

**Graduate Academic Council
2002 – 2003**

Minutes of the Council meeting of April 21, 2003

Approved by the Council on May 8, 2003

In attendance: C. Bischoff, B. Spanier, L. Cohen, M. Casserly, H. Charalambous, E. Block, K. Trent, R. Irving, J. Mumpower, K. Sarfoh, L. Raffalovich, L. Trubitt, C. MacDonald (Chair), & J. Bartow (staff)

Unable to attend: S. Maloney, M. Gallant, J. Rudolph, C. Smith, M. Genkin, & Vivien Ng

Guests: MB Winn, J. Mascarenhas, E. Wulfurt, J. Wick-Pelletier

1. Prof. Mary Beth Winn, Director of the Doctor of Arts Program in Humanistic Studies, addressed the Council in regard to the suspension of admissions to the Program as announced by the Dean of Arts & Sciences. Chair MacDonald had invited Prof. Winn to speak to this matter as campus policies call for consultation with EPC/GAC regarding discontinuance of existing programs. Prof. Wulfert, Chair of EPC was in attendance for similar reasons.

Prof. Winn provided a summary description of the program, including a brief history, and indicated that students are primarily attracted for study with concentrations in departments that do not offer other doctoral programs. The interdisciplinary nature of the program has been historically viewed as attractive by individuals interested in collegiate teaching. Currently there are 55 students in the program. Many are non-traditional. Prof. Winn suggested that by suspending admissions the dean was pre-determining the future of the program. She expressed concern that the dean's decision may have been based on erroneous information regarding student and/or applicant numbers. She expressed concern that the decision to suspend admissions was made without consultation with the program director or the program committee.

Prof. Block inquired as to the role of GAC in this matter. Chair MacDonald indicated the By-Laws specify that EPC & GAC have a role in consideration of program implementation & discontinuance. She indicated that the role of GAC regarding the suspension of admissions is ambiguous.

2. Professor Joseph Mascarenhas introduced the Proposal to establish a M.S. Program in Forensic Biology. He summarized background information as described in the proposal. Prof. Block commented that there is similar interest in Forensic Chemistry as well. He indicated that each would need to define its "niche" and suggested that this proposal will provide one and that collaboration with the NYS Police lab is great. He expects a Forensic Chemistry proposal to follow in the near future and suggested that the door for collaboration with this Forensic Biology program should be left open. He suggested that reference to interested chemistry faculty would be beneficial to this proposal. Prof. Mascarenhas indicated that amplified reference to chemists was contained in the response to the site visit report. Prof. Raffalovich inquired about collaboration with faculty in the School of Criminal Justice and further if any potential licensure/certification of graduates was anticipated. Prof. Cohen suggested that reference to VAX and IBM mainframe computers in the Proposal should be deleted.
3. Dean Joan Wick-Pelletier addressed the Council in regard to the suspension of admissions to the D.A. Program in Humanistic Studies. She indicated that she had taken this temporary action with expectations that strategic planning within the College of Arts & Sciences would inform further considerations about the future of this program. The suspension decision was framed in the context of a challenging budgetary backdrop. She described her understanding of some of the background of the program, obtained through conversations with Prof. Winn and others. Specific

reference was made to the development of the program when four prior PhD programs had been suspended. The Dean described the D.A. as a rarely offered degree, citing her knowledge that the degree is available at only 13 other universities. She referred to the 1987 campus review of doctoral programs that categorized the D.A. program as a weak category two program. She indicated that enrollments have been tapering off and that while potential monetary savings from this program would be modest, they would be significant none-the-less. She characterized her action to suspend admissions as partly financial and partly reputational. She described the chronology of consultation about the program and her review of application numbers. Her discussion with affected departments regarding the suspension of admissions had not garnered adverse reactions. Prof. MacDonald asked whether admissions with tight timelines for program completion might be a possible contingency plan. Prof. Spanier questioned the impact on course delivery schedules. Dean Mumpower indicated the issues about this program were from within the College of Arts & Sciences. Prof. Sarfoh asked Dean Wick-Pelletier if she could support a decision from the College Strategic Planning Committee if its recommendation were to continue the program. Dean Wick-Pelletier replied "possibly."

4. Minutes from the Council meeting of 3/31/03 were unanimously approved without amendment.
5. Dean Mumpower and Chair MacDonald both opted to make no formal report to the Council.
6. The written report of the Committee on Admissions & Academic Standing from its meeting of 4/14/03 (below) was presented by Prof. Charalambous. The Council voted unanimously to accept the report and thereby approved the one recommendation contained therein.
7. The written report of the Committee on Curriculum & Instruction from its meeting of 4/10/03 (below) was presented by Prof. Raffalovich. The Council voted unanimously to accept the report and thereby approved the two recommendations contained therein.
8. The Council returned to the discussion of the M.S. Forensic Biology program proposal. Questions were raised about the zero credit value of the course BIO650, a reference to part-time instructor numbers, and the question of specific courses needed to qualify graduates for certification and/or expert court testimony. Contingent upon satisfactory clarification of these matters and those referenced in the initial discussion with Prof. Mascarenhas (item 2, above) to the GAC Chair, the Council voted unanimously to approve the Proposal and thereby authorize its introduction for University Senate consideration.
9. The Council returned to the discussion of the D.A. Program in Humanistic Studies. Opinions were offered as to whether any GAC action was warranted at this time. The Council voted unanimously to approve a motion that governance continue to be consulted on matters pertaining to this program.
10. The proposal to amend academic grievance procedures (below) was considered by the Council. A motion to approve the joint UAC/GAC revised procedures and authorize the introduction of the proposal to the Senate was unanimously approved by the Council.
11. A proposal from UAC to revise course drop deadline policy was introduced by Chair MacDonald. Some council members expressed concern about the proposal, which had not been circulated to GAC members. No motion on the matter was made.
12. The GAC meeting was adjourned with anticipation of one additional meeting being held this semester.

END OF GAC 4/21/03 MINUTES

To: Graduate Academic Council

From: Hara Charalambous, Chair
GAC Committee on Admissions & Academic Standing (CAAS)

Date: April 14, 2003

Subj: Report and Recommendations

The CAAS met on 4/14/03. In attendance were: A. Boehm, C. Wagner, D. Peterson, K. Trent, H. Charalambous (Chair), J. Rudolph, L. Trubitt, J. Bartow (staff), M. Brown & S. Maloney. One item of business was considered and acted upon.

1. The Committee re-considered a petition from a doctoral student in Criminal Justice who has been seeking authorization for advanced standing transfer credits for course work completed at St. John's University Law School, but in which grades below B were earned. This petition was the subject of a recommendation to the GAC on 12/4/02.

The student requested additional review of the petition following notification of a negative decision by the Council in December 2002 on her initial request. Five new items were considered in the updated petition:

- a. an extensive and detailed letter (2/14/03) from the student
- b. a supporting letter (2/10/03) from the Law School Associate Dean
- c. two email messages (2/20/03) from the UAlbany CRJ advisor
- d. a memo (3/20/03) from the Albany CRJ Associate Dean

In reviewing the above materials, the Committee noted the correction of earlier information regarding grade normalization (curving) as in effect during the time the courses were completed. All other information in the correspondence was additionally considered. However, the Committee does not find the arguments to vary from UAlbany transfer credit standards so compelling as to warrant an exception. The Committee voted unanimously (9 – 0) to recommend that the petition be denied.

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To: Graduate Academic Council

From: Professor Lawrence Raffalovich, Chair
GAC Committee on Curriculum & Instruction (CC&I)

Date: April 14, 2003

Subj.: Report and Recommendations

The CC&I met on 4/10/03. In attendance were: G. Pogarsky, L. Raffalovich (Chair), D. Parker, J. Bartow (staff), F. Henderson, & A. Cervantes-Rodriguez. Professors K. Quinn, K. Sarfoh, R.-M. Weber, E. Block & M. Gallant were unable to attend.

Two proposals were considered as listed below. Each was thoroughly discussed and the Committee unanimously recommends both for approval by the Council.

1. Department of Art, College of Arts & Sciences

The department proposes to add "Combined Media" as an available studio area of specialization in both its MFA and MA programs. Such a specialization will facilitate a multi-media approach to the production of artwork that is becoming increasingly desirable. The Committee unanimously recommends approval of this curriculum amendment.

2. Department of Biological Sciences, College of Arts & Sciences

The department seeks authorization Lisa Donahue to provide graduate instruction in the particular one-credit course BIO510 – Laboratory & Environmental Safety. Ms. Donahue does not possess a graduate degree, but has twenty years of significant occupational experience in the field relating to this technical course. The Committee unanimously recommends approval for the exception to be granted.

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Procedures for Resolving Academic Grievances

Students who seek to challenge an academic grade or evaluation of their work in a course or seminar, or in research or another educational activity may request a review of the evaluation by filing an academic grievance.

The Graduate Academic Council (GAC) and the Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC), through the work of their respective Committees on Admission and Academic Standing (CAAS) are responsible for insuring that approved procedures exist within the schools, colleges, departments (if applicable) and programs of the University for students to file academic grievances. Copies of established grievance procedures shall be filed by each academic unit with the Offices of the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and available to students at each school/college dean's office.

It is expected that the grounds upon which an academic grievance may be based should be clearly identified. Such grounds may include variance from University grading standards/policies, grade calculation inconsistencies with that announced in published course syllabi, procedural abnormalities, or other factors that are alleged to have denied the student a fair evaluation. It is not expected that grievances will propose that the professional obligation of faculty to fairly evaluate academic material within their field of expertise will be supplanted by alternate means without procedural cause.

A student who seeks to dispute a grade or evaluation must initially pursue the matter directly with the faculty member involved. If not satisfactorily resolved directly with the faculty member, a written grievance may be filed with the program/department, or directly with school/college for units that are not departmentalized.

Should the grievance not be satisfactorily resolved at this initial level of review, students may pursue further consideration of the grievance at the next organizational level until such time as the grievance is considered at the University level by the GAC or UAC CAAS, as appropriate. Action on an academic grievance by the appropriate CAAS, upon acceptance by the GAC or UAC, as appropriate, is final and not subject to further formal review within the University. Only at this final level of grievance determination by the CAAS may a grade or other such evaluation be changed against the will of the faculty member(s) involved. In such rare cases, the Chair of the GAC or UAC, or its respective CAAS, as appropriate, may consult at his/her discretion with departmental faculty and/or appropriate scholars to determine an appropriate grade and authorize its recording by the Registrar.

In reviewing an academic grievance, the CAAS will consider the formal written petition from the student and corresponding written response/comment from the faculty, along with all records of consideration of the matter at prior levels of review. Although rare, the CAAS reserves the right to conduct a hearing with all parties present or it may decide to meet with each party separately. The nature and number of the representatives attending any such meeting will be at the discretion of the CAAS. These procedures adopted are those which the University believes will provide all parties involved the opportunity to present complete and factual information as necessary for the CAAS to render a fair decision.