

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
Senate Educational Policies Committee
October 8, 2010
Meeting Minutes

Present: Amy Aggelou, John Close, Judy Erlen (Co-chair), Bonnie Falcione, Bev Gaddy, Kathleen Kelly (Co-chair), Juan Manfredi, Carol Neuner, Tom Platt, Jay Rajgopal, Charlene Trovato,

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 12:00 pm in Room 826 Cathedral of Learning

Approval of minutes: Minutes from the September 2010 meeting were approved

New Business:

1. **Faculty Assembly update-** no major updates but a review of the discussion that ensued re: the perception that many undergraduates – while bright and accomplished- seem to be less prepared for the expectations of college/university academic life. The discussion began as part of a report from the regional campuses with respect to the need to better tailor Freshman courses/seminars that address some of the skills needed to succeed. In particular the concerns about the limitations in students' writing abilities.
2. **Introduction of Vice Provost Dr. Juan Manfredi-** Dr. Manfredi was introduced and discussed a number of programs/initiatives that the Oakland campus has in place for students. He began the discussion by stating the University is committed to the ongoing development and enhancement of Undergraduate programs/curricula. Specifically with respect to the writing issues as discussed in #1, he stated that Arts & Sciences (AS) has 3 writing requirements for all undergraduates. Recently, the College Writing Board was asked to review 60 papers from the writing courses and has created an assessment matrix to measure the course outcomes. Undergraduate and Graduate students also have the Writing Center as an available resource.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) was also mentioned as a resource for students. The goal of the Center is to help *all* students improve (not only students who are in academic trouble); the Center provides peer tutors.

3. **ADD/DROP deadline** - The SEPC was asked to explore the issues related to the length of time that students have for Adding (or Dropping) a course. The discussion today focused mostly on the length of time a student is allowed before Adding a course. In some cases the student will miss 2 weeks of material (including quizzes) creating a challenge for the student to catch up. There are also difficulties with courses having a significant lab component as the amount of time may result in a student missing up to 8 hours of lab activity. In all cases, getting the student caught up to the rest of the class was raised as a significant challenge. The question was raised as to whether or not Instructor Permission could be added as a requirement for adding a course? Other questions were raised about the feasibility of changing the time frame.

Another issue with respect to the ADD/DROP deadline was related to the fact that the date tuition bills are sent is linked to registration. Thus, many Graduate students 'game the system' by

waiting until the last possible day to ADD courses such that they delay the tuition charges as long as possible. In addition to the above noted issues with missing the first few class meetings, there was also the issue of Faculty not having an accurate estimate of how many students will be registering for a particular course and in some cases, courses with low enrollment have been cancelled when in reality, there were enough students who were going to register for the course.

The decision was made to invite someone from the University Registrar's office to attend the November meeting and discuss the rationale for the current process and the factors that would need to be considered if any changes were to occur.

4. Next meeting will be held Monday, November 8th from 3-4 PM in Room 826.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm.

Submitted by,

Kathleen Kelly & Judy Erlen