Committee: Academic Policies and Services

Chairs: Noel Enyedy, Leena Choi
Members: Adam Anderson, Elizabeth Haldeman Catania, Mario Crucini, Graham Hemingway, Queen Henry-Okafor, Dawn Iacobucci, Florence Sanchez
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Committee Description:
To be concerned with new schools, new programs and new degrees. To consider policies regarding 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.

Committee Charges

Charge 1: Approval of new academic and professional degree programs

- **Background:**
  Review of new academic and professional degree programs is one of the standing charges of the APS Committee.

- **Goals:**
  1. Review new academic degree programs submitted to the Faculty Senate.
  2. Provide consultative input for the individuals who submitted the proposal.
  3. Make recommendation to the full Senate.

- **Actions:**
  We reviewed a new online-degree program from the Law School, Masters of Legal Studies (MLS). This is the first new online-degree program that came to the Faculty Senate for consultation. We invited Christopher Serkin (Associate Dean for Academic Affairs) to the APS Committee meeting on April 8, 2020 to hold a question and answer session with the goal of clarifying some specifics on the degree program. Several suggestions were also made by the APS Committee.

- **Outcomes/ Recommendations:**
The Law School sent the APS Committee an updated memorandum (attached) to respond to the questions the APS committee asked at the April meeting. There are meeting minutes available if anyone is interested in the questions asked of the Program. Our suggestions for the MLS program were incorporated into the proposal and details about the curriculum and the faculty approvals within the Law School are now more fully described. This new degree program was presented as a Standing Committee Report to the full Senate during our meeting of May 6, 2021, and no concerns were raised by the Senate. This degree program is ready to proceed to the next step in the approval process. A letter to the Dean will be provided by the Senate summarizing this consultative process.

Charge 2: Library

- **Background:**
  The Library charge is one of the standing charges of APS Committee. In the Fall of 2019, external consultants (A21) were hired to evaluate the library, and the report was circulated in the fall of 2020. Based on the consultation results, the Vanderbilt Library System is undergoing transformative change in terms of the scope of its mission, the method of delivery services in an increasingly, online environment. The ongoing transformation has been accelerated by the move to online teaching and research during the pandemic. Adapting to these shifts has placed strains on the staff, raised questions about the level and composition of the library’s budget allocation, the appropriate mix of physical space, methods of online interface with collections and the changing nature of staff responsibilities.

- **Goals:**
  The committee seeks to understand the current state of library services and the future direction of those services. Some of questions we have sought answers to include the following:
  - What services to faculty, students and staff expect the library to deliver?
  - What services are best placed within the scope of the libraries mission?
  - How does the library use real time data on the uses of collections with the goal of more efficiently curating the collections?
  - What determines the dynamics of additions to collections, maintaining existing resources and removing (discontinuing) under-utilized materials?
  - How much discretion is available to the library in the negotiation and design of contracts with content providers?
  - How does management of online, electronic and physical collections vary across the different forms and content of the collections?
  - How does the library staff engage faculty, students, staff and the administration in the effective utilization and curation of its resources?
Actions:

(1) The APS Committee invited Vanessa Beasley (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs) and Valerie Hotchkiss (University Librarian, Interim Director of Central Library) to discuss the external consultation results for the library. Before the meeting, the Committee had chance to read the external consulting report by A21 and the following general questions were sent to Dr. Beasley in advance of our meeting:
- How are the recommendations (in the report) being prioritized?
- What is the timeline for the development of a Library strategic plan?
- Which recommendations are being implemented and are there barriers to implementing any recommendations?
- How can the Senate and/or APS committee help the Libraries?

(2) During the spring semester, members of the committee attended six library-sponsored information sessions to learn about the current practices and challenges and opportunities faced by the library. Collectively, these sessions were termed the “Faculty Collection Series”:
- Session 1: Understanding Library Subscriptions and their Impact on the Collections Budget
- Session 2: Providing Scholarly Resources to the Vanderbilt Community
- Session 3: Explore Alternatives to Traditional Subscription-Based Access Models
- Session 4: Providing Broader Access to Library Resources—Embracing Creative Opportunities
- Session 5: Text and Data Mining (TDM) Scholarly Resources— a Library Collections Perspective
- Session 6: Demystifying Library Resources and Expenditures: Collecting Distinctive Collections

These recorded sessions are now available to the VU community (log in is required, link embedded).

Outcomes and/or recommendations:

(1) Findings
- One of the recurring themes of the information sessions and broader discussions with leadership of the library is the value of real time data in dynamically managing the library’s collection.
- The collection ranges from static content, such as historical government documents, which are largely physical volumes stored in the Annex to fully dynamic on demand journal content licensed through (mostly) academic presses, such as Elsevier.
- Collections range from very broad and high intensity use, such as core data and text resources used in current teaching and research areas with high number of
users (student enrollments and common faculty research foci) to highly specialized collections such as historical artifacts and art installations.

(2) Recommendations

- As the collections aims to serve faculty and students, the committee recommends continued and enhanced use of data mining techniques to understand the intensity, duration and pivot of demands for material over time. Faculty experts in these areas may be able to offer technical insights in further development of these quantitative and qualitative tools.

- Share the wealth of data already collected with the faculty. Engage the faculty more directly, particularly those most interested in the outcomes based upon their usage of particular collections. By providing interim data on collection cost per use in combination with online live and recorded information sessions, more faculty will be aware of the tradeoffs. Examples of such tradeoffs are the potential to add lower cost per use journal articles as higher cost per use journals are removed from the collection. This is currently part of the library’s dynamic collection management system, but faculty and student engagement could help to aid the library in understanding the relevant tradeoffs.

- Currently there is no direct cost to end users that would temper the use subscription of more marginal resources. While the committee does not envision wide-spread adoption of such models, it is worth noting that this does occur in very high-cost subscriptions such as, for example, Bloomberg terminals in the business school. Selective use of this model might lead to substantial economy of total resources as well as more efficient use of existing resources.

**Charge 3: Bookstore**

- **Background:**
  There was concern that recent changes at the bookstore reduced the number and range of books available at the bookstore at the expense of VU merchandise.

- **Goals:**
  To get a better understanding of the economic pressures driving changes at the bookstore and to represent faculty interests in decisions related to bookstore operations.

- **Actions:**
  Both the Executive and APS committees were represented in the stakeholder groups that assisted VU Business Services in 1) drafting the Request for Proposals for potential vendors and 2) evaluating the responses.
Outcomes and/or recommendations:

Ultimately, Follett was chosen to takeover operation from Barnes and Noble (effective June 1, 2021). The major benefits of the Follett proposal are 1) better use of technology and an ability to interface with VU online systems, 2) a more seamless way for faculty to submit course adoptions and for students to access digital course material, 3) a plan for greater support of the Opportunity Vanderbilt program, and 4) better overall organization of the 2nd floor, supporting general reading, flex space for events and more seating (note however that even less area will be devoted to general reading books).

Charge 4: Online-degree programs

• **Background:**
  There has been an increasing trend over time of online-degree program offerings at peer institutions, and VU is also expected to launch more online-degree programs in the future. Due to the COVID pandemic, this trend has been accelerating. Although VU is still at the early stage of offering online-degree programs, the Faculty Senate should evaluate the potential impact of these programs on both the faculty and the schools.

• **Goals:**
  (1) Understand the status of online programs offered at VU.
  (2) Identify potential areas of concerns regarding how online-degree programs would impact the faculty and schools.
  (3) Address these concerns if they are within the Senate role.

• **Actions:**
  (1) The committee collected data for online-degree programs offered at VU.
  (2) Vanessa Beasley (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of Residential Faculty), Olivia Kew-Fickus (Assistant Provost, Executive Director of the Office for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness), and Bart Quinet (Assistant Provost and University Registrar) were invited to the APS Committee meeting on April 2, 2021 to discuss the degree program approval process, especially focusing on online-degree programs. The committee formulated the following questions before the meeting and discussed them with the guests.
    o What is the approval process when the existing program is added with or switched to online-degree program?
    o What is the role of the Senate in the approval process mentioned above? – e.g., what would be our role for each type of process, for example, quality control?
    o How much flexibility is the VU willing to give to each college (department) regarding online- vs. on-campus programs?
    o What is the approval process for stackable certificates that turn into a degree? ("stackable certificates" mean that a student obtains multiple certificates over
How can consistency in the requirements across different schools be ensured in Step 3 of the approval process (see the attached degree approval process document)?

What is the vision of the VU on online-degree programs?

We participated in the review of a new online-degree program from the Law School, Master of Legal Studies (MLS). This is the first online-degree program that came to the Faculty Senate for consultation.

**Outcomes**

(1) We built a database for online-degree programs. The collected information included: name of degree, degree type, degree form, hosting school, year of establishment, contact person, and approval process. The major findings from the preliminary data are as follow:

   a. Online-degree programs that are currently offered or will be launched in near future include: Engineering (2), Nursing (3), Peabody (5), Law (1)
   b. Most programs (except for those at the Nursing) were established very recently (as early as 2017)
   c. Two major vendors: 2U and Brightspace
   d. Many online-degree programs are created based on existing programs and some online-degree programs are the same as on-campus programs.

(2) Our major findings through working on the charge are as follows:

   o Currently online programs are overseen at the school level.
   o Each school determines the selection of online platform/vendor.
   o Hiring of adjunct faculty for teaching online-programs is an increasing trend.
   o There is no difference in the approval process between online vs. in-person degree programs.

**Recommendations:**

There are many remaining questions/items the committee was not able to address, partly due to the early stage of having online-programs at VU. We recommend that the APS Committee continues to evaluate the potential impact of online-degree programs and considers the following:

(1) Should uniform university policies be developed regarding adding online versions of existing degree programs?
(2) Should guidelines for school-based review of online-degree programs be developed?
(3) Should there be uniform university policies for faculty compensation?
(4) What is the vendor selection process used by the schools/VU?
(5) What is the role of faculty within the department/school in online-degree programs?
(6) What are the expectations for faculty from the department/school with respect to offering online-degree programs?
(7) What should be the role of the Faculty Senate in the approval process of online-degree programs?
(8) It would be good to incorporate online-degree programs in the approval document flowchart.

Charge 5: Promotion supports for practice line faculty and tenure line faculty

- **Background:**
  In recent years, the University has introduced a number of initiatives under the umbrella of mentoring and professional development to help guide faculty toward success in their careers as practice line faculty and tenure line faculty. There is some concern about the possible unevenness of how these resources are developed and made available across different units of the university (schools, departments and institutes) and across different tracks (tenure track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, research and clinical faculty in the medical school and so forth).

- **Goals:**
  The goal is to gain a better understanding of the goals and implementation of mentoring and professional development by various units of the university. Some of questions we have tried to find answers are as follows:
  - What is the relationship between mentoring and professional development and outcomes such as merit raises, tenure and promotion or prospects for contract renewal?
  - What are the core elements of existing mentoring and professional development plans currently in place?
  - What are the key differences in the form that these programs take or should take across disciplines, department, schools and type of appointment? What are best practices?
  - How do we know if these plans are meeting the goals of the faculty, mentors, and university administrators that are involved in their development, implementation and use?

- **Actions:**
  - The committee is attempting to get a sense of the processes in place across the university. There are many explicit policies across the departments that detail the policies for advancement. However, there are fewer written documents outlining mentoring practices to help faculty navigate these policies. This charge focuses on mentoring policies and practices rather than policies that outline what is required for advancement.
The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) has recently created a “Program in Career Development” which is an A&S wide professional development and mentoring program for tenure track faculty. See: https://as.vanderbilt.edu/faculty/pcd.php

Separately, and prior to this, the CAS recommended and encouraged mentoring at the department level.

Economics, for example, has a formal mentoring plan in place where two senior faculty mentor each tenure-track faculty member. There is not non-tenure track counterpart within the economics department.

We are still exploring the scope of these programs in the CAS and across other units of the university. Specific to that point, the committee (which has CAS, School of Engineering and Owen Management representation) is seeking medical school representation to better understand these processes in that setting.

Outcomes and/or recommendations
At this time there are not specific outcomes and recommendations as more information needs to be gathered through engagement with faculty and administration.

Charge 6: Centers and institutes and interdisciplinary degree

Background:
After examination of the original, broad charge of “Best practices for interdisciplinary program faculty review committees,” the charge was redefined into two subcharges: (1) Interdisciplinary Graduate Degrees (MS, PhD) and (2) Centers and Institutes. It was further decided to focus first on the Interdisciplinary Graduate Degrees and table the subcharge on best practices for Centers and Institutes.

Goals:
Interdisciplinary Graduate Degrees
(1) Determine the extent of use of the Individualized Programs degree path by the graduate student population since its inception (including the names of the degrees conferred) and determine the number of graduate students currently enrolled in this degree path.
(2) Understand the criteria, processes, and oversight associated with the individualized Programs degree path.

Actions:
Interdisciplinary Graduate Degrees
(1) Vice Provost Olivia Kew-Fickus from the Provost’s Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) was contacted to obtain an inventory of the PhD and MS degrees
granted under the Graduate School Individualized, Interdisciplinary Programs degree path and the following data was requested:

1. Student name
2. Year degree conferred
3. Committee members and their home departments
4. Title of the dissertation/thesis
5. Subject areas listed as the disciplines involved.

- **Outcomes:**
  - **Interdisciplinary Graduate Degrees**
    Vice Provost Kew-Fickus recommended APS work directly with the Graduate School to obtain the requested information. Discussions with the Graduate School are on-going.

- **Recommendations:**
  We recommend that the APS Committee continues the task of gathering data to learn about the best practices within our existing interdisciplinary programs, across the University and develop relationships with the Graduate School to provide assistance in the continuous improvement of our existing programs.

**Charge 7: Reviewing structures for communicating university wide messaging to faculty**

- **Background:**
  This charge was presented to the APS committee this year due to concerns that academic policies and the calendar were undergoing rapid changes due to the COVID Pandemic and VUMC-employed faculty were not receiving notifications that pertain to their faculty roles through the VU administration in a timely manner.

- **Goals:**
  Identify potential mechanisms to increase communication between VU (especially the administration) and VUMC-employed faculty. Secondarily request implementation of those mechanisms with the help of IT and the administration.

- **Actions:**
  The APS committee discussed some possible ways to remedy this concern of our faculty. 1) Faculty Senate could forward emails to VUMC-employed faculty. 2) A list serve could be created for faculty to ‘opt in’ to receiving these forwarded emails (could IT help create that opt in list serve?). 3) The administration could be to email VUMC employed faculty (using their vu.edu email) at the same time as VU-employed faculty. These ideas were brought to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate. From there, the EC discussed some options with the IT department and VC Lutz and the Faculty Senate team, including Stacey McCarty.
Outcomes and/or recommendations:
In the end, the VU administration utilized the deans of the School of Medicine, the Office of Research and the myVU to get messages out in a timely manner. Several times over the course of the year Dean Raiford and VP George have timed releases of new important information appropriately. The list serve does not seem to be necessary at this time. There are some ongoing IT issues that have emerged because of the VU and VUMC split but these will take some time and the EC is aware of these issues and has notes from meetings with VC Lutz in the Spring of 2021 summarizing the greatness challenges ahead.

Charge 8: Time between classes and evaluate school calendar

- **Background:**
  This charge was carried over to this academic year (AY) by recommendation of the APS Committee in AY 2019 – 2020 (for details, see the APS final report in AY 2019-2020).

- **Goals:**
  Reviewing the impact of increasing time between classes on students and faculty life as well as the University Calendar.

- **Actions:**
  We contacted Bart P. Quinet (Assistant Provost and University Registrar) to invite him to an APS Committee Meeting to discuss potential issues related to increasing the time between classes and the University Calendar. He agreed to attend one of upcoming APS Committee Meetings.

- **Outcomes/Recommendations:**
  - The Committee discussed that it is too early to evaluate the time between classes and fully discuss this charge at this point. The committee decided not to invite Bart Quinet this spring and postpone the invitation until Fall.

Suggestions for Future Charges/Actions

**Suggestion: New degree program**

- The Program Notice of Intent (PNOI) process through the Provost’s office is expected to move to an online submission process. We recommend connecting with Vanessa Beasley in the Fall of 2021 to determine if the Provost’s office has created the online forms/process.
Suggestion: Library

- Develop a small working group within the Senate along with interested faculty and students outside of the Senate to explore data mining models for collection management. This working group should engage directly with the University level committee on libraries, currently chaired by Professor David Lewis.
- Help the library leadership engage constituencies across the University to collaborate on specific facets of the collection that pose the greatest challenges.

Suggestion: Bookstore

- It is important for faculty to realize that course adoptions for the summer and fall will have to be done via email (adoptions@vanderbilt.edu), because the Follett system cannot be integrated with VU systems until the Barnes and Noble contract ends. The APS committee should monitor messaging on this issue and add to it, as necessary.
- Maintain communication among the Faculty Senate/APS committee, VU Business Services, and bookstore operators on issues related to faculty and community services.

Suggestion: Online-degree programs

- To prepare for an increasing trend of online-degree program offerings at peer institutions, we recommend that the APS Committee continues to collect data for online-degree programs offered at VU and peer institutions, and evaluate the potential impact of online-degree programs on the faculty and schools.

Suggestion: Promotion supports for practice line faculty and tenure line faculty

- The APS should seek to compile a report of the mentoring and professional development processes already available to faculty across schools and departments with a focus on the comparison of the processes in tenure track and non-tenure track faculty.
- The APS should engage both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty to gauge how these practices are implemented across programs, assess what is working and identify opportunities for improvement.
- The APS should engage administrators, beginning with Jermaine Soto, who develop and oversee these programs and faculty who engage in these programs with the goal of creating best practice guidelines based on experiences with the programs and processes that already exist.

Suggestion: Centers and Institutes and Interdisciplinary Degree

- We recommend that the APS Committee continues the task of gathering data to learn about the best practices within our existing interdisciplinary programs across the University and develop relationships with the Graduate School to aid in the continuous improvement of our existing programs.
Suggestion: Reviewing structures for communicating university wide messaging to faculty
  • Survey (formally or informally) VUMC employed faculty after the COVID Pandemic has passed to determine if they feel communication between VU administration and VUMC employed faculty is timely enough for them to participate in the academic mission of VU.
  • Follow up with VU IT about other changes ahead as it pertains to Info Security and accessibility on campus

Suggestion: Time between classes and evaluate school calendar
  • The APS recommends that this charge be carried over to AY of 2021 – 2022.