Faculty Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2012

College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Minutes of the Faculty Meeting
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Dean Virginia Sapiro called the meeting to order with a quorum present at 4:05 PM

Dean’s Report:

Dean Sapiro commented that applications are in for CAS, and she could report a bigger group than ever. There were more requests for early decisions, and the academic profile (GPA, SAT scores) of applicants is up. Diversity is up, as are the applications from international students. The question remains about acceptances from the students; will those numbers go up as well?

The Dean then reported on faculty recruitment. So far three scholars have been recruited for International Relations (in the fields of Latin American studies, religion, and political economy); one in English (film); one in Chemistry; one in Mathematics and Statistics (geometry); one in Psychology (developmental); one in Political Science (urban American politics). Negotiations are going on in other departments. Dean Sapiro characterized the pool of candidates as “fabulous,” and that we were getting our first choices.

She reminded the faculty of the next year’s recruiting season. Faculty should look at the strategic plan. Priorities need to be set and each department needs to think about how priorities overlap with other departments or the Core program.

As to raises: there is not yet a “dollar” amount for the merit pool. Issues to think about are: equity, merit, and accomplishments. In some fields, market issues are a factor, since there has been a leap in pay for those fields.

She praised the CAS website, which she notes is much better organized than formerly.

The FY101 Program:

The discussion turned to the new classes set up for the first year students by the office of the Associate Dean for Student Academic Life: FY 101 uses not only instructors but “peer mentors” to help new students. Associate Dean Steve Jarvi reported that 250 incoming freshmen had signed up for inclusion in one of the 26 sections. FY 101 is a one-credit Pass/Fail course.

Dean Jarvi’s office will assess the program, but now he wants to share with the CAS faculty some anecdotal information. Out of 26 instructors, 25 want to do it again. The course lasted ten weeks, but most agree it should be a whole semester. In that way there will be a continuation of the orientation and a greater use of campus resources. (Dean Jarvi noted that the curriculum for the course could be found on the WEB site.)
He then introduced a number of the freshmen taking the course and the student peer mentors.
• One peer mentor, a senior, said she enjoyed “coming full circle and helping students” as she had been helped.
• A freshman said that “college is all about discovering yourself,” and he liked that it “laid out what BU can do, and also what the City of Boston can offer.”
• Another peer mentor, a sophomore, noted that the peer mentors received credit for a two-credit course. He learned how to construct a syllabus. He found the experience very rewarding, learned about the advantages of CAS, and took pride in the college.
• Another peer mentor, a senior, enjoyed exploring with the students and “learning together.”
• Another peer mentor said she had come from a school where seniors were paired with freshmen, but that BU then did not have such a program. She liked BU’s new program.
• Another freshman felt that the course helped her “transition into college.” She enjoyed the dinners together as a class, and the community service.
• Another freshman (aided by the ASL translator) indicated that she appreciated the many resources, including the Writing Center, that were available. She “now feels more rooted at BU.”
• Another freshman (from Pakistan) felt that the FY 101 experience gave him “an edge.” He had found the United States “overwhelming, but exciting.” It was a new country, and he had questions such as, “How do you approach your professor?” He had a chance to not only meet but also get to know new friends, including learning some Chinese words. He feels comfortable now in going to CAS Advising Center for advice.

Dean Jarvi then opened the dialogue up to include the faculty. Prof. Dan Clemens (Astronomy) asked if the residences (and the RAs) function in a similar way. What about the programs of residence life? Dean Jarvi responded by saying that the FY101 is more focused and engages individual students. He felt that FY101 should be kept as a one-credit course. In fact, he had polled some of the freshmen in the program: “Would you take the course because of the one credit?” Dean Jarvi reported that the freshmen responded by saying that the one-credit benefit was a “good luring device.” The freshman (from Pakistan) noted that events are scheduled in the residences – but only for after 5 pm events. He liked the fact that the events and tours scheduled for FY101 occurred during the day.

Prof. Jim Iffland (Romance Studies) asked if a template had been developed for the course. Dean Jarvi said yes, but it was in process. He mentioned some of the issues to consider further when refining the course: crafting learning measures; need to build in flexibility; stress on topics such as Who am I?; a student’s pathway through the college; reassurance that it is all right to be undeclared; the history and traditions of BU; health, wellness, and safety. One of the FY101 freshmen said he did not want a strict template; he liked the fact that the individual classes were in part tailored to the individuals in that particular class. He himself was interested that attention be given to international students and study abroad opportunities. Another student said that one issue was learning how to be considerate and thinking about what things “you are saying that might be offensive.”
Prof. Paul Withers (Astronomy) wanted to know more about the peer mentors and their training. Dean Jarvi said that the peer mentors take a counseling course for which they get two credits. They learned how to be constructive listeners, and they shared with fellow peer mentors the problems and issues they were having. One peer mentor said that FY101 provided her with knowledge about BU resources she would not otherwise have.

Prof. Iffland asked what the size of the classes was. Dean Jarvi said they varied from five to sixteen, and classes are never run on Fridays.

Dean Sapiro then commented on the program. FY101 is set up to help freshmen find their way. New students need not just study skills, but also something else. We want students to feel comfortable going to faculty. Faculty can do things for new students. For example, Prof. Bruce Shulman (History) took students on a walking tour of Boston. She invited faculty to get in touch with Dean Jarvi if they wanted to contribute in this way to FY101. Prof. Stephanie Nelson (Classics) asked how professors were brought in. Dean Sapiro responded that any faculty willing to participate could be included. Associate Dean Patricia Johnson (Classics) noted the importance of faculty contributions to advising students on how to deal with faculty.

Dean Jeffrey Hughes asked whether the instructor also serves as the advisor. Dean Jarvi said that was not the case. He also noted that some of our peer institutions have faculty-led courses – often small courses, like the Core courses. Dean Sapiro commented that departments could also set up courses. The BU ministries can have such courses. She wants to create a mesh that captures students in their freshman year in order to help those students.

Dean Hughes noted that such programs could be applied to graduate education. Dean Sapiro said that it had been decided that there was a need for a committee focused on graduate students.

Report from the Dean of the Graduate School:

Dean Hughes reported on graduate admissions. PhD applications are up by 10%. Of 5000 applicants we admit about 250 students. Psychology alone had 953 applicants. He urged faculty to try to give the best offers to students.

Dean Hughes then reported that there was indeed a Graduate Academic Affairs Committee. It consists of nine DGSs (Directors of Graduate Studies), with three each from Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. It serves as a sounding board and advisory group. The Committee has set up a series of procedures to handle some of the issues:

(1) Graduate students stay too long at BU. The new guidelines say that students who have been here eight years or more now have to have a plan for completion signed by the student and the advisor.
(2) Need to police the “I” (incomplete) grade. Students should be encouraged to finish their incompletes promptly. Right now, Incompletes can stay on the graduate student’s transcript forever. As to “policing”: first comes the advisor, then the DGS, and finally the Dean’s office can be backup.

(3) Dissertation defenses: One and only one person can participate electronically (e.g. by Skype) as long as it is a two-way communication, with the distant person able to see and hear the candidate and all of the other defense committee members.

(4) Broaden the definition of faculty in GRS. Up until now special appointment forms had to be submitted for BU faculty serving on dissertation defenses who were not in CAS. Now other faculty at BU will be considered “professorial faculty” without the need for forms.

Prof. William Waters (Modern Languages & Comparative Literature) asked about tuition and the language classes. Dean Sapiro said that BU does not set tuition for the reading language classes [the 621 classes] and the courses are taken for zero credit. She further noted that she belongs to a consortium of Deans from the area, and the consortium is willing to have an exchange of language training and also to compile a list of tutorials around Boston where doctoral students can learn languages. Prof. Waters agreed that there should not be obstacles to students’ achieving language competencies.

**Faculty Council Report:** There was no formal Report, but Prof. Ifland urged faculty to vote on the issue of who is eligible to vote in Faculty Assembly. The ballot closes March 1, and chairs should urge their departments to vote.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:** None

**Automatic Consent Business:**

All items of Automatic Consent Business recommended by the APC and curriculum committees were approved without discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 5:17 pm, at which time the Dean invited faculty back to her office for sherry.

Respectfully submitted,

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