ACADEMIC COUNCIL
Texas Tech University

Meeting of
January 20, 2015

MINUTES

Present: Cindy Akers, Kathy Austin, Claudia Cogliser, Genevieve Durham DeCesaro, Keith Dye, Stephen Ekwaro-Osire, Cliff Fedler, Ryan Gibbs, Paul Goebel, Sheila Hoover, Lynn Huffman, Patrick Hughes, Jorge Iber, Michelle Kiser, Mitzi Lauderdale, Robin Lock, Ethan Logan, Andrew Martin, Felicia Martin, Brenda Martinez for Bobbie Brown, Randy McBee, Pat McConnel, Garrett McKinnon, Tara Miller for Amy Murphy, Ben Montecillo, Audra Morse, Catherine Parsoneault, William Pasewark, David Roach, Terry Roger for Vicki West, Brian Shannon, Brian Steele, Rob Stewart chair, Kevin Stoker, Janessa Walls, Aliza Wong

Guests: Jennifer Bard, Todd Chambers, Joshua Barron, Ralph Ferguson, Dale Ganus, Mark Sheridan and Achim Weber

Stewart called the meeting to order and introduced Sheridan, who discussed a review of graduate program proposals. Sheridan reminded the council of a moratorium by SACSCOC on development of accelerated bachelors-to-masters programs pending a review of the process by the accrediting body. He also noted that the Provost’s website included a page (www.depts.ttu.edu/provost/new-programs/index.php) with menus that clearly delineate the procedures to be followed for proposing new masters and doctoral programs, including points of contact, routing processes, and more. Parsoneault added that information regarding SACSCOC reaffirmation also existed on the Office of Planning and Assessment website (www.depts.ttu.edu/opa), with definitions for “substantive changes,” institutional policies and SACSCOC definitions. Sheridan concluded the discussion by indicating a desire to revisit the Graduate Council’s authority over graduate course proposals at some point in the future.

Barron presented an update on the Student Success Collaborative, a process for maturing student success and retention efforts. He noted that the university has partnered with EAB, which had resources available for faculty and staff use. He also noted that Texas Tech University was partnering with other institutions to share best practices on the SSC initiative, and that the pilot program would launch in February. Once the pilot program was concluded, the program would be evaluated during the summer of 2015 before being implemented campus-wide during the fall 2015 semester. Barron said that faculty and staff would be able to see historical data and trends regarding individual programs in graphical fashion, allowing faculty and advisors to readily ascertain the difference between the number of students who started a program and the number who graduated from one.
Roach introduced Weber to discuss a proposed degree, the Master’s of Science in Chemical Biology. Weber noted the degree would be the first such program in the state of Texas, and was scheduled to be implemented during the fall 2015 semester. Weber said chemical biology was a rapidly growing field, and that graduates from the program would use chemical methods to study and alter biological pathways as they studied for careers in the biomedical industry. Most of the program’s research would be applied and focus on health and health-related issues, and Weber added that students could transition into the doctoral program in Chemistry. Both thesis and non-thesis degree options would be available, and Weber noted that once SACSCOC sorted out the accelerated bachelors-to-masters process, the track could be included in such a degree. Weber concluded by stating that existing faculty would be utilized to teach classes for the degree. Huffman moved that the degree be accepted as presented, Morse seconded, and the motion was approved by acclamation.

Stewart presented the minutes from the December 2014 Academic Council meeting. Morse moved to accept the minutes as presented, Wong seconded, and the motion was approved.

Goebel presented an informational item noting that Rawls College of Business was proposing a change to 18-hour/3.0 GPA requirements for external transfer students, effective with the spring 2016 semester. The college was doing so, he noted, in order to increase enrollment limits due to increasing student enrollment that had the college near its full capacity.

Andrew Martin presented a proposal to change the Department of Theatre and Dance within the College of Visual and Performing Arts to the School of Theatre and Dance. Doing so would unify the department with the other “schools” within VPA (the School of Music and School of Art). He also noted that the term “school” emphasized quality of education, which was reflected in the department enjoying unprecedented levels of national recognition. The change would be implemented August 19, 2015. He noted many peer institutions utilize the “school” nomenclature, and that the change was timely due to the fact that the department’s dance program had recently become accredited. Martin said that Texas Tech University was the only university in Texas with accreditation in the four areas of art/design, dance, music, and theatre. Stoker moved to approve the change as presented, Wong seconded, and the motion was approved.

McKinnon presented the summary of course approvals. After a brief discussion, Roach moved to approve the courses as presented, Ekwaro-Osire seconded, and the motion was approved.

Martinez discussed a change to the “last day to withdraw from the university” policy. In order to adhere to federal student financial aid guidelines, the day listed must be on a scheduled class day. In recent years at Texas Tech the last day to withdraw from the university had fallen on the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving, a
student holiday. The policy revision would ensure that the university’s academic calendar scheduled the last day to withdraw from the university on a regular class day.

Durham DeCesaro requested feedback on the Provost website page (see URL above) that included instructions for proposing new programs. She also reminded Academic Council members that submissions for changes to core curriculum classes were due January 23, and that applications for writing intensive courses were due February 1. She added that all such proposals would be reviewed, with decisions returned promptly.

Parsoneault presented an update on the SACSCOC Focused Report and the university’s ongoing QEP efforts. She said the SACSCOC on-site committee would be visiting campus during late February to evaluate the QEP and posit changes and/or improvements. She noted the Provost’s Office had undertaken a wide variety of marketing initiatives in order to inform the campus about the new QEP.

In other business:
- Durham DeCesaro distributed information regarding a proposed change to the campus restriction for online courses. The Provost’s Office was concerned that online courses were being populated largely by students living in Lubbock, and proposed putting a hold on core courses and Arts and Sciences core courses so students truly studying at a distance would be given the initial opportunity to register. She said such a restriction would only apply to one section of a course if multiple sections existed, and encouraged members to email Melanie Hart in the Provost’s Office if they would like to include additional courses in the hold proposal.
- Durham DeCesaro also discussed a modification to the policy on online final exams. She noted instructors should select a single 24-hour period in which to offer a final exam during Blackboard, the date of which should be clearly indicated in the course syllabus. Additionally, she said students should be given a time limit of 2.5 hours to take an online final exam.
- Wall noted that the small class portal would open the following day.
- Stewart opened a discussion regarding remuneration of faculty who teach independent study courses during the summer. He noted that a proposal was under consideration, and that an audit of independent study courses taken by student-athletes was ongoing. He said such courses needed written syllabi, particularly for undergraduate courses, and asked council members how departments could ascertain and verify that undergraduate independent study courses were including the required grade assessment and face-to-face contact hours. Fedler noted that graduate independent study courses required students to send data on student activity to their instructor, and the data was then uploaded to Extender files. Stewart advised council members that proper academic rigor needed to be applied to independent study courses, and requested that council members assess the current state of
senior-level independent study courses in their departments, document what was occurring, and provide anecdotes and samples at the February 2015 Academic Council meeting.

- Durham DeCesaro reminded council members that January 23 was the deadline to upload PDFs of syllabi into Digital Measures.
- Morse advised the Council that the Department of Petroleum Engineering was capping the program at 240 students and raising the GPA requirement to 3.2, largely due to the difficulty in recruiting sufficient faculty for the program.

With no other business to discuss, Stewart adjourned the meeting.