

Faculty Senate Minutes September 28, 1998

Senators present: W. Beardsley, M. Birnbaum, N. Bristow, T. Cooney, R. Gomez (student representative), C. Hale, W. Haltom, D. Hulbert, J. Kay, A. Neel, H. Ostrom, S. Rubio (student representative), R. Steiner, G. Tomlin, A. Wood

The meeting was called to order at 4:02.

1. Minutes. The minutes of the September 14, 1998 meeting were approved.

2. Announcements.

Haltom introduced the two student representatives to the faculty senate, Rafael Gomez, ASUPS president, and Stephanie Rubio.

Hale announced the results of the Faculty Advancement Committee election. The top four vote recipients were, in order, Sunil Kukreja, David Sousa, Terry Mace and Don Share (tied). Because of a tie in the third position, all four names were conveyed to Dean Cooney.

Cooney announced that he had appointed Sunil Kukreja to the Faculty Advancement Committee.

3. Chair's Report. No report at this time.

4. "Special Orders."

Hale shared her experiences during an accreditation visit to a comparable college. This campus had engaged in a substantial revision of their core curriculum a little over a year ago, and had concluded that process with 80% agreement among the faculty. One and a half years later faculty still view the process of the core revision as valuable, even though some had concluded that process in disagreement with the final result. All faculty seemed to appreciate the process itself. In addition, Hale found the students on that campus enthusiastic about the core curriculum. Students expressed two reasons for their satisfaction—1) it included no "dreaded intro classes" and 2) it is great to take courses from faculty teaching courses they love to teach. Hale wanted faculty here to realize that the core revision can be done in such a way that faculty leave it feeling good about the process. She also noted that the revision on this other campus was a substantial one. She concluded by suggesting that what worked there might not work here; she was not offering a particular template but simply pointing out that the process can be a constructive one.

5-6. Old Business: Charges to Standing Committees.

a. University Enrichment Committee.

The Senate returned to the task of sending charges to the standing committees. Following brief discussion, M/S/P unanimously the following charge for the University Enrichment Committee: "Review the release unit eligibility guidelines."

b. Student Life Committee.

The Senate next turned to the Student Life Committee charges, a conversation delayed until this meeting to allow for input from Dean of Students Kay. Following suggestions from Kay and brief discussion, M/S/P the following charges to the Student Life Committee: "1. Discuss funding for co-curricular activities. 2. Review programs that serve to prepare students for democratic citizenship and to generate ideas for additional opportunities for students to participate in such activities. 3. Recommend additional ways to involve faculty and students in the co-curriculum. 4. Recommend ways to improve the coordination of co-curricular programs among constituencies across campus."

7. New Business: Core Curriculum Discussions.

Tomlin opened discussion explaining that following the previous senate meeting the Senate Chair had asked him to make a report including a recommendation on how the faculty should proceed on the core curriculum debate. Having attended the last faculty meeting where he listened with care, and having reviewed the existing core proposals, Tomlin penned a report, which he offered in a report to the senate. (Text of the full report can be found at the conclusion of these minutes.) Tomlin introduced and explained the report. As a part of this Tomlin highlighted the need to provide new faculty with sufficient information on earlier discussions. He also pointed out that of the issues or “dualities” he included in his report, #8 and 9 are potentially the most complicating, with # 8 underlying all of our discussions, and #9 having a history of causing us the most difficulty in earlier discussions. From here lengthy discussion ensued about the senate’s charge from the faculty to propose a process by which the faculty might proceed in its deliberations on a new core curriculum.

Haltom explained that as he understood the earlier motion that the faculty should begin with the Ad Hoc Committee’s report when it resumed the core discussion it would be within the spirit of that motion to move on to Tomlin’s report and discussions of how to proceed. Cooney pointed out that the earlier motion, because it had been passed by the faculty in a Committee of the Whole, was not binding. He expressed his hope that the faculty would have the opportunity to discuss principles, particularly because of the addition of new faculty. Ostrom maintained that if the faculty returned to discussion of principles it would need to think about moving its deadline for completion of the core debate to next fall. He also expressed some concern that a return to this discussion might harm the attendance of more senior faculty, who might wait to attend until they perceived the discussions as getting “serious.” Haltom noted that in 1996 it was in discussions of principles that the discussion began to fall apart. He urged the faculty to limit discussions of principles to a single meeting. He also suggested that principles are implicit in the existing plans, and that a discussion will only tease out those principles already established there. Neel reiterated the point that new faculty will want to be included in the discussions, and suggested the possibility of holding a separate meeting to offer them the opportunity to get up to speed. Haltom suggested that in such a context it would be important to include representatives of all of the existing plans. Beardsley expressed his view that the new faculty’s role should be more than simply being integrated into the existing discussion. He urged that faculty members also listen to them and be open to the new ideas they can offer. While proving cautious about the idea of a return to first principles, he hoped for a fresh start in which we could move beyond the debate as currently established. Birnbaum agreed that Neel’s plan would help the new faculty get caught up with the faculty discussions so that they could know the issues that exist. She also maintained that the smaller setting might encourage their participation.

Cooney shifted the conversation, reminding the senate that in 1991 the faculty succeeded in revising the core curriculum over the course of ten meetings, and suggested it was the existence of concrete issues for each meeting that made this possible. He wondered how the faculty might get to this point in this debate. Tomlin reminded the senate that a memo from Jim Evans and Bill Breitenbach in November, 1996 had urged the faculty to begin with the Ad Hoc report, with the possibility that the other plans could then be offered as amendments. The attractiveness of this process would be its ability to force concrete discussions. As it stands now there are four proposals before the faculty, and so no single plan can gain a majority, and only a hybrid of the plans will be able to do so. The success of the new proposal for two freshmen seminars is an example of how this might happen. Haltom suggested he did not see it as difficult first to move the Ad Hoc proposal, and then to substitute the two new freshmen seminars for the Ad Hoc proposal’s plan for first-year students. Ostrom noted the two freshmen seminars might replace the freshmen and sophomore year seminars in the Ad Hoc proposal. Haltom asserted, too, that the Ad Hoc committee no longer exists, and so no proprietary attachment to that proposal exists. The faculty is free to move on from the Ad Hoc proposal as it chooses. He also said that Tomlin’s ideas appeared sensible to him.

Tomlin suggested the freshman year was an area of agreement for the faculty at this point, and that it might constitute a first step. The more difficult issue is how to move on from here. He

reminded the senate that the faculty agreed it wanted a smaller core, and that there was a proposal to select the number to which the faculty wanted to reduce it. He described the difficulties he saw with this plan, as faculty would find it difficult to vote on that kind of detail without additional details. Ostrom proposed that the senate put some details before the faculty. He suggested the faculty assume that it can take a few features—for instance a core of 8 or 9 units—on which there appears to be agreement, and then put forward two or three models. The process would involve moving the Ad Hoc proposal with the substitution of the two freshman seminars and then offering a few ways to move forward. The senate's proposals would attempt to bring together features shared among the proposals. Tomlin suggested concern about rewriting the proposals without the aid of their original authors. Ostrom expressed his worry about the core being written on the fly in full faculty meetings and suggested the senate might try to figure out what is at the core of each proposal with the purpose of figuring out how it might help build consensus in the faculty, noting the faculty can still reject anything the senate sends forward. Bristow agreed, pointing out that the faculty seems interested in the senate providing some lead. She also urged that if the senate sends forward proposals that at least one represent a core model with fewer than eight or nine units.

Haltom proposed that the senate might put together two or three new models, agreeing that if those fail the faculty can always return to the existing models. He noted the importance of including those who have already spent significant energy in developing plans, and suggested they might be invited to the next senate meeting. He also pointed out the value of conferring with them because their own perspectives on the core may have evolved since they published their initial core plans. Beardsley acknowledged that the senate can treat the proposals as proposals, but also noted the senate might want to respect the status of the Ad Hoc Committee's proposal, which was the result of a faculty charge, and the broad popularity of Plan B. Kay thought the senate should be clear that as it develops new proposals those proposals will not necessarily prove representative of the original plans, but will rather reflect the commonalities the senate sees in those plans as the it attempts to build consensus. Ostrom noted the senate included representatives of the Plan A and Plan B groups, and suggested the senate also needed to confer with Taranovski and Veseth. Cooney highlighted the importance of publicizing the senate's intentions clearly so the full faculty would be aware of its plans. Haltom suggested that the senate agenda would accomplish this. Cooney explained that the faculty reached a consensus on the freshman year plan after members of the English and CTA departments talked together, and suggested that if we tried to look at what was left to consider and what might be combined there would be a chance that similar moves might occur. He noted it will be trickier if people begin with dreaming about new additions to the core. He thought the faculty had a better chance of beginning with what exists, and noted this still left an opportunity to include new ideas. He wondered about the possibility of a discussion of a common theme for the core and whether this would provide the discussion of principles some faculty crave. Ostrom noted that many faculty have continued talking about the core. Kay suggested that talking about principles within the context of something concrete might be the most successful way to achieve consensus.

Haltom reminded the senate that it needed to know what it was undertaking to do, expressing his opinion that the faculty would likely need more than the five meetings Tomlin had tried to work with. Tomlin suggested that the senate might consider setting up the duality between the hybrid and unitary approaches and asking the faculty to deal with this early on, even without complete details. He also pointed out there is a third option, a small core without upper-division courses. Cooney noted that the success the faculty has had was helped by work done by faculty outside faculty meetings. Haltom reminded the senate again that they needed a plan. Neel suggested the senate form sub-committees to prepare proposals for the next meeting. Discussion ensued. Wood recommended that three sub-committees look over all of the existing proposals, extracting the sense of each and attempting to pull them together. Hulbert noted that the senate is broadly representative of the campus community and that we might form teams that were also representative. Haltom volunteered Ostrom to lead one sub-committee, including Wood, Hale and Bristow. Haltom volunteered Birnbaum to lead another, including Hulbert, Steiner and Haltom. Neel volunteered to lead a third including Beardsley, Tomlin and Hummel-Berry. Cooney

asked that the sub-committees share their conclusions and their plans with the full senate as soon as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 5:28.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy K. Bristow

Proposal for Setting the Core Reform Agenda 9/28/98

Based on a review of proposals for core reform (AY96-97), minutes of faculty meetings (AY96-97), memos from Jim Evans and Bill Breitenbach (11/1/96) and Kris Bartanen (11/5/96) about how to structure the curricular debate agenda, current core rationale in UPS Bulletin and Curriculum Statement (October 1992), the three motions passed by the faculty in spring, 1997, acting as a Committee of the Whole, email inquiries to key figures involved in AY96-97 debate, and discussion points of speakers at September 22, 1998 Faculty Meeting

My goal for the Senate meeting today is for Senators to discuss the issues raised below, to provide me with feedback on this report, and then for me to bring a revised report and proposal to the Senate on 10/12/98, for final deliberation on the recommendations the Senate makes to the faculty for its 10/20 meeting.

My assumptions about our goals in undertaking this debate on the core curriculum:

1. We seek a well-reasoned, effective structure for a core curriculum which supports our pedagogical goals for a liberal arts, undergraduate education at Puget Sound.
2. We seek core curriculum requirements which meet the educational needs of all students at Puget Sound.
3. We seek a core curriculum which can garner the support of an informed majority of faculty voting at the climactic meeting.
4. The climactic meeting should occur no later than April, 1999.

To ensure an informed debate it seems prudent to expend some effort reviewing educational principles and goals at Puget Sound embedded in the various core proposals (see Appendices), and recapping the chronology, progress, and status of the debate during AY96-97 (which Kris Bartanen did a fine job of at the 9/22/98 faculty meeting). Information on the preparation of entering students in foreign languages, reading and writing, and mathematics, should be re-circulated among faculty as soon as practical. The latest version of each core curriculum proposal, and a cumulative chart illustrating their differences should likewise be made easily available to each faculty member.

For this report I have used the following abbreviations for the various core proposals:

Plan A- that of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Core

Plan B- that of Barry, Butcher, Cannon et al.

Plan C- that of Ted Taranovski

Plan V- that of Michael Veseth

To build on the momentum of what was accomplished in AY96-97, I began devising this proposal with the three motions passed from the Faculty Committee of the Whole in mind, namely:

1. that the core be shrunk in number of units
2. that two seminars be required in the freshman year- the Topic Seminar, and the Seminar on Writing and Rhetoric
3. that the deliberations begin "next time" with the proposal from the Ad Hoc Committee (Plan A).

Culling from the evidence, I found the following list of issues, or "dualities," which ultimately need to be resolved (not all strictly in parallel structure, and not all strictly dualities without other options):

1. Revising current core vs creating a brand new core
2. Separating core from distribution requirements ("hybrid model") vs current unitary core (at least ideally)
3. Devising what every student must have as part of the PS undergrad education vs recognizing very different preparations and interests among entering students (especially in skills part of core: math, writing, foreign language, for preparation; and in perspectives part of core: humanistic, historical, society, fine arts, natural world, for interests)
4. Vertical integration of core (upper division core built on earlier core) vs a shortened core sequence (to avoid incoherence from too many different courses fulfilling core requirements and too many different sequences through the core)
5. Inter-disciplinary core courses required vs not required but not excluded
6. Foreign language core courses required vs not required but not excluded
7. Distinctiveness of P.S. core vs liberal allowance of transfer and AP credit
8. Ideal conceptualization of core vs pragmatics of implementing the core (both changes to current teaching patterns and projections about our ability to deliver the new core)
9. Discussing how to achieve particular curriculum goals (e.g., current core categories/pedagogical principles, or numerical size of core) vs debating the merits of various comprehensive proposals (part of the confusion in AY96-97 came from trying to do both at once).

Dualities #1 through 7 would be automatically addressed in the consideration of any core proposal, since as a set the plans advocate either one side or the other of each issue. Dualities 8 and 9 are tougher to finesse because they will suffuse the debate on core content and core debate process, respectively. My belief is that some general consideration needs to be given to #8 in accepting any proposal, and that the details of staffing can be worked out later. On the other hand the difficulties presented by #9 will inevitably dog us throughout the debate ("How can I vote on a detail without seeing the whole plan? How can I vote on a whole plan without having reached, through debate, the best possible details?") In AY96-97 we spent two semesters methodically working through one curricular content goal (increased rigor in freshman academic experience) and one magnitude goal (smaller core desirable) and at that rate it might have taken another five years to work through the remaining dualities. Yet it was progress in achieving majority support for a piece of the core which not one of the proposals had offered originally in this form. Nonetheless the faculty endorsed at its last April, 1997, meeting to return to the Ad Hoc proposal when it resumed deliberations.

Looking ahead to estimate the meeting time necessary and that available, I saw that we have faculty meetings already scheduled on 10/20/98, 11/11/98, 02/10/99, 03/11/99, and 04/12/99. (I kept open the possibility that extra meetings might be needed.) If one meeting were devoted to a review of the proposals' principles, that would leave only four meetings to resolve the above issues. In that scenario:

Meeting 10/20/98- review of proposals' principles, recap AY96-97 progress, outline issues yet to address among the proposals; possible vote on (1) revising core vs (2) recreating core

Meeting 11/11/98- Ad Hoc Proposal (Plan A) moved, seconded. Process proposed by the Plan A report (AHCCC Report of 05/20/96, p. 9) beginning at Step #4 (which is, I believe, where we are in our faculty deliberations) implemented. Debate proceeds on structural features:

1. Revision of existing core vs creation of replacement core (Duality #1) (straw vote)

2. Hybrid vs unitary core model (Duality #2) (straw vote)

Meeting 02/10/99- Continued debates of features of core.

Duality #3 moot under Plan A, Duality #4 implicitly decided by Freshman-Sophomore-Junior year seminars

3. Role of Inter-disciplinary courses in the core

4. Role of foreign language requirements in the core

Meeting 03/11/99

5. Scope of distribution requirements

Meeting 04/12/99

Vote on Plan A (as amended).

Vote on implementation measures for new core curriculum.

Stated Principles of Current Core

"The Core curriculum is the center of the undergraduate experience at Puget Sound and fulfills four objectives: (1) to improve each student's grasp of the intellectual tools necessary for the understanding and communication of ideas; (2) to enable each student to understand herself or himself as a thinking person capable of making ethical or aesthetic choices; (3) to help each student comprehend the intellectual dimensions of history, human society, and the physical world; and (4) to increase each student's awareness of his or her place in these broader contexts." (UPS Bulletin, p. 6, also Curriculum Statement, October 1992, p. 2)

Students develop "over four years an understanding of the liberal arts as the foundation for a lifetime of learning." (UPS Bulletin, p. 6)

"An undergraduate education should prepare a person to meet the demands of a vocation, to cope with the complexity of modern life, and to pursue interests and ideas with confidence and independence. The best individual academic preparation should ground a person well in a field of specialization; invite familiarity with the structures and issues of the contemporary world; develop a breadth of perspective on enduring human concerns and cultural change; and provide the grounding for continued learning and appreciation." (Curriculum Statement, October 1992, P. 1)

"Educational Goals for the University..."

- A. The ability to think logically and analytically
- B. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing
- C. Intellectual autonomy and the accompanying capacity to learn independently of a formal educational structure
- D. An understanding of the inter-relationship of knowledge
- E. Familiarity with diverse fields of knowledge
- F. Solid grounding in the special field of one's choosing
- G. An acknowledged set of personal values
- H. Informed appreciation of self and others as part of a broader humanity in the world environment." (Curriculum Statement, October 1992, p. 1)

Core education should be experienced throughout the undergraduate years. (Curriculum Statement, October 1992, p. 4)

Stated Principles of Plan B

Keeping parts of core presently that work (Plan B)

Increase rigor and interest for fresh core reqs. (Plan B)

Smaller core than current (Plan B)

Separate reqs that are like distribution from core experiences unique to UPS (Plan B)

"...writing and discussion skills are best developed in the context of challenging intellectual issues..." (Plan B)

"...most students would benefit from serious attention to language and discourse at a more sophisticated level..." (Plan B)

Natural World core category the only one with a 2-unit requirement... thus a logical place to shrink the core... or make science & math together a 2-unit category (Plan B)

"The breadth courses are...centered in traditional disciplines and will help to guarantee that each student is exposed to most major academic areas." (Plan B)

Stated Principles of Plan C (Taranovski)

College ed should include (1) common academic experiences-25% (2) specialized ed in discipline or profession-50% and (3) opportunity for exploration-25% Study at each of 3 categories should involve introductory and advanced level study (be "progressive and growing in sophistication") and "some appreciation for the interconnectedness of knowledge" (Plan C)

General ed should include learning particular skills, exposure to different ways of understanding, introduction to significant subject matter...for the 21st century (Plan C)

College ed should be "exposure to the liberal arts broadly conceived" (Plan C)

"The existing core is too large and unwieldy." (Plan C)

Stated Principles of Plan V (Veseth)

We need a "small but coherent set of core classes and a small, thoughtfully-considered set of Distribution requirements." Core needs a "clear and strong central purpose" (Plan V)

Core should "cause students to confront a set of issues that will be important to them throughout their lives as citizens" (Plan V)

Courses are to approach these issues "from a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives." (Plan V)

"...distribution requirements should guide students to sound classes in the areas of the liberal arts that are likely to be underrepresented in the Core." (Plan V)

An informed citizen "...needs an understanding of the economic, political, and social forces shaping events around the world and the position or condition of the individual within these global structures." (Plan V)

"Citizens need to be able to understand the ways that science affects society." (Plan V)