Meeting of the Villanova University
Academic Policy Committee

Thursday, January 23, 2020
4:00 - 5:15 PM
Fedigan Room (SAC 400)

Minutes

Present: Jennifer Altamuro, Kathy Byrnes, Matt Clarkin, Scott Dressler, Elizabeth Greco, Marylu Hill, Stephanie Katz, Christopher Kilby (chair), Rory Kramer, Eric Lomazoff, Crystal Lucky, Betti Mariani, Wen Mao, Stephen Napier (NIA), Elizabeth Petit de Mange, Michael Posner, Javad Siah, Ani Ural, Andrea Welker, Craig Wheeland

Absent: Sherry Burrell (sabbatical), Stacey Havlik, Zuyi (Jacky) Huang, Stefanie Knauss (NIA), Adele Lindenmeyr (NIA), Christine Kelleher Palus, Joyce Russell (NIA), John Shindelar (NIA)

Administrative Items

1) Jennifer Altamuro volunteered to take notes.

2) Christopher Kilby reiterated that his term as APC chair ends this spring and he will not run for APC next term. He encouraged people to consider running for chair. By tradition, the chair is a tenured faculty member; Christopher pointed out that chairing APC is an excellent way for associate professors to demonstrate leadership in university service.

3) Minutes for 12/2/2019 approved with no negative votes and three abstentions.

New Business

4) CATS Archive on Blackboard
Following up on an earlier email, Jim Trainer (OSPIE) reviewed the CATS archive available through Blackboard (academic years 2004 to 2019). In order to check the system for bugs, all APC members were provided access to their archived reports and asked to sample these for accuracy and completeness and to compare what they see in the new repository with what they have received previously on paper and through NOVASIS. The survey for feedback closes February 15. This platform, accessible through Blackboard, will serve as the new distribution method for CATS reports starting with the end of Spring semester 2020. Diversity and Inclusion question responses from CATS appear in a separate collection, available to each faculty member and to their chair (but not to Deans, R&T committees, etc.), as D&I responses are intended for developmental rather than evaluative purposes. Online and University Alliance ("UA," i.e., CPS) courses and supplemental questions will be added to the archive during Spring 2020; access to the system can be ported to a new LMS if needed. These reports differ slightly from those available through NOVASIS; the key advantage is that the new system integrates various OSPIE processes into one step, which should provide results more quickly to faculty and with less redundant work for OSPIE. The new system also stores students' comments electronically, which NOVASIS did not do.

Jim stated that the system will soon include an option to download anonymized student-level data for each class as an Excel file. This will allow faculty to combine data from different sections of the same course, analyze links between individual responses to different questions, etc. Our vendor offers a dashboard option with some built-in analytics; this functionality should be available in the coming year if Villanova elects to add this option. OSPIE is reviewing what sort of student characteristics could be made available without compromising anonymity. This might allow faculty to look at responses by year (first year, sophomore, etc.), by major, by degree type, etc., so long as student identities are adequately protected.

Old Business

5) Subcommittee Reports

A) Course Attributes: Scott Dressler (Chair) reported that the subcommittee is preparing a survey for department/program chairs to determine the extent of issues with mis-assignment of course attributes and with their faculty making commitments to teach outside their home department without prior chair approval. This is the first step in addressing these issues.

B) Add/Drop: Eric Lomazoff (Chair) reported the subcommittee will meet soon. Eric has continued to receive reports of vague/overly broad accommodation letters; this remains a priority issue. Regarding the Course Preview Policy that APC recommended last semester, Craig Wheeland reported that he had requested that the Registrar meet with student government representatives to clarify goals and discuss feasibility. Craig suggested that Matt Clarkin and Eric reach out to the Registrar's office again to schedule a meeting; if this fails, Craig will follow up.

C) CATS: Rory Kramer (Chair) arrived late due to a scheduling conflict; Michael Posner began the report for the subcommittee, focusing of the Diversity and Inclusion questions of the CATS. Student responses on these questions are intended for two purposes. First, they are to be used for developmental purposes by individual faculty members (viewing their own responses) and by department chairs for curricular development and redesign as needed. Second, they are to be used to assess Diversity and Inclusion at the institutional level and to track change over time, e.g., by the Associate Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer. For this latter purpose, aggregate measures will be generated at the college and university levels. Also, OSPIE will continue to do periodic studies that examine the data in more detail. OSPIE and the subcommittee are still considering how to assess the distribution of D&I scores—e.g., 40 low scores scattered across 40 courses/instructors is quite different than 40 low scores concentrated in a few courses/instructors—while still respecting the principle of protecting faculty and student confidentiality. The subcommittee will continue to work on revised guidelines for the use of CATS in teaching development and evaluation, with special attention to the proper use of D&I questions.

D) Out of College Programs: Christopher Kilby (Chair) presented a draft proposal of guidelines for Out of College Programs (a slightly modified version of the draft presented briefly in December), together with the draft form used for submitting a program proposal. There was some discussion of the proposed "faculty type" requirements the Program Committee and the Steering Committee. Christopher explained the rationale (fulltime faculty in some roles, tenured faculty in other roles, and limits on the reliance on part-time and adjunct faculty); no strong objections emerged. Matt suggested including students in the process; Christopher agreed that including students who are in the program (majors/minors) on the Steering Committee makes good sense. Craig pointed out that, at the stage of setting up the program, the proposal must demonstrate adequate student demand, which would serve the function of involving students. There was some discussion about whether there should be redundancy between the guidelines and the form. The advantage of redundancy is that people using the form would not have to check the guidelines as much; the disadvantages are a longer form and possible conflict between the guidelines and form if one were updated but the other was not. There seemed to be a slight preference against redundancy, but APC may want to revisit this issue.

Craig suggested that the Program Committee first secure signatures from the relevant department/program chairs and then submit the proposal to the Deans. There was some confusion about committee names (Program v. Steering); the subcommittee will consider new names to make each committee's role more immediately obvious. Craig suggested changing the annual report due date to better match the University reporting periods. Rory suggested adding a timetable for external reviews; Christopher responded that, while it is a good idea, such a timetable would hold OCPs to a higher standard than departments and other programs. Craig suggested reviewing guidelines for VIA courses to check for alignment/language.

Elizabeth Petit de Mange asked about the risks of the program "failing" and its impact on students. Craig said Villanova follows a "teaching out" practice for discontinued programs, where no new students are admitted but the university ensures existing students (majors/minors/etc.) have a way to complete their chosen plan of study.

There was additional discussion of OCP staffing and selection of a program director (including the pro's and con's a term limits). Several people pointed out that there could be no volunteer to replace a term-limited program director. Christopher argued that this is an important cultural transition; term limits would preclude programs being associated exclusively with one faculty member and hence expand the pool of faculty willing to serve (and incentivize succession planning).

Craig suggested that the proposed probationary committee is not necessary given the other elements of program review; the subcommittee will reconsider this feature.

Thanks for Jennifer for thorough notes on this meeting!