

CAS Department Chairs

Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2015

Guests: Wes Hillyard, Tim O'Donnell, Golda Eldridge

Next meeting: January 20, 2016

Lee Hall 411

I. Introduction of Director of Academic Services and New Career Services Plans: Tim O'Donnell and Wes Hillyard

Wes Hillyard, the new Director of Academic Services, introduced himself and encouraged people to contact him if they have questions or concerns. Tim reviewed the spring schedule for advising and declaring a major, and the reasons behind the changes. After a discussion on the new process, Tim said that they would look at the possibility of moving the declaration drive to a date either late in the spring registration process or following it.

A "raft debate" during advising will be new for the spring semester. Tim asked that departments meet with students in February to promote their majors, and later in the spring term, participate in the debate to engage students with their programs. The February meeting would represent about an hour commitment from each department.

II. Center for Honor and Leadership: Horizons Program

Golda presented a PowerPoint about the Horizons Program which involves student commitment in the classroom as well as outside the class. The student has a faculty sponsor to work with to cover the foundations, discovery and exploration of a project. The Center will have workshops for students and they are looking for faculty help in running workshops on several topics. The department chairs were asked to (1) share the information with their faculty and students and (2) consider partnering with the program to present at the workshops. Richard suggested that Golda provide a list of courses that he thought might be useful to the program; and that Golda identify the kinds of mentorship activities for which faculty could be helpful.

III. Announcements and Questions

- There will be no classes on the first Thursday of the first week of the first summer session. Werner Wieland and Deb O'Dell are bringing to campus the annual Virginia Academy of Sciences conference that will require all classrooms that day. Faculty will have Friday of that week to hold classes instead.
- Faculty have received over 80% on average toward each trip for which they've requested funds during this year's supplemental grant periods. The most recent figure was about 85%. Additional money in this budget has brought the percentage up from the 60s during recent past years.
- Not well known is that students' financial aid is in jeopardy not just if they fall below 12 credits but also if they drop more than 30% of their credits in a semester. For example, a student with 18 credits who drops 6 credits will receive a warning from the financial aid office and possibly lose the aid. The Dean asked that this information be shared. Federal financial aid rules dictate this process. The Financial Aid office does work with students who find themselves in this situation.

IV. Honors Courses – Issues and Updates

With the help of Gary Richards, a member of the Honors Committee, the Richard discussed the need for more Honors courses, particularly in certain areas such as History and Political Science. He and Professor Richards reminded people that existing courses can be used; that new syllabi need not necessarily be constructed; but that assignments for honors students should be more meaningful, creative, or in depth (true of many courses that already exist).

Randall Helmstutler suggested that the Honors committee tell Chairs courses that it would be useful to have designated as Honors. The Dean concurred and said that he would work with the Honors committee to do this prior to registration periods.

He also reminded everyone that with about 250 students now in the Honors program, and a likely higher number next year when we have four full classes of such students, certain problems have ebbed. For example, it is now less common that only a small number of students will be in each Honors class. Because Honors courses are open to non-Honors students, and because of the need for these courses, the Dean affirmed that departments should not be concerned about enrollments lower than normal in such courses. *The current goal is to have a large roster of Honors courses approved from which a selected group could be offered each semester.*

V. Course Evaluation Cycle

Department Chairs were unanimously in favor of not changing the rotation for course evaluations to every semester.

VI. VRS Changes

The Dean updated people on the significant and appropriate concern that has been expressed by the removal of TIAA-CREF and Fidelity from retirement plan choices. Human Resources locally and statewide were blindsided by the change. President Hurley only first heard of it about a week prior to its announcement. Everyone—faculty and administration—have agreed that signing the circulated petition is a good idea, as is reaching out to people at other affected campuses and to legislators, AAUP, and other groups. It is noteworthy that the CEO of the chosen company had been head of the VRS until only about half a year before the contract was awarded to his group.