

**Meeting of the Villanova University
Academic Policy Committee**

Wednesday, December 5, 2018
11:00 - 12:00 Noon
Fedigan Room (SAC 400)

Draft

Present: Sherry Burrell, Scott Dressler, Marylu Hill, Zuyi (Jacky) Huang, Stephanie Katz, Christopher Kilby (chair), Rory Kramer, Eric Lomazoff, Wen Mao, Stephen Napier, Lesley Perry, Michael Posner, Ani Ural, Andrea Welker, Craig Wheeland, Tianxia (Tina) Yang, Maggie Emamzadeh (substitute for Matt Clarkin)

Absent: Melissa Bradley, Sarah-Vaughan Brakman (NIA), Kathy Byrnes (NIA), Matt Clarkin (substitute), Stacey Havlik, Adele Lindenmeyr, Christine Kelleher Palus (NIA), Elizabeth Petit de Mange (NIA), Amanda Rappa (alternate), Javad Siah (NIA)

Administrative Items

- 1) Stephen Napier volunteered to take notes.
- 2) Minutes from 11/14/2018 approved unanimously.

Sub-Committee Reports & Discussion

3) CATS

Michael Posner (chair) indicated that the subcommittee would bring a revised charge to APC for consideration and approval at the next APC meeting. Looking ahead to the spring, Michael laid out the subcommittee's plans. These include a website to collect feedback on CATS from faculty and students and periodic reminders to faculty and students to provide feedback. The subcommittee will check with OPIR to verify this is consistent with what that office has already done/planned. The subcommittee plans 4 meetings next term: 1: talk with APC Chair and AVP to flesh-out subcommittee action plan; 2: talk with OPIR to review CATS and evaluation of CATS; 3: more in-depth analysis of Spring 2018 faculty survey results; 4: talk with director of VITAL about how Villanova does or should use CATS. Meetings may explore, among other issues, development of questions for team-taught that are about the overall course, rather than instructor-specific.

There were a number of follow-up questions. Craig Wheeland recalled that APC had approved adding a number of open-ended questions (proposed by VITAL Director Gabriele Bauer) to the standard CATS and asked what had become of this. Christopher Kilby suggested checking APC minutes to confirm; Michael will follow-up with OPIR Director Jim Trainer. Christopher noted the response rate for the CATS remains a central issue. Jim Trainer previously indicated data problem had made old response rates appear higher than they were; Christopher argued the problem is actually the opposite. Students who withdrew from a course used to be left in the response rate denominator, resulting in lower-than-actual rates being recorded under the old paper system. Thus, current numbers that indicate declining response rates understate the problem. The CATS subcommittee might consider setting a lower bound for response

rates; if actual rates fell below this, it would trigger a change, such as incentives to complete CATS or, in the extreme, a return to paper CATS. Andrea Welker pointed out shorter CATS would have a higher response rate and suggested the subcommittee trim low value questions. Eric Lomazoff underscored the importance of timely dissemination of CATS results to faculty, a purported key advantage of online CATS that has yet to materialize. Wen Mao asked why responses to open ended questions are still only available as printouts, rather than online.

4) Student Course Load

Rory Kramer (chair) reported the subcommittee is gathering information from the registrar, peer institutions, and elsewhere. Student course load issues are very different across colleges, with COE and CON students (and maybe CLAS science students) having less “maneuvering space” than CLAS (Arts and Social Sciences) and VSB students. Correspondingly, the number of students with multiple majors and minors (and the “credentialing problem”) appears much greater in CLAS and VSB. Approaches at other universities with lower student course loads include courses with a range of credit hours (a complex system) and the opposite (course credits only; no “credit hours” attached to courses). The latter approach appears more common at Ivy League universities and small elite liberal arts colleges.

Subsequent discussion touched on a number of topics. Sherry Burrell questioned double counting, i.e., single courses counting toward course requirements in more than one major or minor. Such practices follow college- and department-level rules for undergraduate degrees/minors and University rules for graduate degrees (i.e., only 3 courses can simultaneously count toward a BS and MS). Craig noted that six years ago the CLAS Dean changed policy to allow students from other colleges within the University to complete a CLAS major without also completing CLAS core requirements. This change likely accounts for some of the increase in the number of double majors. Craig also suggested collecting data on AP credits for students with multiple majors; if the increase in double majors stems from AP credits, it may not pose a problem in terms of students being spread too thin. Christopher suggested attempting to collect data on how many students attempt multiple majors/minors as a high rate of failed attempts could indicate problems. Eric suggested a survey of faculty at Villanova who had previously taught at institutions with lower student course loads for the pros and cons of the two systems. Maggie Emamzadeh provided a student perspective, opining that 4 longer classes with more homework/reading (rather than the current 5) would be too much but with no change in contact hours (as is suggested) would be fine.

5) Add/Drop

Stephanie Katz led the discussion on proposals to extend the add/drop period from 5 to 7 days. A central concern is a potential adverse impact on clinical and lab courses (especially in Nursing, Engineering, and the Sciences). Stephanie reported that at Boston College, which has a 7 day add/drop period, each science department has a lab coordinator who runs make-up labs for students adding a course after the first lab. This is an expensive system and would be difficult to run at Villanova. The subcommittee suggested that Villanova not extend add/drop but instead require faculty to post syllabi a week in advance and encourage faculty to begin instruction the first day of classes, with only abbreviated in-class syllabus review. This would address requests for more time to assess class content and the

professor's teaching style without the logistical challenges of changing the add/drop period.

APC members discussed this and other options. Some noted the importance of reviewing syllabi in class so that all students are aware of course assignments, policy, and expectations. When instruction requires active involvement of informed students it may not be practical to plunge in on day one. If students want a longer add/drop period because of insufficient ex ante information about courses, access to previous semester syllabi during advising and registration might be a better solution. Syllabus archives do exist but are not readily available to students. A number of people supported the idea of making such syllabi more easily accessible for students and advisers.

6) Cross College Programs

Jacky Huang (chair) outlined progress by the subcommittee. This includes contacting Notre Dame and gathering information at Villanova. Jacky suggested defining a cross-college program as one that includes students and faculty from more than one college. Craig suggested this may be too broad (including programs that were really housed within one college) and suggested that joint decision-making was a key feature.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15.