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Faculty Meeting Minutes - December 5, 2019

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Faculty Meeting Minutes - December 5, 2019

Abstract

Minutes of the Gettysburg College Faculty Business Meeting, December 5, 2018.

Minutes of the Gettysburg College Faculty
December 5, 2019
Mara Auditorium
Business Meeting
(Quorum 101; Attendance 104)

President Robert Iuliano called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

He noted that two students, Benjamin Pontz, of *The Gettysburgian*, and Patrick McKenna, from Senate, were in attendance.

A quorum count succeeded.

Minutes for the meeting of November 7 were approved as submitted.

President Iuliano began his report by noting that a group of college counselors with whom he has recently met cited the college as having a strong reputation for academic rigor. He then reported the appointment of Tres Mullis as Vice President for Development, Alumni, and Parent Relations. He now serves in a senior development role at Washington and Lee University. He is a parent of one of our currently enrolled students.

The Forward Thinking Group recently met with him to discuss, among other matters, the response of the college to the demographic challenges confronting higher education. The steps we are taking to address them will be the focus of a faculty meeting scheduled for January 30, one that has been added to the calendar.

Since we will of necessity become less tuition-dependent than we have been, he has had conversations—encouraging ones—with several foundations that want to support liberal education

In his report, Provost Christopher Zappe advised of the need for faculty members to be mindful of licensure and copyright issues in the production of web projects by their classes. Last month we received a demand for payment for the use of an image that a student mistakenly believed could be used under fair use guidelines. He reminded the faculty of the importance of paying attention to citation requirements; the library is working on a document intended to help member of the community avoid problematic situations. He was pleased to find that over ninety percent of our graduating students have taken the survey administered through the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium, on how satisfied they are with their education. On most measures, we did well in comparison to peer institutions. Students described themselves as highly satisfied with their relationships with the faculty, course selection, opportunities to do oral presentations, their readiness to take their next steps in life, diversity, extra-curricular activities, preparation for employment, and possibilities for community service. They report being satisfied with campus life and facilities. But where eighty-seven percent of students at peer schools were satisfied with major advising, only eighty percent of ours were. We also did not rank as well as peers on two other measures, participation in religious groups and working with faculty on research.

The president then called upon Dean Wertzberger to discuss textbook costs and the emerging option of open source alternatives. She began her presentation by noting that she knows of many faculty members who are concerned about a growing problem, and, as a meeting with students from last March indicated, students are as well. She displayed a graph indicating that while textbooks have not risen as dramatically in price over the past twenty years as have hospital costs, the rise has outpaced that of college tuition. A survey from Florida reveals the consequence: increases in dropped courses, the avoidance of some classes, students not purchasing required texts. Sixty percent of students reported that they had not bought at least one book because of pricing. In response, some schools have developed programs to encourage faculty members to reduce the costs students face. While some students indicated a willingness to pay up to fifty dollars per course for texts, most considered themselves strained when prices rise above forty.

Perhaps the most feasible solution lies in Open Educational Resources, which are free and available on-line. They range from brief articles to complete texts. With their family incomes often less than twenty thousand dollars, students eligible for Pell Grants—eighteen percent of our student body, and one hundred forty-eight members of the first year class—are especially appreciative of the savings afforded by this option. As this particular challenge is likely to intensify over the coming years, the college is developing a strategy to respond appropriately, one that takes advantage of these resources. She noted benefits to those faculty members who make use of them, including the fact that they are free of copyright restrictions and are adaptable to individual needs. She then noted steps that the faculty can take to minimize the costs of their courses. It would help, first of all, for people to look up the cost of texts, share estimates in advance with students, and order everything from the college bookstore. She urged colleagues to talk with one another and compare experiences with different systems, and also to be sure that costs of courses are relatively constant across sections. She recommended a site from the University of Minnesota that reviews available resources, and advised that librarians can do some of the research that would go into an informed decision about whether and how to use them. She noted that one way of indicating interest in these resources would be through going to an electronic form that she has posted and initiating a conversation about options.

President Iuliano then asked for consideration of the motion that the Academic Policy and Program Committee brought at the meeting of November 21:

Beginning in January 2020, students may elect to pursue a minor in Data Science. The minor will be administered within the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies.

He asked Professors Kennedy and Portmess to lead the discussion. After Professor Portmess reviewed the proposal, Professor Campbell Hetrick, speaking as chair of the Faculty Finance Committee, reported that it has taken a second look at it, and has reiterated its support for it: the minor will bring new opportunities for revenue to the college, and can run within our budget. Professor Cushing-Daniels shared his reservations about its likely impact. Of twenty-five proposed electives, eleven now in the curriculum are regularly full, another has not been offered during the past five years, and one will be a new course. As instructors will have the discretion to admit students who have not met prerequisites into courses they teach as part of the minor, enrollment pressures will be all the greater. He indicated concerns about the impact of prerequisites, especially on students majoring in fields in which statistics is not already a required course: a history major, for example, might find that what is designed to be a six course minor is in reality an eight course one. He urged that a decision be delayed until such variables could be included in projected expenses.

Professor Campbell advised that the estimated annual cost of the minor is thirty thousand dollars. The finance committee does not have sufficient information to tell where students will go, but the provost has identified those courses most likely to draw high enrollments, and the committee's analysis includes the cost of staffing them.

After President Iuliano called for a vote, Professor Cushing-Daniels moved to postpone it. Professor Kennedy pointed out that a statistics requirement is one of the six courses of the minor, which is thus unlikely to entail eight courses. Professor Glass asked about the goal of postponing a vote. Professor Cushing-Daniels said that he believes we should know more about actual costs; the current estimate is not robust enough. What will it cost to accommodate students in courses that are already at capacity?

The motion to postpone failed, fifty-two in favor of it, seventy-eight opposed, with eight recorded abstentions.

The president called for comments on the motion.

Professor Portmess reflected on various initiatives in which she has been involved. Worries about meeting needs typically surface as programs begin. But they develop in unforeseen ways; predicted needs don't always materialize, while unanticipated ones come up. It often takes several years for student interest in something new to the curriculum to catch on. Once it does, momentum can build quickly. If over the long term excitement can have a catalytic effect, it also means that costs are hard to gauge at the time a new program is added.

Professor Kaempfer had two questions that he wished to stress were not rhetorical ones. First, is the proposed program genuinely interdisciplinary? Second, is it to be a pre-professional one, or a liberal arts one?

Describing herself as supportive of the motion, Professor Reyes said she nonetheless worries about the impact it will have on students who need courses that are going to be under added enrollment pressures. How will such students complete degree requirements when they face the risk of being unable to take classes they need in a timely fashion?

President Iuliano called for a vote on the motion.

It passed, ninety-nine in favor, thirty opposed, and twelve recorded abstentions.

The president thanked the many people who worked to develop the minor.

He then commended Elizabeth Diehl for her contribution as Interim Vice President for Development, Alumni, and Parent Relations. His thanks were echoed in a round of applause for her work.

President Iuliano adjourned the meeting at 4:52 pm.

Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leonard S. Goldberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Leonard S. Goldberg
Faculty Secretary