

Minutes of Faculty-Only Meeting on the Dean of Studies Restructuring

Friday, 23 September 2005

Davis Auditorium, 3:30-5:45 p.m.

FEC Chair Tim Burns began the meeting by describing the planned agenda: The first ½ hour would be devoted to presentations by members of the administration regarding the restructuring of the Dean of Studies office, including substantive and procedural issues and a rationale for the changes. Following questions, the administrators would leave, and the faculty would discuss the situation, with Denise Smith (Co-Chair of IPPC) serving as moderator. Tim thanked the administrators for attending the session, and for their willingness to return to the meeting at the end, if necessary, to answer further questions.

Tim then introduced President Phil Glotzbach, who offered prepared remarks dealing primarily with process (see Attachment 1). He began by emphasizing that the change that had occurred was the moving of the Dean of Studies to Academic Affairs from Student Affairs, and a division of responsibilities formerly housed in Student Affairs, not a reassignment of responsibilities in the other direction. As contextualizing remarks, Phil recalled the fragility of community, which he had discussed the previous week at the opening Faculty Meeting. Specifically, he named two threats to community: mistrust and misuse of resources. Mistrust is destructive; it divides the community into the privileged and the rest. Misuse of resources is bad for obvious reasons; time is one important resource, and leaders must promote trust to avoid wasting of time.

Phil expressed regret that the process leading to the Dean of Studies restructuring had led to the present situation. He mentioned two specific regrets:

- That the administration had not been more aggressive in bringing the issue to CEPP, and to an open forum back in January 2005. He cautioned that VPAA-DoF Chuck Joseph had talked to CEPP and CFG about the restructuring, and had not been slighting the issue.
- That he personally had made an impromptu response to the Committee of Committees report in May 2005 indicating that decisions had not been made – this remark was made in the context of his having already made personnel appointments, and with much yet to be settled regarding the restructuring, but his statement could have been read differently.

He then made the following commitments:

- To work with FEC and CEPP to properly vet the issue.
- As we move forward, academic support issues would be considered by CEPP, and the offices would work together; if DoF and DoSA can't agree, the issue will go to the VPAA for resolution. Phil said that he would be astonished if such an impasse were to occur.

- It was important that he withdraw from the conversation; the issues are for the faculty and administration of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to resolve.

Why would anyone believe him [Phil]? Last year the faculty had been involved in six senior-level searches, a senior administrative review, and the reorganization of Academic Affairs. The strategic plan went through 46 drafts, each revision reflecting input from the community. A lot happened last year that demonstrated collaborative intent.

Why should student affairs be involved in academic support? Our program is broad – academics are at the center, but student affairs should be involved in the educational mission. We have good people in student affairs who can do the work.

Phil closed with the hope that we are embarking on a conversation, and not a debate to be won or lost, and with thanks for the faculty’s attention. He then introduced VPAA Chuck Joseph.

Chuck began by saying that he should have communicated sooner about the joint work of academic and student affairs (see Attachment 2). FEC has a serious mission, and is taking it seriously – his conversations with FEC have been open, serious, and oriented to finding a solution.

The Dean of Studies Study Group began its work in June of 2004, and reported in December; John Brueggemann chaired the group. Chuck received the report, but it was not broadly shared. Chuck endorsed the report as a way to bridge student and academic affairs; we are “far behind” other colleges in this. He is hoping that CEPP will work on these issues.

The study group’s report recommended that two offices be created, “one in Academic Affairs and one in Student Affairs. This would demand constant collaboration. The DOS office would continue to include work related to academic advising/mentoring, academic standing, academic integrity –and those in Student Affairs would address tutoring, student opportunities with potential links to HEOP/AOP and Career Services.” Of course, “the devil is in the details.” Chuck consulted with CAPT on the restructuring, and was counseled not to rush forward. CAPT made clear that slowing down was wise – he heard this advice. He shared the study group’s report with CEPP in February, but there were only a few questions. Chuck stated that he should have pushed CEPP to study this issue more vigorously, but CEPP was very busy with other business. The minutes of CEPP show that there was minimal discussion of the report, and it is fair for FEC to question the level of consultation.

Chuck discussed the restructuring with CFG in April. “CFG was placed in the awkward position of not being able to respond to faculty members who were, apparently, asking what this Study Group was and more broadly – what the heck was going on.” Chuck took responsibility for this, and indicated that the study group’s report should have been more broadly shared. By then he had come to realize that there were educational policy issues at stake, and that it would be wise to slow the process down so that

consensus could be reached regarding the allocation of responsibilities between the two offices. Pat Oles agreed that this was the proper course.

Various meetings with CFG/FEC occurred over the summer, leading to the brief memo of 15 August 2005 that announced the restructuring – it was intended that this memo lead to open discussion of both process and content. A discussion of consultation, decision-making, and shared governance at Academic Staff was dominated by this issue, because most people were still in the dark about it. FEC and CEPP reported on the restructuring at the first Faculty Meeting [on 9 September]: “The confusion at that meeting resulted from FEC’s expectation that Phil or I would recap some of what we are presenting to you today at that meeting, and that FEC’s report would be in response to that presentation. The faculty was left, I am guessing, hearing FEC and CEPP’s report without the anticipated framing of the issue.”

Chuck closed his presentation by stating that he should have monitored this issue from the start, but in any case, it is essential going forward for the offices to work together to build the bridge. He pleaded that the clumsiness of the process not be allowed to obstruct the realization of the goal.

Pat Oles then spoke about the rationale for the changes, after first echoing the earlier expressions of regret (see Attachment 3). Jon Ramsey’s retirement led to the reconsideration of his office, prior to a search for his replacement. We have a retention problem – a problem with many causes. The most selective institutions attract the best students. Poor retention leads to larger-than-necessary first-year classes and other problems, including loss of some of the best students in an entering class. Our students leave for many reasons, including the lack of diversity. We also have problems with non-HEOP minority and international student retention.

An office that tries to enhance academic support can enhance student achievement. There are many possible initiatives along these lines. Views of how to bridge academic and student affairs are changing; the Dean of Studies is no longer “the” bridge. Many student affairs offices are involved. Bridging among divisions will increase. The study group looked at several possible models, and not all agreed with the final recommendations, which are reflected in the recent restructuring. Referring to a handout showing the old and new college organizational charts, Pat described the two new offices: The Dean of Studies, situated in Academic Affairs, is responsible for advising, integrity issues, etc. The Associate Dean of Student Affairs will head the Office of Student Academic Services and HEOP/AOP; this office is assuming the student-affairs responsibilities formerly assigned to the Dean of Studies; the overall mission is to promote student engagement, achievement, and retention – in a word, success. Noting that not all experiments will succeed, Pat closed by noting that there is much work to do, and much need for consultation among IPPC, CEPP, FYE, DOF, etc.

Tim Burns invited questions for the administrators; a lengthy discussion ensued.

Question: Has retention gotten worse recently? Has the Honors Forum or have other efforts mitigated the problem? Pat Oles answered that the overall problem has been

relatively stable; the last couple of years have seen some movement in the right direction. It was noted that the most recent retention of first year students was the best in recent memory.

Tim Burns asked whether the other administrators present should speak, or be excused to permit the faculty-only portion of the meeting to begin. A couple of differing views were expressed on this.

Question: Are the faculty going to be able to see the study group's report? Chuck Joseph said that it could be posted on the Dean of Faculty web site, and that an email would be sent to announce the posting once it had occurred.

Sarah Goodwin requested to be invited back at the end of the meeting, if any of the other administrators were. Grace Burton stated that she had served on the study group, and had presented a critique of the current model (being the loudest voice suggesting problems). In response to a question, she outlined her concerns:

- Structural: No single person is in charge of student academic affairs in the chosen model.
- Functional: Academic Affairs and Student Affairs may be sending inconsistent messages to students. Issues with students do involve both Academic and Student Affairs, but the two-office model may be unnecessarily complex.

Question: Is the new model a diminishment of the Dean of Studies? Grace answered yes; there are fewer personnel in the office and a high workload.

Question: Is it correct that the Dean of Student Affairs review was completed in the spring? Did that review affect the restructuring? Phil Glotzbach answered that the review of Pat Oles (which was focused on his individual performance, not his office) did not feed into the restructuring decision. This response was confirmed by a faculty member who had served on the review committee.

Question: The speaker had heard apologies for certain aspects of the restructuring process, but had not heard any talk of rescinding the decisions. The president answered that that was fair – he couldn't with integrity stop and reverse course, administrative moves having been made; however, a review in two years (as proposed by CEPP) is fine. For individual faculty, nothing is changed; there are no new policies or standards. Decisions remain to be made about the implementation of the new structure. Pat Oles said that he would be very reluctant to change the decisions based on an argument. The questioner expressed an unwillingness to debate a decision that has already been made; the president answered that such was the situation.

Question: Are resource issues still open (i.e. new resources)? Tim Burns suggested that it would be helpful for the faculty to have a sense of what issues were still on the table for discussion. Chuck Joseph spoke to this point: Last spring, there was a lot unsettled, but some agreements were in place. Pat Oles mentioned that one position on

graduate school administrative support was not funded; the budget process is underway, and the strategic plan identifies faculty lines as the main priority.

Question: We have chosen one model to deal with the retention issue, but there are other possible models. A discussion of this down the road would be welcome [the speaker indicated that some of this concern was implicit in Grace Burton's comments]. Phil Glotzbach responded that retention is a multi-dimensional problem. One troubling dimension for Skidmore is retention of high-achieving Asian females. So, to answer the question of other models needed: Yes, we have to address all aspects of the issue. The recent decision is "picking the low-hanging fruit."

Sarah Goodwin described Jon Ramsey's dual-reporting status, and noted that his budget was always in student affairs. Pat Oles also discussed the dual-report, noting that it had been a subject of discussion for at least 15 years, and represented a long-term trend of functions migrating from Student Affairs to Academic Affairs.

Question: \$2 million is allocated to the new office. Is this an annual figure? It was noted that much of this amount represents the expansion of HEOP from 25 to 40 students per year; the figure also includes four staff positions at reasonable salaries.

Question: The speaker stated his appreciation for what he had heard from the administration, but then asked whether these issues should have been vetted by the committee system more thoroughly. Chuck Joseph, speaking for himself, stated that he felt that the issue should have gone to CEPP earlier on in the process; it is there now.

Tim Burns thanked the administrators for their attendance, and stated that their comments had been helpful. He asked the assembly to move to the faculty-only discussion, and asked Denise Smith to assume the chair, explaining that he wished to be a participant in the ensuing discussion. Denise thanked the faculty for attending the meeting, and noted that there were members of FEC, CEPP, and last year's CFG in attendance, so that as much as possible questions could be addressed to specific individuals. She then opened the floor for comments.

A member of CEPP reported that only three CEPP meetings had been held so far this year, and that they had been dominated by the issue of the Dean of Studies restructuring. CEPP has a big agenda, including the vetting of the Middle States self-study report, the writing requirement, global Skidmore, diversity, institutional assessment task force, academic vision review, and on and on. Sue Layden had attended the third CEPP meeting, and had made a status report on the restructuring. The mission of her office can be summarized as follows: "engagement, excellence, and retention." Sue's office has in operation a peer-tutoring program, international student support, disabilities support, ESL support, unsats, support for athletes, and support to non-HEOP AOP students. There are a host of other projects under consideration, such as GRE prep courses. CEPP will begin to discuss how it can enter this discussion at its next meeting.

Question: Will FYE be involved? Answer: Yes. The speaker indicated some of what he had heard would be included in the new office in Student Affairs, including programs for honors students and London program students. Faculty serve as mentors and advisors – are these all support services now? FYE thought that it would be responsible for the London students; are they at risk? A member of CEPP said that the division of responsibilities would be based on “faculty-side” vs. “student-side,” but there wasn’t that much clarity yet. Is teaching a student to use a textbook academic? Not sure.

Question: Much of the confusion has been based on timing. Has any committee been given a timetable [for rollout of the changes]? A member of last year’s CFG reminded those present that the preceding year had been a (busy) transitional year for the governance system, and that the new structure had mechanisms in place to keep the faculty informed of issues as they arise and insure that they receive appropriate vetting by faculty governance. Regarding a specific timetable going forward, it was noted that a timetable had been included with the retention report. This speaker recalled that CEPP had been invited to have a member on the Dean of Studies study group. The purpose of the group was to study the office and make recommendations prior to the search for Jon Ramsey’s replacement. Grace Burton had asked that some functions of her office be reallocated, and that the Dean of Studies report to the Dean of the Faculty. The study group was asked to look for models of bridging between Academic and Student Affairs, and to report to the President and the VPAA/DOF. The study group was convened by those two officers, and was not a subcommittee or task force of CEPP. The study group made its report appropriately as it had been charged. The speaker raised the issue of the move of the athletic program to Student Affairs. Who decides what issues get attended to [by faculty governance?] and which don’t?

In response, a faculty member expressed appreciation for the previous speaker’s remarks, and noted that we need to use the Faculty Handbook as a guide. Educational policy changes can’t be made without committee consultation. Committees report to the faculty, etc. Do unsats go to Grace’s office or the new office? All this confusion is due to the lack of appropriate consultation. There is no faculty oversight of Student Affairs; do we want to move [certain responsibilities there?].

A member of last year’s CFG stated that everyone was sympathetic to the need for bridging, but why did the bulk of resources go to Student Affairs? What will we achieve here? What goals might we have? A member of FEC responded that the Dean of Studies study group wasn’t a subcommittee or task force of CEPP, and had no responsibility to report formally to the faculty. Going forward, FEC should be informed when ad hoc groups are formed, so that their results will be properly vetted. But what are we going to do in the present instance? We don’t know what is left for CEPP to deliberate. Last April, CFG thought that the “slowing down” mentioned by Chuck Joseph referred to the entire decision, not just the implementation. Chuck didn’t see the educational policy issues until February or March, but the decision [to proceed with the restructuring] was made in January. A member of CEPP stated that CEPP is beginning to learn what is left for deliberation.

A member of CEPP rose to offer some clarification: 1) The duties being discussed were always under Student Affairs; what happened last year was a shift of some of these responsibilities to Academic Affairs. 2) The faculty doesn't have a say over the structure of the administration. They do listen to us, but we cannot control their structure.

In response, a member of FEC read from the Dean of Studies description in the Faculty Handbook. Jon Ramsey's office was the bridge; his duties as Associate Dean of Student Affairs and as Dean of Studies are described under the Dean of Student Affairs [p. 503]. The Dean of Studies' responsibilities include academic advising and students experiencing academic problems. This is being moved to Student Affairs; a change has occurred here.

A faculty member stated that focusing on support and assistance to students without looking at academic policies is a problem. This may be just the tip of the iceberg. Are there any other task force reports we don't know of? The CEPP report on the FYE was mentioned; it is available on the CEPP website.

A faculty member was troubled by the lack of consultation in this case. The presidential override of CAPT decisions, the geosciences issue [i.e., faculty appointment to an interdisciplinary program], the move of athletics to Student Affairs, and now this – is there a worrisome pattern here?

A former member of CFG expressed amazement at the [large] attendance at the meeting, and noted that we should have had a clear explanation of the restructuring earlier. On the other hand, there has been a pattern of consultation as well. In addition, there is reason to fear overloading CEPP with this issue – can some issues be off-loaded? A CEPP member responded that CEPP has moved the restructuring up on its agenda, and that other things would probably be dropped over time.

The FYE Director noted that the FYE is also a bridging office. The new office in Student Affairs was created in June, with no rationale. FYE has yet to be consulted about this. He is concerned about advising and mentoring. What defines "students at risk" – is it a matter of academic danger or retention danger? HEOP has placed exceptionally talented mathematics students in remedial math during their summer program. Can there be faculty advising or mentoring of HEOP students along with HEOP advising? What is the locus of resolution of these issues? Another faculty member expressed concern that every student would be funneled through student academic services.

A member of CAPT stated his appreciation for Chuck Joseph's remarks. Chuck did consult with CAPT on this, but CAPT's brief does not include educational policy. There were appointment issues (local/national search for the new Dean of Studies, etc.). This faculty member believes that Chuck did ask the administration to slow down on these changes. CAPT asked: "what's broke?" That is, what is the rationale? There was no rationale at that point. There was conflict between the two offices – an unhappy compromise was the result, and we are still waiting for a rationale. The decision had very little to do with academic policy or the faculty.

A faculty member rose to register the opinion that the current situation is not that serious, and to express the hope that we can go forward. Would FEC appoint a committee to deal with this? We are at risk of overburdening CEPP. He wants to move to consideration of the writing requirement, international programs, FYE, etc., etc.

A faculty member asked again "what is left?" and offered the opinion that remedial work should be housed in Student Affairs, whereas Academic Affairs should be responsible for the Honors Forum, the London program, etc.

Question: could CEPP, working with FEC, set up a subcommittee to assist with its work? The review process is critical.

Concerns were raised about the process, especially the administration's decisions. The DOS restructuring seems like a done deal. If we can't undo what has been done, how can we prevent actions like this in the future? Perhaps some documentation is in order, calling the "culprits" to account.

It was further suggested that the faculty ought to separate process from substance -- real people have been hired to do real jobs, and second-guessing the viability of their roles is demoralizing.

One faculty member expressed confusion with regard to helping students with problems: "After hearing all of this, I still don't know whom to call."

Meeting adjourned 5:45 (?)