

COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT (CAA)

MINUTES, DECEMBER 5, 2005

LC-31J; 1:30 – 3:00 PM

Maria Brown, Sean Walmsley, Malcolm Sherman, Joel Berkowitz, Kristina Bendikas, Carol Jewell, Olimpia Pelosi, Barbara Wilkinson, Marjorie Pryse

The meeting began with Sherman's comments from the Executive Committee in response to the Council's proposal that program review include areas beyond the major. The Council on Academic Assessment may look forward to including areas beyond the explicit guidelines. One of the Council's suggested additions is to report grade distributions in program reviews. Clarification was requested because a few of the presenters at the President's Assessment Seminar explicitly advised against the use of grades for program review purposes. The rationale for requesting grade distributions is to monitor grade inflation. The use of grades was discouraged during the seminar in the context of reporting student performance on the learning outcomes. It was agreed that its use for addressing student learning outcomes was not appropriate for program review or accreditation, but grade distribution data would be useful for other purposes.

The Council turned its attention to the Music Department review. Brown thought the self-study was weakened by missing data. It was felt that the department is missing opportunities. It was also suggested that they are doing too many things. For example, they hired an individual for the Electronic Music concentration, which is too much for a single person. The committee overall agreed with the comments in the external reviewer report. Sherman noted that the department has not had a line since 1986. The council was surprised that the department did not mention anything about a credential program for High School band teachers. The department can not compete with other Music departments in part because there is no credential program. Brown added that the report did not comment on what the alum are doing. The number of students who graduate per year is small. In 2003, the department graduated three students. They also offer General Education courses. An inquiry as to whether it represented the smallest department received the response that the Chemistry department graduated one student last year. The Music department represents one of the few Arts & Sciences departments with no Master's Degree. Should the department develop its non-major and service roles, or develop majors? This is a question for the Dean. The Dean accepts the self-study report and external reviewer report, and creates a MOU based on the strengths and weaknesses. A suggestion was made to ask the department for a follow-up report with additional data. It was suggested that the Council ask Szelest how he thinks this council should respond to a self-study that is incomplete. Perhaps the Council should address the Dean? The final paragraph of the report refers to the external reviewer comments that the department is lost. Gathering additional data may not address the issue. It might be better to take this back to the CAS Dean.

The larger issue is where Music and the Arts fit into the University mission. Art, Music, and Theatre may play key roles in recruitment. It was advised that the Council

differentiate between Art and Music, as the situations differ. Resources are an issue for both, but the Music Department needs help with focus, and the report does not reflect their intended direction. The department may indeed have focus and direction, but it is not reflected in the report. The link between the department and the University's strategic goals and mission is missing. It was noted that Music and Art are anti-party school factors. They are huge counters to that and their absences are contributors to party school image. That needs to be said.

It was asked whether to go to the department and ask for more data and an interim report? The Council does not want to ask the department to go back, our role is not to say whether the report needs to be redone. The Council can express concern, and can look to the future using the annual progress report. Perhaps this may be an issue of interest to James Anderson.

The Council response to the self-study is more than usual, and must be written by those who debated the issues and are more familiar with it. A request was made for what specifics are to be included in the report, and who reads the reports. It was suggested that a statement be added to the report to say that the department is unsure of their role and they may need some assistance in determining that. This would put the onus on the administration to clarify it. An additional issue is regarding degrees and credentials. Most Music graduates aim to be High School band teachers, and the University can not offer this. It hurts University recruiting. St. Rose has a program and if we offered one, it would hurt their program because we have lower tuition. It was suggested that first the BA program has to be strong. If the program itself is weak, then nothing else matters. Once it gets a reputation for being weak and another program has a reputation for being strong, we're done for. So it seems that the issue is quality of the program. There is a brief mention of program quality at the bottom of page one of the Council's report, but this needs to be stronger.

It was mentioned that the faculty are engaged in individual lessons as part of courses for departmental majors, not private lessons as consultants. The report should be revised to clarify this.

The directions to the Council were not to make recommendations. We were to state what the assessment was saying. The purpose of this group was to assess the assessment. It follows that to improve the assessment one would ask for X, Y, and Z. In this case, the report was written so long ago, that perhaps in the annual report we could ask them to address the missing portions. The person who was helping Music to prepare this document did not really help them. It seems that they did not understand how to do the self-study. The departments get a checklist, but we have to make sure they actually check their checklist. The department may also need some new faculty to stir things up. The department needs to look at offering applied music study. It seems that the department could add it to the major to make their requirements more attractive and recruit students into the major.

The Council report should be revised to strengthen our concerns with the department role at the University. The report says that the curriculum design is strong, but actually it is not because they need to think about the quality and design of the departmental major.

This is the last meeting of the semester. The two committees will meet. Barbara can send the revised version of this report by email and we can vote over email. The revised report will go out in a week for a vote. The Art self-study was impressive. The chair of the quantitative committee is writing the report. Women's Studies and French are next.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Wilkinson