

Comments for the Faculty Senate
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Red Oak Room

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Faculty Senate chair Volker Frank asked me to talk about the budget situation as well as our resolution to the issue of reassigned time. He also invited me to make some comments about priorities for our work together this year.

Related to the budget, Dr. Linda Nelms covered the matter quite well in her summary of the University Planning Council meeting. With the possibility of a statewide hiring freeze later this year, I anticipate working closely with department chairs and programs directors to assure that our curriculum is delivered. Chancellor Ponder and I will need to remain vigilant regarding the economy and its potential impact on our budget for the next biennium.

In what I am about to say regarding priorities for our work together, I have adopted the word “enough” as a theme from a provocative little piece written by Pat Shipman, an adjunct professor, in *The Chronicle Review*. (Enough Already! - *The Chronical Review* - *The Chronicle of Higher Education* <http://chronicle.com/article/Enough-Already-/124143/>)

Pat Shipman says that the defining idea of the next decade is “enough.” Through the concept of “enough,” we learn how to discipline ourselves to arrive at a place of contentment where we recognize when we have done “enough” and seek satisfaction in promoting the common good rather than striving for more and more in a rising spiral of ambition. It struck me as an idea that would resonate with us and our university’s commitment to sustainability.

Many of the priorities I created for us are grounded in the idea of what will make the education we provide at UNC Asheville sustainable. Gone from most of our minds is the idea that the American economy will come roaring back. We are now beginning nobly our third year of no raises and an increased work load by virtually everyone on campus. If our economy ever recovers, we now understand that is probably a decade away. In the wake of the economic recession, the whole world seems different. And now that it does, what is our response?

Academic Policies Committee (APC)

Our curriculum – upon what shared principles do we offer the university curriculum? I think our ILS and majors programs are on strong foundations – solid roots, strong trunk and branches that reflect commitment to liberal arts and interdisciplinary teaching and learning. But the curricular tree that I see has shoots all over. Some branches are growing in haphazard directions. We need pruning. At what point is our curriculum enough?

Is it permissible for our faculty to have four separate preparations as some do now in the name of our curriculum? Why do we carry courses that we offer one time per year? Courses that we offer one time every other year? Courses that we offer one time every five years? When should some course be offered as special topics once in a while and not carried as regular parts of our curriculum?

In a climate of shrinking resources, how can we continue to sustain majors and the resources they require when they have only one or two graduates, and sometimes no graduates, per year?

Can we revisit the policy for how many credits a transfer student needs to earn at UNC Asheville to be eligible for Latin Honors at graduation? We accept transfer students with their documented record of academic work and—even if it is perfect – we discount it because it was not done here. Is this policy really reflective of our university values? Is it a fair and sustainable policy given current resources?

Advising – there is a lot of room for improvement in the way that we do advising – now may be a time to look inward and improve the quality of what we do (e.g., advising) rather than the quantity.

We have adopted university Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the first time ever in our history. How does our curriculum support our SLOs, for majors, and for ILS, and for the work of APC?

Faculty Welfare and Development Committee (FWDC)

How do our University Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) align with and support the work of FWDC?

Are the FWDC members well attuned to the work of the Committee on Tenure and Rewards Systems? I anticipate important recommendations from this committee. I hope that our tenure and rewards systems can be designed to support our values. It would be excellent to begin looking at the Faculty Record form and discussing how we could modify it so that it reflects what we value about our work.

And it is a good time to make revisions to the Faculty Handbook that may be needed – especially in light of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reaffirmation of accreditation that is coming up soon.

Institutional Development Committee (IDC)

How does the work of the IDC align with and support the University Student Learning Outcomes?

What is the role of the IDC in shaping a culture of evidence on campus?

The work of IDC should be integral to the Institutional Effectiveness process. We are going to establish an Institutional Effectiveness Committee and I wonder how that will impact IDC's current role on the University Planning Council. Is the role of IDC primarily planning, primarily institutional effectiveness, or is it a combination of both?

IDC should be the faculty voice in budgeting and planning. I would like to better understand how IDC is linked to important university budgeting and planning processes; to understand the connections between these university processes and our Institutional Effectiveness work.

Delivering the Curriculum

We have agreed with several major recommendations from the Delivering the Curriculum task force. We confirmed the priorities for hiring adjunct faculty; we agreed to focus on student contact hours in equitably quantifying faculty; the remaining point needing clarification is related to reassigned time.

In an effort to address faculty mental health, we will seriously explore awarding reassigned time to about 65 faculty members for the 2011-2012 academic year. This is about one-half of the faculty who do not have reassigned time from any other source (for example, serving as department chair, holding

an endowed professorship, etcetera). The program area deans will work this semester with department chairs to develop guidelines for awarding one reassigned course each to 65 faculty members. We hope to have this decision made by the end of this semester.

In the meantime, Chancellor Ponder and I will work on arguments to the Board of Governors regarding the unique nature of faculty work at UNC Asheville in an attempt to seek a more reasonable teaching load standard from the Board of Governors.

Thank you for the opportunity to share ideas with the Faculty Senate about the budget, reassigned time and priorities for our work together in the coming year.

Notes:

See also "The Logic of Sufficiency," by Thomas Princen (MIT Press).

<http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=10635>