

Minutes of the Meeting of the Faculty Delegate Assembly of Hunter College

**November 28, 2007
Room 1203, Hunter East
1:10-3:00 PM**

1. FDA President, Professor Jason Young, called the meeting to order at 1:20

2. Approval of the Minutes of October 17, 2007

The minutes were approved with one change.

3. Executive Committee Report, for the meeting of November 7, 2007

* Professor Tony Doyle summarized the Report.

* Professor Young elaborated on the summary.

-- The committee discussed the possibility of having an event to recognize faculty achievement. Faculty have mentioned that there aren't enough forums for recognition.

-- The Committee also discussed the "corporatization" of the academy. Perhaps the FDA could hold a forum on the topic and ask Roger Bowen of AAUP, for instance, to speak. The forum could address some of the following topics: What are the implications of increased dependence on adjuncts? Does this dependence threaten intellectual freedom or faculty control of the curriculum? Does the trend mean that department size will become a function of the market? For instance, if there were no philosophy majors, would that mean a reduction in the number of full-time faculty in that department?

-- The University Faculty Senate. Hunter's representatives of late have not had good attendance. The UFS's monthly meetings are the one regular opportunity that faculty have to express their concerns to Chancellor Goldstein. At the most recent meeting the chancellor discussed the following issues.

i. Health and safety issues in an aging physical plant

ii. Academic freedom. The new protocol contains a stronger call on the presidents to respect academic freedom.

iii. New York State Higher Education Commission Report is due. Many of the commissioners represent private universities, whose

interests diverge from those of public universities to some extent. The chancellor urged CUNY faculty and students to attend the next Higher Education Committee hearing, which will be held in Manhattan.

4. Academic Update: Provost Vita Rabinowitz

Provost Rabinowitz addressed three topics.

1. The Middle States Initiative. Hunter undergoes Middle States re-accreditation every ten years. Over the years the process has become more rigorous and more quantitative. Linda Susky is our Middle States evaluator. She visited in October, when she met with the president, faculty, and staff. She suggested revisions in the self-study. It was promptly revised, and the revision was approved in two weeks. Phil Alcabes of Urban Public Health and Sandy Clarkson of Mathematics and Statistics have done a great job as co-chairpeople.

Middle States Work Groups. Hunter has to certify that it meets 14 standards of excellence. The work groups include the following: institutional goals, leadership, graduate programs, faculty, students, and undergraduate programs. Every group will have public meetings.

Middle States will also be addressing institutional effectiveness in the following areas: finances, student services, leadership of the administration, academic freedom, and learning.

2. Assessment of student learning. The professional schools have taken the lead on assessment. But Hunter has begun doing this systematically across the college. The president has set aside \$100,000 to fund assessment. We're not where we should be regarding assessment for Middle States. The purpose of assessment is to improve our curriculum, not to catch people out. However, if a course or program isn't working, we need to determine what we can do to improve it. The president is dedicating a new line for a director of assessment.

* A member of the faculty pointed out that assessment differs from discipline to discipline. The provost agreed, adding that the administration is not imposing a single method of assessment on faculty.

* Professor Young observed that standards of comparison for a given department are an inevitable problem with assessment.

3. Faculty engagement and faculty satisfaction. Administrators have the task of doing something about faculty concerns and dissatisfaction. The president has created three initiatives to increase student-faculty engagement.

- i. Co-curricular activities initiative. This will provide funds for activities outside of the classroom related to class but potentially purely social, for instance, field trips.
- ii. Student presentation fund. This would provide students with the opportunity to present their research in professional settings that they attend with faculty or settings that faculty recommend that students attend.
- iii. Student-Faculty Research Initiative. This will provide money for joint research between faculty and students. In the past the student researchers have primarily come from the sciences; this should change.

5. Mellon Project Steering Committee: Professor Christa Acampora, chair

With Professor Acampora were other members of the Steering Committee, Professors William Sakas, Phil Alcabes, and Richard Burke. Professor Acampora discussed the following issues.

- * The Committee requests more faculty input.
- * The Committee has a Blackboard site. This includes discussion boards, where faculty can add sample assignments, and a wiki. The Blackboard site also includes data sets regarding, for instance, which General Education Requirement (GER) courses have increased in enrollment and which have decreased. However, these are only preliminary reports. Also, the Blackboard site has podcasts of public events sponsored by the Mellon Grant.
- * The Mellon Committee is looking for faculty to talk about parts of the curriculum that might need change, among other issues.
- * There is currently a proposal before the Senate to give the Mellon Committee, in cooperation with the Senate, the responsibility of reviewing the GER.

Professor Acampora then distributed a handout providing information about how the GER has changed since 1975, as well as a graphic of core and graduation requirements.

Professor Sakis spoke next.

- * The current GER isn't bad. The problem is the catalog, where the requirements are badly presented.
- * The Committee has discovered that there are some problems with the GER, for instance, that it lacks oversight. There is no administrator whose job it is to assess how the GER is working for students. For instance, is it really providing general education? Hitherto the GER has lacked centralized curriculum design. The students don't know why they have to do the GER. Another problem is finding an

appropriate school to use as a model for the GER. Because of its large number of transfers, Hunter can't use a school like Princeton, which has virtually no transfers, for comparison.

* Interdisciplinary courses. There has been no campus support for interdisciplinary courses, which are virtually non-existent at Hunter. Hunter has lagged behind the national trend of cross discipline curriculum development.

Professor Alcades followed.

* These days there is increasing emphasis in higher education on research. How does that fit with teaching? Should the GER be based on a common body of skills that an educated person ought to have? What aspects of the current scene in higher education does Hunter need to incorporate? How should technology be incorporated? Are there aspects of technology that students need to know about as part of a general education?

* How will we involve students in this process? It can be a challenge to get students involved at Hunter since it's a commuter school and students are generally very busy. Should the GER be a map of disciplines? Should it be an orientation to learning in the academy? Does evaluating the GER give us an opportunity to address other problems on campus, like writing.

Professor Burke spoke last.

* Until now Hunter hasn't assessed the GER. The committee is now asking whether the current GER, introduced in 2001, works. The committee's assessment is both systematic and anecdotal.

The Committee then entertained questions from faculty.

* Question: Why has the number of General Education literature requirements dropped so dramatically since 1975?

* Professor Acampora responded that there was agreement in the past that Hunter needed to cut the number of credits in the GER, although it's not clear why the number of required literature courses in particular has decreased so dramatically. As for current requirements, we might need to cut them, but we shouldn't assume that we will.

* Regarding interdisciplinary courses, Professor Sakas observed that the committee can't dictate that such courses be taught by at least two people.

* Question: Regarding interdisciplinary courses, why should faculty get release time to teach outside of their disciplines? In other words, why should they get

release time to teach something that has nothing to do with what they were hired to teach?

*Professor Sakas responded that the provost is behind cross-disciplinary courses. Professor Acampora added that the president understands that the development of interdisciplinary courses has to come from faculty initiative. The faculty need to talk to chairs about developing of such courses, since teaching them will mean that faculty will be working outside their immediate disciplines.

* Professor Young observed that there are serious disincentives to developing new courses, since doing so takes time away from research and other things that are needed for tenure.

* Question: Why are the GER and the Mellon Grant linked?

*Professor Acampora responded that former Acting Dean Friedlander wrote the grant proposal. She chose the topic.

* Professor Alcabes added that the committee is urging that there be someone specifically in charge of the GER. The committee also recommends that there be a constant stream of money to give full timers release time to work on new courses, and this will mean hiring adjuncts.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Doyle
FDA Secretary