

Academic Committee Meeting
March 12, 2020
1:00-2:30 P.M.
Pamplin 1028

Attendees:

Bagchi, Rajesh
Boyle, Kevin
Carlson, Kevin
Chakravarti, Dipankar
Dickhans, Jim
Gnyawali, Devi
Hunnings, Kay
Khansa, Lara
Maggard, Derick
Maher, Jack
McGehee, Nancy
Mitchell, Elizabeth
Russell, Robin
Sumichrast, Robert
Winkeler, Jay

Absent:

Ghandforoush, Parviz
Singal, Vijay

Recording Secretary:

Ridpath, Kimberly

Minutes/Action Items/Announcements

Dean Sumichrast welcomed the academic committee and acknowledged special guests. He thanked academic committee members who have made financial commitments to GBAC.

Commencement

Sumichrast said it is unclear if there will be commencement ceremonies this spring but acknowledge the importance of continued planning at this time. Lara Khansa referred to a map of the coliseum floor and described changes planned for this May.

COVID-19

Sumichrast acknowledged the seriousness of COVID-19 and referred to recent communications from President Sands and other university leaders. It is important to use time available today to discuss major issues about the college's preparations and response. Many details are unknown or are better discussed outside of the academic committee. The committee will consider three general areas: educational programs, administration/operations, and events.

The committee spent most of its time discussing the colleges instructional mission in the current environment. Students are being discouraged from returning to campus after the extended spring break so faculty must provide some sort of distance learning. The committee discussed the use of zoom and recorded formats. Jim Dickhans responded to technical issues and described plans for student and faculty training and support. It will be important for instructors to communicate directly with their students to keep them aware of the mechanics of instruction and any changes in schedule or grading. Instructions should not expect students to provide documentation for illnesses, etc. as is required in more normal circumstances. Instructors must provide access to their electronic grade book to their department head or director. The committee discussed various options for grading student performance.

At this time, Pamplin offices are expected to remain open and everyone should report to work as usual. Kay Hunnings will be sharing university policy information related to working remotely. Unit leaders should make exceptions for anyone who might be infected by COVID-19 or who otherwise should not report to work.

The committee discussed how to continue essential Pamplin operations and some non-essential operations. It acknowledged that some essential operations can be suspended for weeks. The college will seek input from faculty and staff to better understand the need for training, communication and equipment.

Virginia Tech events expected to attract 100 or more people are cancelled through April 30th. Travel is being restricted. The committee discussed how it can achieve goals, such as, recruiting the fall 2020 class of students and maintaining momentum for the boundless impact campaign in this environment. Elizabeth Mitchell provided a list of cancelled events and explained how advancement will continue to communicate with and engage with alumni and other constituencies.

Retreat

At this time, Pamplin expects its Leadership Retreat to take place as planned. The committee discussed the agenda. Kim Ridpath described the accommodations and plans for meals. Ridpath also said that a survey to help select the team building activities is underway.

Future Faculty Development Schedule

Sumichrast referred the committee to a summary of the Future Faculty Development Program. He said the Office of Inclusion and Diversity has proposed a schedule of next year that has an earlier time. Sumichrast asked committee members to review the schedule in the context of the recruiting cycle for the disciplines and let him know if they foresee problems (or benefits).

Honors Banquet Proposal

Pamplin has held an Honors Banquet with its current format each fall for many years. The primary activity is the individual recognition of students receiving scholarships. Even though two departments have limited participation at the event, the duration of the program has grown as more scholarships are awarded. In addition to honoring students, the event is intended to recognize scholarship donors and encourage additional philanthropy. Undergraduate Programs and Pamplin's Office of Advancement have worked together to propose a significant revision of the format. Elizabeth Mitchell described the proposed changes and the Academic Committee discussed how this would impact participation by their constituents. There was a consensus to adopt the proposed new format. Advancement and undergraduate programs will refine the proposal so it can be implemented in 2020-2021.

Changes in P&T from University Council Meeting

The University has proposed changes to the faculty handbook that affect promotion and tenure. These changes have had a first reading at University Council, but the President has indicated that they will not be rushed to a premature vote. Kevin Carlson summarized changes that impact Pamplin's current policy and procedures. After a discussion, Sumichrast asked that the Department Heads Committee make a continued discussion of this topic a priority.

Policy 450 – Pamplin Procedure for Appointment or Promotion of Full-time Non-tenure Track Faculty

Carlson briefly discussed Policy 450 and requested the committee to review and share comments.

New Action Items:

1. Jim Dickhans/IT staff will set up zoom meetings to support faculty on the transition to online courses.
2. Elizabeth Mitchell will send a list of event cancellations to communicate to faculty and staff.
3. Kim Ridpath will send information to book lodging arrangements for leadership retreat.