Arts and Sciences Council

Faculty-Student Interaction and Advising Committee (“FSI”)

2019 Annual Report to the Chair of the Arts and Sciences Council

In the spring of 2019 ECASC revived two committees that had been inactive for several years: FSI and the Committee on Undergraduate Teaching, Academic Standards and Honors. The revived FSI Committee met twice in the spring semester, 2019, with the goal of understanding the lay of the land in Trinity vis-à-vis advising and interaction, and establishing clear lines for the Committee’s work in the future.

In 2019-20 goals of the FSI will be:

- to reevaluate the charges of the two committees; it is possible that they will be redefined, reconfigured or even merged, based on the results of work this year and in the fall semester, 2019.
- To establish clear lines of communication at both ends— with faculty and administrators, to ensure that faculty voice will be represented and heard in discussions relating to faculty-student interaction and advising, and that faculty can contribute appropriately to any initiatives.

BY-LAWS language with the committee charge and membership:

9. Committee on Faculty-Student Interaction: The Committee on Faculty-Student Interaction shall concern itself with enhancing advising and other faculty encounters with undergraduate students outside the formal classroom setting. The Committee shall work closely with the Committee on Undergraduate Teaching. The Committee shall have monitoring responsibilities for Pre-Major Advising and upper-class advising, for the House Course program, for the Faculty in Residence Program, and for the Faculty Associates Program.

Membership: The Committee on Faculty-Student Interaction shall consist of eight members: a Chair appointed from the faculty of Arts & Sciences at large; one faculty representative from each Arts & Sciences division (Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences); one faculty representative from the Pratt School of Engineering; one undergraduate student nominated by Duke Student Government; ex officio one representative appointed by the Dean of Trinity College of Arts & Sciences; ex officio one representative appointed by the Vice-President for Student Affairs; ex officio the Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Writing; and ex officio a Member of the Executive Committee.

FSI members for 2019 are:

Voting members:

Francois Lutzoni, Biology
Charmaine D Royal, African and African American Studies
Leonard Tennenhouse, English  
Marc Sommer, Pratt  
Carol Apollonio, Slavic and Eurasian Studies, Chair  

Ex Officio:  

Sue Wasiolek, Dean of Students  
Alyssa K Perz, Advising, Biology  
David Rabiner, Psychology and Neurioscience, Director of Advising  
Jose‐Maria Rodriguez‐Garcia, Romance Studies, ex officio  

In the fall of 2019 representatives from DSG and the “Center for Teaching, Learning and Writing” should be included in the membership (with appropriate updating of the by‐law language relating to the Writing Center).

**The renewed FSI met twice in the spring semester, 2019.**

**On February 26,** members established the lay of the land and introduced their role in advising and faculty‐student interaction.

The students we serve now differ from those in earlier generations. Trinity is experiencing “growing pains” and new realities of student life have changed the nature of advising and faculty‐student interaction. The Committee hopes to find ways for faculty to be involved in the complex landscape of “FSI” on campus without treading on territory that is already served by Student Life and Advising and other entities. Advising and “faculty‐student interaction” overlap in some, but not all areas, but everyone in Trinity shares one priority: to educate the students in ways that allow them to reach their full academic potential while maintaining a healthy and fulfilling life outside the classroom. Given the importance to students of a stimulating intellectual life, and of meaningful relationships with faculty and mentors, faculty’s expertise and passion for their specializations should be an essential part of any effort incorporating faculty more meaningfully and integrally into student life.

**On March 22** Gary Bennett, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, hosted the second meeting of FSI.

A lot has changed since two 2014 reports (CEUE; Advising Task Force). Vice Provost Bennett briefed the committee on a number of new initiatives being discussed with Duke’s higher administration and the Board of Trustees. Advising and faculty‐student interaction are major priorities, including in the area of fundraising.

Duke is recommitting itself to its basic mission of providing a liberal arts education, but students do not necessarily know what that is; nor are they necessarily on board. Not only are they under enormous pressure from family, peers, and the society at large, but they have been selected in the admissions process precisely for some of the qualities that we are now trying to change.
Vice Provost Bennet said that it is “a new day” with this new team of deans. Ambitious ideas are in play. Faculty undoubtedly will support initiatives relating to culture change—enhancing and expanding the Faculty-in-Residence program, and finding ways to engage faculty in residence life and elsewhere on campus. Architecture and big expenditures are not out of the realm of possibility.

Vice Provost Bennet shared key challenges related to the culture of instrumentality on campus, not the least of which is the cost to students’ emotional health. Faculty-student interaction and advising is important to addressing these enormous problems. A new vice-provost for undergraduate engagement has been hired, with a very open charge. Ideas being considered include:

- A residence-based course for all incoming students helping them on their Duke path to adulthood and intellectual community;
- Small groups of diverse faculty and students getting together on student initiative;
- Ways of honoring contributors (public recognition, posters around campus, etc.);
- Designating or even endowing certain professors as sort of special advising faculty with appropriate titles and honors
- Common hour—once per week when nothing is allowed to be scheduled

**DISCUSSION:**

- FSI knows that no efforts to change Duke’s undergraduate culture that involve faculty labor will be successful without the full support of the Trinity Deans of the Faculty (of Arts And Sciences, Divisional Deans). How will faculty contributions in this area be recognized and rewarded in salaries, promotions, awards, and tenure decisions?
  - Is this part of teaching? Of advising? Of service?
  - Opinions differ as to whether financial incentives should be in play, but non-TT and non-regular-rank faculty, with their considerably lower pay, would undoubtedly welcome financial (and other) incentives.
- Students must be integrally involved in any efforts.
- FLUNCH works great because of the minimal bureaucracy involved, and because students “own” it.
- The Student Life side is huge, beyond the imagination of most faculty. Their lives outside of class may in fact be where students place most of their energy. What will be the challenges for integrating faculty voices more seamlessly into the already existing landscape? Has Student Life filled a vacuum that faculty should take more responsibility for?
- A radical idea was floated to budget in a set stipend for all Duke students, that they can use together with faculty for some project. This could be a self-generated project related to the faculty member’s field, or it can take the form of a “job” helping faculty with some research, teaching. It just is given to students when they enroll, or every year. They decide whether to use it or not. If they decide to use it, they can approach faculty and propose something, with no bureaucratic hurdles between student and faculty (applications, websites, reports, etc.). At the beginning of each semester’s class, faculty might bring up some ideas that students could
pursue with these funds, related to their areas of interest or the subject of the class. Not all faculty, and not all students, would be expected to use the money.

- The way to change Duke’s intellectual culture is not going to be to create new programs and hire new administrators.

**GOALS for the FSI COMMITTEE**

- Duke is extremely active with fundraising in this area (particularly advising). **How will this money be spent?** If faculty are involved in the early stages, it is likely that we will feel ownership of any programs and initiatives that will emerge.
- We (Council) own the curriculum. We are currently in an unofficial moratorium vis a vis curriculum change, as we recover from the traumas of Blueprint. With luck some discussions can begin next year. **What role will the Curriculum play** in this huge mission of changing Duke’s pre-professional, transactional, instrumental culture?
- Faculty contributions should be anchored in our role as intellectual leaders. **How can we contribute to changing the culture?**
- Faculty are likely to want to weigh in on **how new initiatives are structured.**
- **What is the role of the classroom, and teaching,** in all of this? (Here we will undoubtedly work closely with our colleagues on the Teaching committee). Faculty probably agree that support for us in this primary mission will only help with everything else. Our Dean of Trinity and divisional deans must be committed in order for any of this to work:
  - Will some of that money being raised be spent to hire more faculty (as opposed to more administrators and more new programs)?
  - Some fields here are bursting at the seams, desperate for new faculty. Can new “real” faculty be hired (as opposed to adjuncts and visitors)? POPS are a good category for this, as they tend to be devoted to their teaching as part of their defined responsibilities. “Interaction” and advising are a natural outgrowth of this.
  - Hiring more TAs, RAs, etc. can help faculty manage our time to allow more contributions to non-classroom-based initiatives. These new hires may also be tasked to work with students.
  - Can some of our best adjuncts be moved into regular-rank positions based on their contributions in this area?
  - Can funds saved from senior faculty retirements be redirected to support teaching-and-community hires?

**APPENDING** the full report from the March 22 meeting, including the subsequent email dialogue among Committee members.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol Apollonio, Chair
April 19, 2019