

**College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Minutes of the Faculty Meeting
April 25, 2012**

Dean Virginia Sapiro called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 4:07 p.m.

Dean's Report:

Dean Sapiro reminded the faculty that the final April Open House for prospective first-year students would be Friday, April 27, 2012. She thanked all who have participated in Open House activities. She feels that the Academic Fair, providing opportunities to talk with faculty and students about the whole range of CAS majors and academic programs, has been particularly lively and successful this year. She also reported that we should soon be receiving the results of the promotion and tenure reviews. And we are almost finished with faculty recruitment for this year. She noted that it was going to be a great new group of assistant professors. In most cases BU got their first choice. We would be hearing more about the new colleagues at the September faculty meeting.

The Dean also introduced her new assistant in the Dean's Office: Nancy Geourntas, casdean@bu.edu.

Dean Sapiro said that at this meeting the Faculty would not be discussing the high school Advanced Placement (AP) scores and how they count for course credit at BU, because she wanted to pursue the issue in an orderly way. The discussion of AP credit at BU should first be carried on at the department level. In the fall we will have a fully prepped CAS Faculty meeting about AP policies; representatives from Admissions will be invited.

Old Business - None

New Business

a. Any Automatic Consent Items Called Up

Dean Sapiro said that "Automatic Consent" would be used only for the approval of individual courses and degree programs. Academic policies will not be placed in the "Automatic Consent" category, since such policies should always be open to discussion on the floor of a CAS Faculty meeting.

All items on the Automatic Consent agenda for this meeting were approved without discussion.

b. Discussion of CAS Curriculum and Pedagogy in Developing Undergraduate Writing Skills

Dean Sapiro noted that core skills and knowledge are a part of all education and that responsibility for developing students' competencies in writing, mathematics, and foreign languages is not confined to just one department. She asked that we question what we do

in our individual departments, especially in developing writing skills. The current meeting would be devoted to a discussion of writing skills. Next year there would be meetings focusing on mathematics and computational and analytical skills. The following year would be devoted to foreign language.

On behalf of the Writing Board, Prof. Peter Yeager (Sociology) described its roles and recent initiatives. Current Board members then introduced themselves. They are Joseph Bizup, Director of the Writing Program; John Caradonna, Chemistry; Arianne Chernock, History; Alice Cronin-Golomb, Psychology; Magda Ostas, English; Peter Schwartz, MLCL; Thomas Underwood, Writing Program; Peter Yeager, Sociology; and Steven Jarvi, CAS Associate Dean, *ex officio*.

[See: <http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/reports-documents/> for information on the history, governance, and goals of the CAS Writing Program, much of which was discussed at this CAS meeting. This web site also explains the goals of CAS WR 100 and WR 150, including the teaching of grammar and the teaching of skills to craft a sustained argument.]

Prof. Joe Bizup (Director, Writing Program) gave a brief summary of the Writing Program. There are over 100 faculty [of whom 40 are full-time lecturers] offering 375 courses each year to 6,500 students. The program deals with a complex set of issues, but the program *is* the faculty and students. Since the first discussions of the program in 1999, there have been inevitable changes in curriculum as well as in the composition of the student body that the Writing Program serves. There has, in fact, been a 40 percent increase in enrollment by international students. Prof. Bizup noted that we now know more about how writing happens. There is a national discussion about writing pedagogy.

Prof. Bizup praised the hard-working faculty, and stated that the success of the program depends on them.

Prof. Alice Cronin-Golomb then spoke about the Writing Board's meetings with 15 departments and programs, and noted the following themes that emerged from the departments:

- 1) Writing is important, and the departments wished they could incorporate more. However, departments felt they did not have enough resources, specifically Teaching Fellows.
- 2) Faculty in many departments were never trained in how to teach writing.
- 3) Faculty in departments liked the idea of discipline-based training in writing for their students.
- 4) Faculty generally liked the idea of delaying WR 150 until *after* students' freshman year, rather than advising students to complete the WR 100/150 sequence in the second semester of their freshman year.
- 5) Students' writing has improved with WR 100 and WR 150.
- 6) Faculty find that students still have problems with argumentation. The Faculty want their students to have training not just at the "sentence level" but also in developing arguments.

7) Faculty feel there is a problem with the non-native-English students.

Prof. Caradonna noted that there can be different paths for CAS students. For example, WR 150 could be moved to the second or third year, and then be subject-specific. Until now, WR 100 and WR 150 have been seen as a sequence for the freshman year. There should also be writing for all four years.

Faculty then made comments. Prof. Michael Zank (Religion) said that he had noted improvement in students' writing since the inception of the Writing Program, but added that a greater emphasis on proofreading would be welcome. Prof. Linda Heywood (History and African American Studies) noted that at Howard University, where she previously had taught, they had a "Writing Across the Curriculum" program. Each participating faculty member had to work with writing program experts to develop courses with an emphasis on writing. She recently came across an article in the *Atlantic* where one of her former students praised that experience.

Prof. James Winn (English; Center for the Humanities) argued that "making an argument" and "sentence-level" proficiency are joined. Subjects, verbs, and whether or not there are misplaced modifiers are all part of making an effective argument. Prof. Winn felt that these three papers per semester were not enough. Students need frequent graded assignments. Students come with no knowledge, and their ear for language is not good. He suggested one-page papers, and then working up to longer papers.

Prof. William Grimes (International Relations) asked whether WR 150 should be taught by Writing Program instructors or embedded in departments' own curricula. That might not work for his Department.

Prof. Nancy Ammerman (Sociology) noted her faculty's concerns with bridging the gap between WR 100/WR 150 and 300-level courses.

Prof. Bizup said he appreciated the feedback. He clarified the requirements for WR 100. The course now has three major essays, with drafts and revisions, as well shorter informal exercises, with continuous feedback to the students. Longer papers [as in WR 150] have been considered "capstone," source-based papers. However, when departments change, the Writing Program wants to be sensitive to that. Perhaps long papers are not the answer. The Writing Program aims for "effective teaching of grammar" and is concerned with the production of language and rhetoric as a discipline.

Prof. Loren J. Samons II (Classical Studies) then spoke about the need for action. He thereupon made the first of several motions regarding the CAS Writing Program: "That instructors in the WR program be encouraged formally, including in the written guidelines for the courses issued by the WR program, to address sentence-level and style issues from the beginning of WR 100." [See Appendix with Prof. Samons's five motions.]

Dean Sapiro responded by saying that she wanted a discussion of all the issues, and that

she wanted to hear the concerns of many people. She respected Prof. Samons' right to make a motion. But, she asked, would he want the CAS Faculty to legislate pedagogy in Classical Studies? Prof. Samons said that he felt he was not exceeding protocols, since the Writing Program was created by CAS.

Prof. Roye Wates (Music) wanted also to encourage the teaching of basic grammar. She has many international students, especially Asian students, who have great difficult writing in English. She wanted to "plead on their behalf" and suggested one-page papers every week.

The Dean noted that international students constitute 17-20 percent of the University's incoming class, and that they needed specialized pedagogy. Therefore, more resources are needed. Prof. Bizup spoke of Prof. Maria Zlateva. She is the Writing Program's Director of ESL, in charge of instructors for WR 097 and WR 098, which are the ESL courses for international students. The emphasis in these ESL courses is on instruction in grammar with writing assignments every week.

Prof. Bruce Shulman (History) asked why there was need for a motion. Prof. Samons stood his ground.

Senior Lecturer Martin Fido (Writing Program) reaffirmed "from the trenches" that, in the crafting of essays, argumentation is important and that the argument is lost without careful attention to sentence-level issues. Individual instructors within the Writing Program differ in their priorities for the improvement of students' writing.

Prof. Deena Klepper (Religion), a former Writing Board member, objected to the pressure of voting for a motion that instructs WR teachers how to teach. It was at that point after 5 p.m., and many faculty had to leave the meeting. She regretted not being able to stay for a vote, and she considered it insulting to tell WR instructors how to do their work. Moreover, she felt it was important to acknowledge the field of writing pedagogy.

Prof. John Paul Riquelme (English) moved to table the motion on the floor. A vote was taken: 39 voted to table Prof. Samons' motion; 15 opposed tabling the motion. There were no abstentions.

Prof. Samons then asked about his second motion. Another vote was taken and 41 voted to table Motion 2; 11 opposed tabling. Prof. Schulman then moved that all five of Prof. Samons's motions be tabled. Another vote was taken and 39 voted for tabling all five motions; 14 were opposed to tabling.

Prof. Patricia Hills (History of Art & Architecture) asked for a definition of the "portfolio system." Prof. Bizup explained how portfolios were used in WR courses. At the end of the term, students would present papers they had written with an introduction to the papers assessing what they had learned. Then, a grade would be assigned based on the instructor's evaluation of the entire portfolio.

Prof. Anita Patterson (English) invoked a pervasive anxiety about writing in today's world. In particular, students arrive from high school with less practice than earlier generations in close reading and more practice in the use of secondary sources. Are these students, then, less independent-minded? There are larger questions that need to be addressed.

Calling this a "live question," Prof. Bizup noted that close reading of texts is emphasized in a large number of WR 100/150 sections, of which approximately 75% are literature-based. Reading texts closely is a way to gain evidence. He felt close reading was "alive and well."

Prof. Graham Wilson (Political Science) said that he would never teach a course without a strong writing component. However, he found that sometimes students write "all they know" instead of "answering the question." In his course on British Politics, he asks students to write one-page papers. At other universities he notes that TAs correct papers, but do not grade them.

Prof. James Johnson (History) said that his present course includes six writing assignments. Had he heard accurately that total word count was a criterion in the evaluation of portfolios?

Dean Sapiro suggested that perhaps she could bring someone in to a CAS Faculty Meeting to explain the various ways in which portfolios work. Prof. Bizup explained that the portfolio is not a genre. It is a "folder" — in this case, a collection of students' writings prefaced by an essay by the student commenting on what was learned over the course of writing a number of essays. The earlier writings are the archive that allows students to reflect on their progress. He cited research indicating that students' learning is highly contextualized and that they are more likely to transfer knowledge and skills to new contexts when they have been required to reflect actively on learning to date.

Prof. Bizup continued. Writing instructors have some discretion as to what should be included in the portfolio. It might include three already graded papers, one draft of each of the papers, and other short assignments. The grade for the portfolio itself is primarily determined by the student's analytical introduction. WR collects about 800-900 portfolios each year and uses them as representative evidence to inform decisions about pedagogy. In the aggregate, students whose portfolios were evaluated from that perspective in the summers of 2010 and 2011 were rated higher on sentence-level style than on their ability to craft arguments.

Dean Sapiro concluded the discussion by urging that feedback from faculty about writing is important to the Writing Center. She herself likes to teach writing. It is not just a skill, but also an acknowledgment of the importance of using language well. She noted, however, that in the day's discussion there had been a lot of tension between participants, instead of constructive discussion. These are issues we should talk about together.

Faculty Council Report. There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at about 5:32 p.m. Dean Sapiro invited faculty to her office for sherry and cheese.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Hills
Professor and Acting Chair of History of Art & Architecture and
Secretary of the CAS/GRS Faculty

Appendix:

Motions regarding the CAS Writing Program
4/25/12

I make the following motions:

1. *That instructors in the WR program be encouraged formally, including in the written guidelines for the courses issued by the WR program, to address sentence-level and style issues from the beginning of WR100. ["Sentence-level" issues include grammar.]*
2. *That the sequence of assignments in WR100 and WR150 include some assignments aimed at summary and close reading, preferably early in WR100. [This motion aims to encourage the teaching of forms of writing other than academic argumentation.]*
3. *That the portfolio system be made optional for instructors in the Writing Program.*
4. *That instructors be encouraged formally to increase the number of graded assignments per semester from the current 3 or 4. [In particular, more assignments that will become part of the student's portfolio and which may then influence the final grade on the portfolio itself should be graded. Such grading is intended, among other things, to give the student a gauge of the faculty's expectations and standards.]*
5. *That the WR program develop a writing assignment (beyond the portfolios themselves) for assessing the success of the portfolio system of instruction and the Writing Program in general. [A primary goal of the WR program is to produce good writers, not writers who can produce good portfolios. The portfolio system should be treated as means to this goal and not as an end. Since students must be prepared to move forward into settings where they will not use the portfolio system, a paper written for class outside of the portfolio system may be the best means of determining whether the portfolio system is achieving its goal. The assignment need not be long, but it should be drafted and revised by the student without the involvement of the instructor, with its first submission being its final submission. Such an assignment would mimic a challenging type of writing assignment that the student is likely to encounter multiple times in his academic career and life.]*

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Samons