up on that, an actual question I would like to know the answer to is not the 40% but the 20%. That would imply that the 20% which is half the 40% which could make a veto, it means that 20% of the faculty could veto something and I’d like to know how few number of the big departments, and I think we have about 600-ish faculty, 650
something like that. That would be 120, 130 faculty. I’d like to know how few departments that could be? Could three departments, if they were unified, veto anything at all?

**Munger:** If no one else supported it. Because that means there are no “yes” votes.

**Chaves:** Or it was split among the rest of the faculty.

**Munger:** It means somebody cares enough to vote. We have a democracy of the interested. Some people will care and they care a lot and the others don’t care enough even to vote electronically.

**Chaves:** If people care enough to vote, so we’ve hit the 40% quorum, but you’d only need half of that to actually veto it. So people care and you get the 40% quorum but those three biggest departments are united so they get 50% of the 40% …

**Munger:** That means there’s very few “yes” votes. If you want more than 40%, we just heard that less than 40% was better, that seems to mean that 40% is probably right. Presumably we are going to use a majority of some percent. Let’s suppose you made it 70%, then you could say 35% is enough, yes it is, that’s the property of majority. Then we’re running afoul of this is too many.

**Chaves:** Again the factual question I would like to know the answer to is what’s the smallest number of departments that could veto something under this rule.

**Munger:** 120 people.

**Chaves:** So in rank order of departments, in terms of size, how many would you need to get to 120?

**Munger:** Certainly the largest three departments.

**Chaves:** So by this set of rules, three departments, if they were unified, could veto something.

**Munger:** And nobody cared enough to vote “yes.”

(cross talk)

**Jeff Forbes (Computer Science):** So more people could vote. Twenty percent is the absolute minimum. You couldn’t need more because if more people (cross talk) If 50% of the faculty voted, then you’d need 25%.

**Chaves:** I’m talking about the minimum. If 40% of the faculty vote, those three departments could veto.

**Munger:** We need to move on, but let’s say this. For some reason, another 20% say, “You know, we’re going to be the stooges of the largest three departments and we’re going to vote for
this,” and then the three largest departments could do it. But if the others just don’t care, you have 21% of the faculty vote, that’s not 40%. If, on the other hand, a lot of people do care and the majority say, “Let’s do this, let’s veto it,” that’s a feature and not a bug. So the three largest departments couldn’t do it unless a bunch of other people said, “We’re going to vote in this just to make sure it gets turned down.” Because all you have to do is not vote. If you oppose it, all you do is just not vote. This is a situation where, in order to overturn it, a lot of people have to vote yes. You may decide that’s a bad idea and you vote no. But you have now helped explain why a feature or bug – I’ll try to be more neutral – is a property of the procedure.

Steven Asher (Psychology and Neuroscience): A comment then a question, Mike. The presentation was very helpful, especially the perspective that you give at the beginning. I think you are right, the goal here is to have a healthy process. I was not very initially excited about the referendum but I think if we have a process here that is not sufficiently engaging people – and we can talk about that, what we can do to engage our colleagues in what happens here – but I think the point about publicizing the decisions quickly is good. But if we have a process that’s less than fully healthy, then this does give people recourse. The connection between having your way and having a say and this would certainly give people who were not happy that say.

Munger: You said you had a question.

Asher: I guess maybe I don’t.

Admay: So Mike, I’m representing the Sanford School, so I don’t know exactly how I’d go about telling them about this. How would you suggest I tell them about this so they know there’s an issue on the horizon?

Munger: Share the PowerPoint which is up on Sakai and the wording of the referendum which is up on Sakai and then I would, if I were you, since you asked, I would send an email to the faculty saying this is to be considered and if it were to happen, then we would not get a vote in this process as it’s been proposed.

Admay: Because what’s happened is the difference of it being a department by department vote, it’s now a faculty member by faculty member vote. So we’ve gone from a senatorial model to a populist model.

Munger: But that’s not something that I’m proposing. That’s something that’s already true. That’s what the Arts & Sciences faculty is. So Sanford was given a vote on the Council to make sure that it’s more representative, but Sanford became a school. It made a choice to become a school. More power to it. But that means that, by the bylaws, it is not part of the Arts & Sciences faculty.

Admay: But we do get a vote on whatever the policy is that would be proposed for nullification.

Munger: Yes.
Admay: So it’s a strange situation where we get a vote in the Council but then we don’t get any kind of vote on this nullification and I’d imagine –

Munger: Well one solution would be to take your vote off the Council, but presumably we don’t want to do that. So the concession was made when Sanford said “we’re going to be a school and go off by ourselves,” a concession was made which now does create this strange situation.

Admay: Including that we have a whole lot of undergraduates.

Munger: Yep. It’s very important and it’s crucial and we might want to change the bylaws to include your faculty but that is not a property of this proposal. That’s already true that Sanford is not Arts & Sciences faculty. That’s in the bylaws already.

Admay: I just, as a person who cares a lot about our undergraduate students, I feel like we can’t erase the fact that this would create a problem that is not currently a problem. So the default position doesn’t create a problem. If we do pass something like this, there would be a situation where we have a vote as a function --- I want to be sure, this is the clarification question, right? We have a vote as a function of – we have a vote on any kind of policy that’s in front of Council, but we would not have a vote either in a senatorial model or a populist model

Munger: You’d have it in the senatorial model.

Admay: On the nullification of it.

Munger: But the point of the nullification is to use a different system of representation.

Admay: So the bottom line is we would not have a vote …

Munger: The answer to your question is yes, I’d be happy to come to your faculty meeting and talk about it if you want but it seems to me you fully understand.

Matt Serra (Assessment): Would it be possible for them to just propose an amendment to the proposal?

Munger: But this is not part of the proposal. It would take a separate amendment to the bylaws.

Serra: Well that is what I would suggest they do.

Munger: Well it would mean that, that’s pretty big. The amendment would have to be that we ask that Sanford faculty be added to the Arts & Sciences faculty. I think there’s all sorts of other things that that would create problems with. It has to be a separate bylaws amendment.

Layton: Thank you, Mike. So we will come back to that in January.
Plays to Improve First/Second Year Courses

Layton:  Next item, improving our first/second year classes: an update. Some of you may have heard Lee’s office has been working with the department chairs to improve our first and second year curriculum and I guess, like you, I am very interested in learning about what is going on. So Dean Ashby has agreed to come and to talk to us about this very exciting initiative.

Valerie Ashby (Dean):  So thank you to Anita and to ECASC for inviting me to come to talk. Let me just start by saying we are not talking about an initiative, we’re not talking about a thing, it’s not a thing yet. This is discussion that is happening when I meet with the chairs. This was a discussion that came out of a discussion of what we were going to do when we did not vote on the curriculum, kind of where do the faculty feel like they are, what do they want to do, what is important, and I’ll say a lot of words here and ask for a lot of questions so we can actually clarify what we are talking about.

So where we left, and I want to separate this during the discussion from I’ll stop using the word “curriculum” because the curriculum is implying the thing we’ve been talking about the last two or three years and talk about really what the chairs are talking about, the DUSs are taking about, and that is improving our student experience, learning, in our introductory courses and I realize in a Humanities-flat discipline, we’re not necessarily talking about first- and second-year courses but for some disciplines, that is the case.

The question that the chairs started having and I believe the DUSs are starting to have is if we stop thinking about the curriculum for a moment and just start thinking about what our student experience actually is and thinking about if -- the question that was posed by one of the chairs was if this was the only class, this introductory course whatever it is, to your discipline, is this the experience that you wanted them to have? For every teacher in the room, that ought to touch the heartstrings somewhere.

The other question, another way to pose that is, if this is the first introduction to your discipline, is this going to inspire a student to actually maybe perhaps consider another course beyond this to deepen their intellectual engagement with your discipline. Is this what you would have wanted them to experience? Some of the chairs were asking the question, “Have we been thinking about our students from the standpoint of focusing on our majors?” Often when I ask chairs or DUSs or faculty, “how are your students doing,” they immediately are thinking and telling me about their majors, their minors and their certificates and often they are telling me about their majors, and of course their majors are doing well. So the question then became, in thinking about this with the chairs and DUSs, can we actually change our mindset from the bulk of students that you encounter in a course being your students. Every single one, so all 1,100 who take math, they are math students. And whatever that translates to for you. And then thinking about for your students, under that new definition, is this the experience that you wanted them to have?

Now the reason I loved hearing the chairs talk about it in this way is because, quite frankly, I think we need to pivot a curriculum-based discussion that still feels like a win-lose negotiation of something to really focusing on the student experience here for a moment. I think it would do us
well, and actually listening to them talk about it is phenomenal. To hear faculty talk about this focus on teaching and delivering this world-class focus on education. The question I posed to them is, “If our mission is to deliver a world-class liberal arts education in this research environment – and it is – then how is that mission reflected in that introductory course? Can you see the mission in that course?” Maybe you can. I think we have a lot of great courses, but I think this gives us an opportunity to think incredibly positive in a complete win-win way. This is not pitting anybody’s preferences against anybody else’s. Who doesn’t want for their students to have a great experience in the classroom?

It’s also an interesting time so let me just give you some sense of where I think we are university-wise. We certainly have paid a lot of attention to access. In other words, you know this if you’ve been on this campus longer than I have, we’ve paid a lot of attention to the students we bring in, making sure that anyone who is intellectually capable of doing Duke has access to Duke. What that has done is given us this amazing student body that is more diverse in every way you can imagine it’s ever been, including economically diverse.

We’ve also had a real focus on expanding the classroom in the sense of things happening outside of the classroom. Duke verb, right? Fill it in, and they are wonderful. When you ask students why they apply to Duke, they often will quote a Duke verb, whether it’s FOCUS program or DukeEngage or whatever that is, they will quote that, and that’s a wonderful thing. They’ve become a signature part of Duke and what the chairs were suggesting is it might be a moment for us to actually come back into the classroom. The student body has changed, their interests have changed, Duke is very different, and it’s an opportunity for us to ask ourselves is the excellence that is the brand of Duke really happening for all of our students in all of our courses before they become our majors, and if not, then what could we possibly do? So the question I was asking the chairs is, you know, this is great because what we’re saying is how do we become our best selves today? I love teaching, so I love the fact that this is coming up. And so going forward, we just had a chairs meeting on Monday -- I’ve been on the west coast twice in the last 10 days and I was on the red eye last night so I’m a little weary so anything you think looks bizarre, it probably is. You just have to ride with me here for a moment. But in talking with the chairs on Monday on how to proceed with this discussion, my question was, “How do I help you do what you want to do? I love hearing what you’re telling me here. This is amazing. I think it could be a place where Duke is signature outside of the classroom, imagine if we became signature inside. Wow.

Imagine if I go out there … Is anybody else from Math here? In talking to Jonathan, and I’ll just pick on Math for a second because they teach a large number of students, particularly in the first year. I said to Jonathan, “How awesome would it be if I just walked out there and tagged a student and said, ‘what math are you taking,’ and they said, ‘Calc 1’ and they didn’t do what they often do.” That’s not a critique of math, that’s just calculus, right, and it’s the way we teach it and it’s how we’ve always done it. It’s an opportunity for Duke to lead the elites – and I hate that word but you know what I mean, our peer group – in really thinking about teaching, research and service with an emphasis on this teaching piece. I would love it if we really think about who’s teaching, how they’re teaching, whatever you want to think about. What I proposed to the chairs is to go and think about this however you want to within your own departments. Great. Tell me how I can help you do it.
Some of the things I was beginning to hear had to do with who’s teaching, if you have a scaling problem and if you’re one of those departments you know what that means. Some of it had to do with helping our graduate students have the same mentality about teaching that we have and often graduate students will go in the classroom and it’s the one place they feel comfortable in the first year and they’ll flex their ego muscles on our undergraduates and we don’t treat our undergraduates like that. And so it might be some establishing of help training graduate students.

It may be they want to think about somehow changing that core course. Now what I don’t want people to do is to go off and create a set of courses that are separate from the core because we’re talking about the core, not another shiny object. Now I want your core to be a shiny object, that’s essentially what we are talking about here.

So thinking about this, I’ll talk about this from Arlie’s perspective and the things he’s trying to do in Academic Affairs. He talks about – it’s a perfect day to discuss this, it’s early decision day. I’m not even going to ask if any of you had kids in the pool. I don’t even want to know. I hope it went well for everybody who wanted to get in. But here are the numbers. We exceeded 35,000 applications this year; we only have 1720 beds. Technically we can have 1740, which is what we did last year but it’s painful. So the better that Duke becomes, the better we do in this undergraduate education piece, in particular. We are popular with really great students and to hear Christoph say it, really 30,000 of them are worth a look, which is amazing.

But that’s what we have and thinking about the idea that Arlie is talking about this, that we would then bring them into an introductory course and decide that they need to be weeded doesn’t compute. They need to find their way, but weed is a completely different concept. What weeding does to people, 18- to 20-year-olds, is different than helping them find their way. And so really thinking about maximizing, as Arlie says, the pathways that students come into Duke and are introduced to our disciplines as opposed to either having a singular way or such a challenging way where it feels like you have to earn your way after you have arrived. Certainly we are going to find out that not everybody’s going to be an M.D. Everybody’s not going to be the writer that they thought. They’ll find their other thing. But it’s an opportunity for us to really think about we have 1,720 amazing first-year students but I’m not just talking about them. But that’s our first-year students.

How do we actually do that? So I don’t have a lot of framing for this because I’m going to hear … so the chairs said they are going to go back to their departments, they are going to have this discussion over spring semester, have several discussions with their faculty. Some of them have already started to think about where this actually works for them and how they would actually want to do this to maximize what they are delivering, which is why, by the way, speaking of Sanford and other schools, when you are asking about this, I feel like if that’s what Sanford is interested in doing, that’s fabulous and to the degree we’ll need to be in conversation – so this is not for each department to talk about in a siloed kind of way. So there are departments who are already thinking, “Boy, our intro course (whatever that means) would be so much better if it was taught across,” or “here are the components that we’ll need to assemble across departments, across schools maybe.” I’m not limiting that. My question is if you are going to teach this course to your child who pays $65,000 a year, how do you want that to be taught? What
experience do you want them to have? When they find out it’s not their thing, how do you want them to walk out of there mentally? That’s the question.

I’d rather have this discussion any day than the curriculum discussion, quite frankly. Right now, right now, and I’m happy this is already starting. So I’m going to listen to what you guys are saying at your faculty meeting, the DUSs will be discussing this, I’ve asked the chairs, so this doesn’t become an extra load for them, to identify some folks in their department who can help them think this through, however they want to do that. Some of my smaller departments said they wanted to do that in combination with each other. Okay. Then they’re going to come back to me sometime in late March, early April and tell me how I can help you do what you want to do.

Let me just say that in relation to how this might inform future curriculum discussions, I think it absolutely could. I think once we start to see how faculty decide to become their best selves in the classrooms, how disciplines decide to do that, it may inform a structural change that makes sense because you’re already heading in a particular direction as opposed to trying to create a structure and make us fit into it. So I’d rather you be creative in how you want to do student learning and improve student learning and let it inform if our structure is actually broken in places or not. I think that will give us a little bit more direction in which to go. It may turn out there’s nothing to do, it may turn out there’s something to do.

I’m going to stop using the word curriculum after today in discussing this because it confuses people. I’m talking about a learning experience, a student learning experience, an introduction to your discipline with a focus on the students, an introduction to your discipline, an introduction broadly across – I don’t care how you do it but I really feel we owe it to our students really thinking about this, also from the fact that our students have changed at a rate much faster than our faculty have changed. If you’ve been here for 20 years, you look in your classroom and they’re not the same. And so just being thoughtful about how might we do that differently to really make Duke a leader here.

I will tell you, I just came from – one of the reasons I was on the west coast last week was I was at the Gates Foundation and they were discussing how they could actually put the Gates name and Gates money behind changing this introduction to disciplines across all of higher education. It’s mind blowing when you think about what they are trying to do because they are not only talking about Duke and Harvard and Virginia, they are talking about publics and community colleges across all of higher education. They see a need for the introduction of student learning in disciplines to change. Duke was the only institution of our peers who was represented there, which was interesting, but an opportunity for us to actually lead. I think we have in us a culture that says, “This is who we are, this is what we do.” That’s actually why I came here. We do teaching, research and service. We have figured out – we’re not Hopkins. Hopkins is great but they are still trying to figure out how to serve undergraduates. We know how to do that.

Now that I think our undergraduate body has changed, life has changed, times have changed, it’s an opportunity to now think about how we maximize our presence to students, perhaps even re-equipping some of our faculty, but whatever that means. I’m excited about it.
On the curriculum piece, as I said I’m going to stop talking about that for a moment, stop using that word, and I think that where the faculty are going and when you’re having these conversations, this is going to drive any discussion around structural changes in the future, but for the moment if we just focus on this, I think it might take us in the right direction without feeling adversarial, without feeling win-lose, it won’t be. The only challenge is for you to be better than you are. You, your department, you as the faculty, for me to be better in that classroom than I am, for my students to be having a better experience than they already are. By the way, if they are having a great experience, let’s go for greater. Why not? These guys are really worth it.

So that’s all I’ll say about that and in talking to Anita, one of the things I do want to say about Council -- and Mike, by the way, that was a great presentation. That was really informative, really helpful. I am really wanting to think about faculty governance in the sense of, I mean you guys are amazing colleagues in service. The last thing I want you to be doing is not working on the most important things that are happening, and when I talked to Anita about this, I want to make sure we think about, as this unfolds, these conversations unfold, what’s the best use of Arts & Sciences Council in this? How can you be most engaged in a substantive way? I’d hate to have a group of people off talking about something that’s not the thing that’s actually happening and I won’t know what that is until I hear some more from the departments in late March. But I want to engage you because you are important to be engaged and you are representing your colleagues and I’m not sure what that will mean in thinking about a curriculum committee, an education committee, a first and second year experience committee – I don’t know what that will mean. But as we see what departments are actually proposing, there may be some very clear things we need from you. Certainly one of the things we talked about was having some version of departmental representatives coming here to talk about what they are doing so you could hear the sort of best practices that people are sharing across departments and just keeping abreast of things that way.

So I think that’s all I have to say. I’m perfectly willing to answer any questions you may have or hear any other directions that you may want to go, but my hope is that you will hear very soon your chairs and your DUSs and Arlie and all of us talking about this and learning quite a bit from you on what you want to do. I want you to shoot for the stars, aspirational, as high as you want to go and make me have to figure out how to help you do it. That’s what I’d love.

(not picked up by audio.)

Ashby: I am.

Grunwald: I want to thank you for putting the departments and the faculty first in discussion and innovation. With my experience as dean and this is a request, it’s helpful for us in having these discussions in our departments to make it clear to our colleagues that there is if not a mandate then at least an (inaudible) from the administration and I’m wondering if you haven’t already if you could package your comments and the vision here in a memo that can be shared across the faculty so they know it’s not just coming from us.
Ashby: I’m glad you asked that question and I’m going to answer it in a little bit longer winded way than you desired. You’re speaking to something that I just feel the need to speak to. My goal is to really destroy the “us-them” mentality. It just doesn’t make any sense. And “us” being administrators and “them” being whoever’s not in the Allen Building on whatever given day it is. It doesn’t work and besides we’re working 24/7, that is our job, to do whatever the faculty are bringing to us that’s most important. So to your point, one of the things in talking to dean’s staff today about how we actually talk about this is I would be happy to put it out there as something we are highly supportive of and there’s that very fine line of when I go out and say something that people can feel it is a top-down mandate, and this is not. This is “help me, help you.” But I also think people need to understand where we are in the other schools and in our own school on the curriculum discussion. So Deborah Hill, who is my genius communications person, is going to try to figure out how to actually say something that doesn’t feel like I’m swooping in, which I’m not, and at the same time give people some sense that I’m highly supportive. That’s her mission to really think about how and when to do that. So today we thought maybe we won’t do that until after some of the departmental discussions have happened so it won’t look like we’re in front of it. And then at the same time, there are people who are wondering what’s going on with the curriculum, because they’re not here, right? So I think we will probably say something because I feel like something needs to be said to the points made earlier that people don’t know what’s happening here and try our best to still maintain that space where it doesn’t feel like – it’s so funny, sometimes I could even ask faculty to do the thing they wanted to but if I asked as opposed to letting them come to it, they don’t like it. I get it, I’m a faculty member. I get it. So we will do our best to communicate.

(Unidentified person): I want to ask about this phrase that keeps coming up in these discussions which is “weed-out courses.” So is this a fear?

Ashby: No.

(Unidentified): So if the impression is we are having weed-out courses, what’s the source of that? What’s the data?

Ashby: Data. Let me just give you quick data on the last portion of (inaudible) I’ve seen. This happens more actually in STEM courses, in natural sciences courses, than it does in other courses. Sometimes it crosses over but more so the data are clear there. So, for example, I can speak to it and then Arlie can jump in because he’s analyzed this deeply. When we look at the number of students who come to Duke who have an interest in the natural sciences, it’s about 60% across the board, that’s just an interest, you know they are first year so it’s an interest. Turns out if you look at the demographics, there are certain groups where 60% graduate and it just so happens that it’s white males. When you look at the demographics for women of any race and ethnicity, and underrepresented students, that number is about 30%. When you drill down into the data, you find out we can match those students intellectually perfectly and that still happens. When you talk to those students about what that is, often it’s something that happened in the first or second course or intro version of something and what that is varies. So it’s fascinating. So there’s a place where I feel like yeah, people should come to Duke and change their minds, right? Absolutely. But that’s half and that’s an interesting dynamic. So that’s a
part of it and it happens more so in the sciences, but quite a few of our students are having that experience. Arlie, do you want to speak to that?

**Arlie Petters (Trinity):** One comment I would make that could (inaudible) a large number of pre-meds in a particular department and if that pathway in that intro course does not suite well those needs then that experience is not optimal. So looking at entry points, the diversity of actual pathways but in general the big picture is if we look very closely at how this first-year experience is happening and take a more positive way of maximizing excellence through diversity of students being served, I think a lot of things that we see in our office – and some of it is great – that we will surely be at a much stronger place than we were before.

**Unidentified person:** I agree with that but when you use the term “weed out” that implies intent on the instructor.

**Ashby:** No, so happy to change the word. Totally there. So that was your point?

**Unidentified person:** Yes.

**Ashby:** Yes, that’s an easy answer. So one of the things we said to the chairs is -- and I’m talking to you like I talk to the chairs – is please don’t talk about this from a deficit model. Please don’t talk about this as if people are doing something wrong. Talk about this as who our students are now, are we maximizing their learning, is this the best and highest use of an introductory course? All positive, and I hear you, I don’t think there’s any intent. I appreciate it, we don’t have to do that.

**Inge Walther (German):** I just want to ask if you had had any discussion about the fact that many of our first- and second-year courses are taught by adjunct faculty?

**Ashby:** Yes.

**Walter:** And if you have given any thought to (inaudible), because I don’t think it would cost that much more to make them regular-rank faculty. (inaudible) Those courses are often taught not because regular-rank faculty don’t want to teach those courses, it’s because they are needed for other courses. Those intro courses are taught often by graduate students who have no experience or contingent faculty (inaudible)

**Ashby:** So your department is not the only one where that is the case. What I’m going to say is I’m going to ask the departments to tell me what they are proposing to do. What are your first ideas? We are willing to walk through each of those departmental ideas, cross-departmental ideas, and really get at the heart of what’s needed here. I will tell you that regularize is not a verb in the dean’s office. People become regular rank through a national search only. Having said that, if you decide that a problem in your department is that I have a group of students looking at my students for the first time who are not my colleagues sitting here discussing the best and brightest way to do this – and by the way, we’re not training them the way we want to if that has to be the case, then that’s an issue I want you to bring as a part of, “We want that to be different.” And every department – this is not
trivial. This is real work, but if you want to have a sustained change, you’ve got to do the real work.

**Walter:** (inaudible) university policies that might affect this. So I have several times taught the Pratt students who have to take the Physics classes, especially biomedical engineering students. Some of them like it, but a lot of them take it because they have to take it. And what happens often is because of the way AP credits are handled, a lot of students will pass out of the first sequence, where they want to pass out of many of them, and often even though they’ve taken these classes and they’ve passed the AP test, it’s not really the same. They aren’t really prepared for university work. Then they show up and they think it’s easy and they skip say the first semester of mechanics and they get fully wiped out in the second semester and they really struggle. So some of that stuff can be handled at a departmental level, like we talk about whether we can have placement exams and things but that’s of course unpopular. The students all really want the credit for these classes and I kind of feel like it’s baked in a little (inaudible).

**Ashby:** So I will say a part of what’s exciting about this discussion is that there’s a similar discussion happening in Pratt under Ravi’s leadership. Also, we’re having some of these discussions together for departments that are particularly affected by this. There are a lot of service departments in Trinity for Pratt students and it builds in a lot of the issues here. So yes, I think we can see these issues and working together, Ravi’s really starting to talk to his faculty about what we actually want to require of them because what he is beginning to see and they are beginning to see is that the number of requirements let’s say, I was talking to Jonathan about this, the number of topics that Pratt needs a math class to contain almost sets it up to be a class that is not the most engaging. It’s just the number of things that are required, so we’ve been in a lot of discussions with Jonathan with Pratt. So there will be a lot of discussions across Pratt about where those courses come into play and as they are re-thinking, it really gives us the opportunity to do something that’s not at odds and I think they’re willing to be flexible in how they are thinking about this. The admissions piece is another beast, but the actual course content and the nature of services courses within Trinity for Pratt students …

**Walter:** So my comment is less about the content, which is also an interesting and separate discussion and we’re trying to do active learning things in those classes, but it’s a problem of students who, because of the way that requirements of the university work, are passing out of classes that probably they shouldn’t be.

**Ashby:** I understand.

**Walter:** And that hurts them in the end, even though in the beginning it might be boring for them a little bit.

**Ashby:** No, no, I totally agree. That happens across several departments. That’s a separate discussion that there are people sitting here taking notes for me that we should not lose sight of how we’re actually advising those students. As you know, it’s very hard to tell a student whose been the best of the best of the best that they might want to start at the first and then by the time that they realize they are in trouble, they are in trouble. So we really needed to think about that,
and it may be the nature of if we've changed our version of the intro course and it doesn't look on paper like your high school course … But there's some advising in there, too.

**Rodríguez García:** (inaudible) This is an exciting initiative about the student experience. Do you get the sense that what the Gates Foundation is trying to do (inaudible) curriculum in order to mitigate the emphasis on pre-professionalism or is it a way to create a stronger foundation (inaudible).

**Ashby:** So there was none of the latter in the discussion. That would not have been a discussion I would have been interested in flying across the country to participate in. There was none of the latter of how we actually get students prepared for the skill. It was the exact opposite. It is the broader liberal arts piece. Their perspective is how do we actually enhance broadly and it is not skill-based. It is not any kind of version of that agenda. If they have an agenda, it is access now that we have created access. Do you understand what I mean? That’s their agenda. If it’s any agenda, it’s that. How do we make sure we are maximizing students now that we’ve created access. And by the way the reason I think Duke was the only kind of Duke-like school there is because the majority of the students in the U.S. aren’t at Dukes. So they are trying to have a broad impact, volume wise, right? It wasn’t because Duke was so special, we were the only person there. It’s because they are looking at volume, but they also realize that we have a real sense of caring about teaching in our cohort, but it is not the latter in the least bit. It was never even discussed and they are also very careful not to actually feel like a parent coming in with an agenda and so it was really a brainstorming session. They just wanted to know how could we possibly help you to do what you want to do, they didn’t actually bring, other than the access agenda, that’s all they had.

**Rodríguez García:** So if I understand correctly, at the Gates Foundation they realize that we have the access to a whole repository of information, (inaudible) opportunity, but perhaps the quality of interactions and the quality of conversations could be enhanced for long-term benefits?

**Ashby:** Absolutely. It’s the kinds of things I think we all really want to do. It was a real focus on faculty-student engagement, or at least a lot of conversation about how do we actually do more of that? How do we actually adjust for this fact that the faculty have not changed technically but the student body has significantly changed in the last decade? But they were open – it really truly was just a brainstorming session. I don’t even think they know what they are going to do next. They are going to synthesize this and they had a faculty member from the University of Washington, you may be familiar with him if you read the literature on pedagogy, his name is Scott Freeman. Writes quite a bit. I know Sherryl knows who he is. He was leading this, so he is going to codify everything we’ve discussed and then bring back a smaller group of us to talk about what, if anything, Gates could do to support the kinds of things that we want to do. It was actually even talking about mentoring. What mentoring support for TA’s graduate students or any faculty or anything that they could weigh in and move the needle and help us do what we want to do more quickly by being Gates.

**Asher:** A kind of follow-up about Gates, actually. Your whole presentation is very exciting to me but the only thing you said that gave me a little bit of worry is actually the name Gates. I
want to say why. And why is my sense is they have been fabulous in the natural sciences in extending what we’ve learned to be helpful. When they moved to the field of education, I don’t think their track record is nearly as strong because they don’t have a database approach, but they kind of have passions (inaudible) vouchers and other kinds of things that don’t actually turn out to be a success. So what I love of these is that they will support process, that is they will give money to help universities to engage in good process to figure out how to solve these access problems. (Inaudible), convening a bunch of people, coming up with the idea, then going to scale with it right away which I think is (inaudible).

**Ashby:** Yeah, I think they would absolutely agree with that, too, so thank you for that. I will tell you I think that’s the way that they’re moving because I looked at who was in the room and they really were just gathering folks to hear, to learn more about our own processes so that they wouldn’t actually do what you are suggesting. I think going forward, they don’t quite know how they are going to respond, but I will be happy to weigh in but I think they’re in the mood that I’m in with you guys, which is help me help you, as opposed to I decided this is the way and I’m going to put money behind a way. I think they actually realize that’s not possible for multiple reasons, one of which is that every single type of institution was present and there’s no way. Just like there’s no way even in 32 departments. So I would keep that in mind, I will give that feedback and I think Scott is quite open to that. And the good news is when they actually convened Scott and his team and they told that they were actually going to data, because this is his scholarship, and so I even trusted that, that was the way they were putting it forward to have a leader/scholar in the field kind of convening people across higher education. They actually said in there when they charged us, a part of our hesitation, back to this, is that there are people who say when Gates comes in, they say exactly what you just said. So thank you, really appreciate it.

**Moskovitz:** I love this concept but my biggest concern is, as someone who’s been involved in a lot of faculty development, re-tooling classes is a lot of work and finding out what you might want to do to re-tool your classes is not a trivial amount of work, and asking faculty to just do more just doesn’t work. So what I’m wondering, and not a question that can be answered now, is if there are ways in which people want to work on this, there’s something that might be taken off their plate in exchange for doing this that would be concrete and not, you know, just a pat on the back?

**Ashby:** I hear you. So the pages I did not go to has incentives at the top and when I mentioned this to the chairs, I said that the biggest … most faculty will tell you that the most important thing to them is time. And so I’m asking, as you guys are discussing this, I don’t want to tell you the answer to this because I don’t know what’s best for you, and it may not be uniform across departments. But I recognize that and I’m asking you to think about time. I asked them to think about reward and from a sense of not necessarily monetary or any other kind of reward but a sense of can we shift the culture such that this has a value, where people feel like doing this is as prestigious as doing something else. I get that we’re a research institution, I have not lost my mind, okay. But a sense of value that’s meaningful, I would love that. I’m open to hearing possibilities of what that could look like. Yeah, I know, I can’t, it’s hard for us to talk about. This is what we said in the chairs meeting, the beautiful thing about Duke is we will create anything on any day at any point, I mean, that’s what we do. But usually it’s an add-on for
people, and so really thinking about this. The other piece I don’t want this to fall to is people who will naturally do this. I’m asking for this to be a broad departmental discussion and not just fall to the people who will naturally do this. Great people, but I don’t want to just do that.

Richard MacPhail (Chemistry): I was just going to say junior faculty, in a way, are the people coming in with new ideas would be susceptible to getting involved in this, but they have all these other projects, so I’m not sure how to deal with that.

Ashby: I need my senior faculty to get involved. I’m serious. It’s not that simple, but that’s a start, which is why I’m really asking the chairs to really talk about this across your departments and identify not just people who are willing or who would naturally go here but some more senior leadership even because there are all of these balances that you have to do for your faculty. And by the way, a lot of our junior faculty are really excited about doing these types of things. That’s who they are, which is why we brought them here, right, to energize us, to reinvigorate everything and at the same time there’s balance, so I do need a broad range of faculty to engage so that it doesn’t become a burden anywhere and I’m asking the chairs to tell me what that really looks like in their departments. By the way, let me just say that this is not an original thought. I don’t want you to think I thought we weren’t doing this before. I’m asking us to focus, I’m asking us to be intentional. I’m asking us to do it consistently across Trinity. There are departments that are already doing this and they are telling me what they’re doing and it’s wonderful, okay? But I’m just bringing it up to visibility level across the board, not because it’s an original thought. We do this pretty well in a lot of places and the question is how do we continue to do it well for our present students.

Chantal Reid (NSOE): This is all very exciting but some of the changes might depend on having different classrooms or different instructional structures. Is there any consideration of that?

Ashby: You know, I love that. And if Bob Barkhau were sitting in here, I can’t tell you how many discussions we’ve had in the last few months about classrooms not being conducive to what the faculty actually want to do and the way that students actually learn best. I would love it if you would tell me what you want to do and it forces me to have to figure it out. Now, mind you, I can’t actually create space but reconfiguring space, thinking about our classrooms differently. I’d love to have to figure out how to resource that differently. I hear you, we don’t have optimal facilities to do some of these things. What I do think is that we are at a very opportune moment because every talk I have heard President Price give, he leads with this: teaching, learning and discovery. And he uses discovery in the broadest sense of discovering whatever, right? And so it’s high on the university list. I will tell you it’s what the Board of Trustees is talking about now. They are talking about undergraduate – this same thing, and so I think we have an opportunity to present some great ideas that might need some structural support. I am completely open to advocating for that, to raising money for that, to doing whatever it is we need to do. I don’t want you to be limited in your thinking, I know that’s a little of pie in the sky, I don’t want you to go too far, like don’t tell me you need a teaching building, although you don’t know how much I’d love to put Trinity in a building with a lot of beautiful classrooms, but that’s probably not going to happen soon. I think this is something we can actually initiate some of these changes in the next year or so. So tell me what it is you think
you need. We might just think about how we start modifying some classrooms and we have to figure this out. So yes, I do understand the problem and we will go to the next step once we know what you want to do.

**David Malone (Education):** Sometimes when I think about this, I think about the aspirational aspects of this, but there’s also the operational aspects, which this notion of classrooms is one of those aspects. So one of the --- Jeff Forbes, who’s sitting back here, Jeff and I co-taught a FOCUS course this semester with 18 first-year students. And Jeff, if I can speak about you, you are also teaching COMPSCI 201 and that has how many students?

**Forbes:** Three hundred and forty something.

**Malone:** Three hundred and forty. So Jeff and I were having so much fun in the FOCUS course and the students were so responsive and it was really high touch and high impact and I think very meaningful for each of us and for them. So we started talking about how could Jeff do that in his other class? And we ran into a lot of operational concerns …

**Ashby:** That’s a very kind way to put it, David, but go ahead.

**Malone:** There were a lot of resources concerns. So it seems in order to do this in a way that would be effective and meaningful, it’s going to require some resources.

**Ashby:** Yes, I am agreeing with you and I will tell you, I am 100% agreeing with you. Let me just pick on Comp Sci and Jeff for a moment. Hey Jeff, how you doing? Jeff, I’ve been traveling, but I will see you soon. Let me pick on Comp Sci for a second. In talking to Pankaj about this, that’s where they go, right? There’s some things we could think about doing but the scale is challenging. But, having said that, I think they are going to have conversations, from some of the initial conversations I’ve had with Pankaj, they are already thinking about, for lack of a better word, destroying the model and really thinking about what we can actually do here that’s different. It’s everything from thinking about there’s a Jeff, right, but then how do you actually create those smaller engagements that’s not one-on-one with Jeff? What does that look like in an intro course? Or there’s a Jeff version of a course that’s 340 – the most I ever taught was 419 in Chem 101, it was fabulous, I loved those kids. Three hundred forty, but then there may be the 340 course, and by the way there are some great large lectures, there are some great large lectures, but then we have to make sure if it’s a large lecture, it’s great. Then there might be other versions of courses that are pathways that might not actually be that size. So I am open to not making what you’re doing fit, you telling me what the best is, and then we’ll be in enough conversation where we won’t – I don’t want faculty to get really excited about something that’s not possible, but I also want them to be aspirational, which means we have to be in constant conversation and iterating this so that I can help you do the best thing we can possibly do. But I hear you on that, but they are already thinking about really changing the model of their teaching. Same thing in Math. I’ve had this conversation with Jonathan because it’s a scale issue and it’s also a discipline issue for them because the way that their PhD students actually earn their street cred to teach is to teach. But they are practicing on my introductory students. So is pretty much any tenure track faculty member pretty much who’s a junior faculty member. They probably are practicing also. But really thinking about then still how do you optimize that experience and
think of really different ways of structure. This is not trivial, but we are open to the aspiration without the impossibility. I’m telling you, if you gave me some great ideas, and I know you will, it would be hard pressed for us not to have wide university support. This is a really big deal right now at the highest levels of the university, which I was so happy to even hear that conversation happening. I didn’t realize they were having that conversation in the Board of Trustees. I happened to go to a Board meeting and thought, my gosh, they are talking about the same things my chairs are talking about. Perfect. So it’s on their radar screen, so I think we have possibility for resources. Okay, I’m done. Thank you.

Layton: I think that’s both exciting and very informative. Want to stick around some more for another 45 minutes? No? So we had wanted to do a group discussion on the curriculum, I even made slides about the current requirements but we will come back to it in January. So enjoy the holidays and happy new year.