

Academic Policies and Services  
Vanderbilt University Senate  
Report for Academic Year 2006-07  
Chair: Ann M. Neely

The Academic Policies and Services Committee included the following Senators: Karen Campbell, Andy Porter, Terry Lybrand, Tracy George, Peter Rousseau, Peter Wright, and Michael McLendon. Norman Tolk was the Executive Committee Liaison.

APS has the charge to be concerned with new schools, new programs, and new degrees; to consider academic honors, leaves, grants, promotions, departmental and divisional chairmanships, programs abroad, the academic calendar, career planning and placement, Vanderbilt University Library, Information Services, the bookstore and the University Press; and to examine university strategic plans and initiatives.

APS began the year with five charges and six additional items were added to our agenda.

#### New Degrees

APS carefully reviewed proposals for new degrees in the following areas:

Master's of Accountancy (proposed by Owen School)

Ph.D. in Chemical and Physical Biology (proposed by the School of Medicine and the College of Arts and Science)

Ph.D. in Law and Economics (proposed by the Law School in conjunction with the Economics Department and Owen School)

All three new degrees were recommended for approval to, and ultimately approved by, the Senate.

APS would like to re-iterate that it is imperative for any advertisement of newly proposed programs (via brochures, the website, etc.) include the statement that the program is "pending approval." If the program is advertised in advance of approval, a statement in the proposal should explain contingency plans for students admitted prior to degree approval.

#### To provide input on the University Library

One of the original charges to APS, there was little activity or involvement of the committee this year. There has been correspondence between the Provost, Associate Provost Dennis Hall, and the committee chair. A Library Task Force was announced in early September, 2006. APS requested that one of our members be appointed to the Task Force.

At this point, the Task Force has not been appointed. Associate Provost Hall has outlined his plans in an e-mail shared with APS. This item will need to continue to be on the 2007-08 agenda for APS.

To examine the University's strategic planning initiative, making the process more visible and transparent

APS worked with Associate Provost Tim McNamara to improve the availability of strategic planning information on the website of the Office of the Provost.

To reconsider potential changes in Vanderbilt's policy of awarding honorary degrees or alternatives to non-Vanderbilt faculty members

An initial debate was held two years ago, but was not reported on last year. The 2006-07 APS committee completed the review and made the following motion to the full Senate: "Vanderbilt will continue the policy of not awarding honorary degrees. We commend the administration for soliciting nominations for the Nichols-Chancellor's Medal from the community at large, as we believe this honor is a more appropriate recognition than an honorary degree would be."

During extensive discussions on the issue, APS believes that awarding honorary doctorates would weaken the earned degree. After meetings with Vice Chancellor Mike Schoenfeld, we believe that the Nichols-Chancellor's speaker provides the same sort of recognition and speech provided through honorary degrees. APS members worked with Vice Chancellor Schoenfeld for an e-mail to be sent to all members of the Vanderbilt community to seek input on the Senior Day speaker (sent from the Chancellor's Office on November 15, 2006). We encourage this same feedback be sought in future years.

Given that this issue has been considered repeatedly and rejected repeatedly, APS recommends this policy stand until 2012 or later.

To clarify the role of SACS reaccreditation and determine the level of involvement for the Senate

Associate Provost McNamara indicated there was no role for APS in the work being done for SACS reaccreditation.

To understand better the opportunities for international study/research undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, and faculty have

Associate Provost Joel Harrington met with APS and outlined the work of Vanderbilt International Office. The committee felt his presentation and the discussion that followed was an important one for the full Senate to hear. Associate Provost Harrington presented to the Senate in March.

To review the request by SGA for making course syllabi available online for students to view before/during registration

APS recommends that University Registrar Gary Gibson work on a way to make course syllabi available for students (via a password protected link) through the Vanderbilt website outlining the schedule of class offerings. Faculty should be encouraged to provide recent syllabi for their classes, while students must understand that syllabi are fluid documents that change immediately prior to (or even during) each semester.

To make recommendations to the Senate/Provost for additional awards for faculty excellence

APS reviewed the list of awards the University currently makes to faculty. It should be noted that we have concerns that the process of making nominations for these awards has often left too few nominees, leaving us with the concern that there may already be too many awards given.

We have considered suggesting three new awards that seem to be in areas currently unrecognized: one for service to the greater Nashville community, one for excellence in mentoring graduate students, and one for undergraduate advising. These may be excellent ideas to take to interested donors.

The request for this item to go to APS originated with Provost Zeppos. The APS chair went back to the Provost for additional clarification on his request for the study of new awards. In an April 7, 2007 e-mail, the Provost outlined further his intention: new awards would lead to the ultimate goal to have the election of many more faculty to the National Academies.

The 2007-08 APS committee should continue to work with Provost Zeppos, Associate Provosts Dennis Hall and Tim McNamara, and Associate Vice Chancellor Jeff Balsler to investigate this issue and make recommendations.

To consider the time that is allocated between classes for undergraduates

APS began a review of the concerns brought forward by students and faculty that the current allotment of time (ten minutes) between classes. It is felt by some that this interval is too short to make it between classes offered on a campus the size of Vanderbilt. The following points have been considered:

- Peabody professors and students have concerns that the current schedule is antiquated (Gary Gibson confirmed it has been in place since before the Vanderbilt/Peabody merger). This problem has become greater with the opening of classroom space on the south end of Peabody side of campus (Wyatt) and the north end of the West End side (Wilson). With the seminar classrooms being open in the Freshman Commons, this will present more with a time crunch.
- Most of us can walk the route in 15 minutes. But most classes only have a 10 minute interval, causing students to leave early or arrive late. Several students were asked to time themselves as they made the walk, and they reported times of 15-18 minutes.
- The Registrar was informally asked to find out what campuses of similar size do. In a brief study, he found we have the tightest schedule by far (Duke has a 45 minute interval!). The University of Notre Dame (a much smaller campus) allots 15 minutes between classes.
- We don't think it's unreasonable to expect that students will greet each other (and faculty) as they walk, talk with other students headed their way, answer their cell phones, and even day dream a bit. In fact, we view most of these as desirable elements of the collective life of a campus.
- We would rather that students arrive a bit early for class and/or have time after class, if they wish, to chat with faculty for a moment---if only to make an appointment to meet at another time. Thus, the transition time between classes is not solely for the purpose of getting from one classroom to the next.

APS requests that the Administration (Provost's Office, University Registrar, etc.) review a recommendation that the TIME ALLOCATED BETWEEN CLASSES TAKEN BY UNDERGRADUATES BE EXTENDED TO FIFTEEN-TWENTY MINUTES. A study of this recommendation should be made during the summer of 2007, so that any changes may be fully implemented for 2008-09.

Pending a report on this review, APS and Student Life committees will submit a recommendation to the full Senate in fall, 2007.