

COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT (CAA)

MINUTES, APRIL 29, 2009

UNH 200, 10:00 – 12:00

Members present: 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: Heidi Andrade, Michael Christakis

The minutes of April 1 were reviewed and adopted.

The Council reviewed the reports of the Program Review Committee for English, Religious Studies, and Reading. There were discussions about several points in the reports and minor changes were made. Separate motions were made to approve the reports. They carried.

The Chair updated the Council on a request from the Provost to put forward names of senior faculty, active in Ph.D. programs, to serve on the graduate student support (GSS) review panel. The names of two previous members were provided on behalf of the CAA.

The Council was briefed by Dean Pryse on the upcoming graduate student support (GSS) review. This review will be undertaken to get an institutional perspective of the university's graduate portfolio and the results used to inform funding decisions. The process will not reiterate the Program Review process, but there may be data drawn from recent ones. The Provost's staff has met with members of the 1997 doctoral review panel to learn from the previous process and has created a time frame for its activities. Currently, it is soliciting input on the design and process of the review from governance, and will soon form a review panel that will convene in early May. Collection of data will continue over the summer and a report made available to the CAA as part of an informational review.

The proposed GSS review process will include comparing programs by common objective measures, but will permit departments to provide context and background to further illuminate their strengths. In the previous review, they were given a ranking by the panel of 1 (very strong, no significant problems), 2 (some areas of strength, additional resources needed to address weaknesses), or 3 (serious problems, significant investment necessary to raise program up one level), depending upon their level of strength. In this review a five point scale may be adopted.

There have already been a number of suggestions for additional data to include and more are welcome. The Academic Analytics data, disaggregated for departments, will be available for this review. It is believed that there should be two common dimensions for measurement and one specific dimension chosen by the department.

There will be two subgroups of the review panel looking at the data provided. Faculty who are part of a program under review, are in some way associated with it, or who would be beneficiaries given a particular evaluation, will not be asked to review that program or any related programs. The programs will have the opportunity to respond to the panel's evaluation. There are still a number of questions to be answered and input is requested on issues such as who should have access to the documentation and how widely the results of the review should be disseminated. The previous review reports were treated as confidential. The current review panel is not expected to have access to the 1997 reports since they might prejudice its judgment.

There was concern expressed about sharing the Program Review Committee's reports with the review panel since some of the committee's recommendations could conceivably be used against programs. A Council member pointed out that they had been written as formative documents, intended only for the department Chair and Dean, and might have been different if the Committee had known they would be disseminated more widely. There are potentially serious consequences to programs from the GSS review so that the question of what information to provide is a very serious one. It was proposed that programs have some say in whether or not to share the Committee reports. It was noted that while faculty have the prerogative to create or dissolve programs, the administration can determine whether to fund them, and that is the focus of the panel's review. It was also pointed out that if there was a discrepancy between the panel's review and the Committee report, that it could be investigated further. It might be helpful to the panel to have more, rather than less evidence. The Council did not reach consensus.

The Chair suggested that the Council continue its discussion at a meeting to be held on Wednesday, May 6.

Action Steps

1. Bendikas will arrange for a meeting room for Wednesday, May 6, 2009.

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kristina Bendikas