

Minutes
Senate Scholastic Standards Committee
September 5, 2007
(approved 9/19/07)

Members: (attending members in bold): **Andrew Moiseff (Chair)**, John Bennett, **Francine DeFranco**, Gerald Dunne, **Gerald Gianutsos**, Lynne Goodstein, **Lawrence Gramling**, **Katrina Higgins**, Diane Lillo-Martin, **Yuhang Rong**, **Jeffrey von Munkwitz-Smith**, David Wagner, Robert Weiner **Guest: Vice Provost Veronica Makowsky**

1. The April 17, 2007 minutes were approved.
2. This meeting time (Wednesday 9-10:15) seems to be the best time to schedule future meetings.
3. G. Gianutsos has agreed to be our representative on the Senate Growth and Development Committee.

4. Vice Provost Makowsky spoke to the committee to express her concerns about our current academic calendar:

Our calendar provides only two *study days* (Saturday and Sunday) between the last day of classes and the first day of finals. There are no *study days* before mid-semester exams.

In the Spring semester, we have final exams scheduled through Saturday and at least 1 college has their graduation that same Saturday. This tight schedule makes it extremely difficult to schedule additional end-of-year events, such as an honors ceremony, events for seniors, etc.

The lack of study periods may send inappropriate messages to students about our commitment to academics. The abrupt *end-of-classes*, *finals*, *graduation* in the Spring prompts us to ask “why do we need to get students ‘out the door’ so quickly?”

Is there any real advantage to ending the academic year early? E.g., Is it true that students would be at a competitive disadvantage for summer jobs if the academic year were a little longer? On the other hand, should we consider fewer class days per Semester to address these problems?

We discussed the calendar with V. Prov. Makowsky.

- With the current final exam period being compressed down to 5 ½ days more makeup exams are needed due to the bunched final policy.
- The registrar can sometimes reschedule exams to reduce conflicts. For example, avoiding scheduling finals on Saturday for courses that would be taken by students that would be graduating later on the same Saturday.
- It was suggested that students may not like to have a prolonged finals period. Students never seem to want to have a final on the last day.
- An extended time between the end of classes and finals could present a problem with respect to students partying.

- G. Gianutsos, who was chair of Senate Scholastic Standards Committee when the calendar was last revised, pointed out the difficulty of making calendar changes by reminding us that if we reconsider the calendar we must stick to our boundary condition of 52 weeks per year!
- It was pointed out that policy is sometimes driven by anecdotal information instead of rigorously acquired data.
- Our current schedule contains 14 weeks. What factors go into determining the number of weeks in a semester? J. von Munkwitz-Smith will find out the length of the semesters at some other institutions.
- If we were to consider reducing the length of the semester might this be perceived as reducing our academic standards instead of strengthening them?
- We would need to check that any calendar changes would not adversely affect federal financial aide, or accreditation of the University or any of our Schools?

We concluded the discussion with a recommendation to acquire more data from students, faculty, and others that would be impacted by changing the calendar. We agreed that the current calendar does indeed present scheduling difficulties, but it might be prudent to wait a short time before we begin the process of considering its revision.

5. Updates:

TNE (Teachers for a New Era) Dual Major Proposal. Teachers must have a discipline-specific major to be certified to teach that subject. TNE is working to facilitate obtaining this additional major. Last year the emphasis was to enable students receiving a degree in the Neag School to also get a cross school (CLAS) discipline-specific major. TNE, Neag and CLAS have taken this in a the new direction. We expect to be presented with a proposal that would facilitate a dual degree for Neag students. They are working on a proposal that would exempt Neag students that are also working towards a CLAS degree from the current requirement: “The student must meet all requirements for each degree. The two degrees require at least 30 degree credits more than the degree with the higher minimum-credit requirement.” Neag students are already here for 5 years to receive their BS, and MS in education. If the additional 30 credit requirement is waived and they are allowed to ‘double-dip’ course requirements, they will also be able to earn a BS or BA in CLAS. We should expect to hear more about this from TNE soon.

INTD (Interdepartmental courses). Margaret Lamb, Director of IISP, will report to the Senate on the status of INTD courses. During the review of INTD courses we learned that the workload to supervise the review of INTD courses was far higher than expected. In addition, the review process has been evolving to better define the role of INTD Courses and Curriculum Committee and how they interact with School and College Courses and Curriculum Committees. We should expect to review the current procedures and update our recommendations for how to review INTD courses.

Misconduct/Plagiarism. We need to role out our proposal as soon as we can. We should set up a forum to discuss Misconduct and Plagiarism and to present and discuss our proposed revision to the misconduct procedures.

6. New Business

The Summer 2008 calendar can not follow the usual 3-6-6 week model because of a 'lost' week. (It was noted in passing, that the 3-6-6 model leaves only 1 week between regular and summer session for residential life to clean the residence halls.) The Summer and Intersession Faculty Oversight Committee will make a recommendation to the Provost regarding the summer calendars after 2008. Because of the deadlines for submission of course proposals for summer 2008, a decision had to be made sooner regarding the Summer 2008 term; it will follow the 3/6/5 model, as an extension of the experiment at Waterbury this past summer.