

COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT (CAA)

MINUTES, FEBRUARY 25, 2009

UNH 107 10:00 – 12:00

Members present: Heidi Andrade, Henryk Baran, Kristina Bendikas, Zakhar Berkovich, Irina Birman, Daryl Bullis, Sue Faerman, Marjorie Pryse, Bill Roberson, Joette Stefl-Mabry, Bruce Szelest, Alex Xue

Members absent: Michael Christakis

The minutes of February 4 were reviewed and adopted.

The Chair reported to the Council on the response of the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) to the proposed changes to the Charter. The main objections were the following:

- the proposed changes are too specific in delineating titles (X.6.2)
- the consistency of wording throughout the Charter would be compromised by the changes
- there would be a shift in power from the Senate to the Administration if the changes suggested in X.6.4. and X.6.5. were to be adopted

The Chair also shared with the Council the general concerns of the SEC regarding the level of administrative control and representation on Senate Councils and Committees. The objections of the SEC drew strong reactions from the Council members. Members agreed that several points could be modified in the spirit of compromise, but much of the discussion centered on X.6.4. Members indicated that the changes proposed in X.6.4 and X.6.5 were critical. It was suggested that members read the charges of other Councils to see the current and proposed changes to the Charter in context. Council members expressed grave concerns about the SEC preferring consistency over clarity and transparency. The question arose about how the Council could, in practice, be “responsible” if that was taken to mean “held accountable.” It was agreed that there was a need to distinguish and clarify the role of administration and governance in the program review and assessment process. Council members argued that the change in X.6.5., which allows the Council to make its recommendations directly to the administration, reflects current practice and is necessary for efficiency. One member pointed out that the descriptions of the line of reporting in X.6.5 of the current Charter does not support sound organization practice. Another noted that the changes were made because the answer to the question, ‘Is the current process working’ was ‘No.’ Several members were concerned that if every recommendation needed to go through the Executive Committee prior to going to the administration, the work of the Council would become hopelessly backed up.

The Council discussed options for compromise and for bringing the proposed amendments forward. It was agreed that the Chair should invite several members of the Governance Council to the March 11 meeting of the Council so that the concerns

expressed by the Senate Executive Committee could be addressed. Prior to that meeting the Chair will circulate a draft of the justification for the changes. Council members will be able to provide input.

The Council moved on to a discussion of the relationship between the General Education Committee (GEC) and the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC). The main overlap was that the Chair of the GEC serves on the GEAC and the Chair of the GEAC serves on the GEC. A concern was expressed about the service burden of anyone considering Chairing the GEAC, since it would include attending not only the meetings of the CAA, but also the meetings of the GEC and the GEAC. It was pointed out that a designee could be asked to attend in the place of the Chair.

The Council continued discussion on the Program Review Action Plan, presented at a previous meeting. Several suggestions arose, including

- asking programs to think strategically about action steps rather than just ask for numbers e.g. of faculty, students.
- asking programs to identify other “issues” rather than “priorities” and how it intends to address them
- asking programs to apply what they learned from the self-study
- possibly beginning with assessment and having the rest of the steps derive from it

Action Steps

1. Baran will work with Council members to write a justification for the proposed Charter amendments
2. Baran will invite members of the Governance Council to the March 11 meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kristina Bendikas