

COLLEGE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
3:30 p.m., Monday, 10 April 2006
5208 Social Science

1. Announcements and Questions.

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. Dean Sandefur announced that he was seeking nominations to elect a member of the faculty to the L&S APC, to fill one of the two seats designated for the Social Sciences, and asked that nominations be directed to himself or to Associate Dean Chuck Halaby.

2. A motion to approve the minutes of the L&S Faculty Senate meeting held 11 April 2005 was approved.

3. A motion to file the Annual Report of the Academic Planning Council, 2004-2005 was approved.

4. Annual Report of the Faculty Honors Committee, 2004-2005

Professor Chris Kleinhenz (French & Italian), Faculty Director of the Honors Program, presented the report of the Faculty Honors Committee. He noted a few items of particular interest. The program hopes to find a new home at the Washburn Observatory. The program, which sponsors two highly-regarded undergraduate journals, also recently sponsored a conference on political trauma and restoration. Finally, he noted that the Honors program sponsors an honors-level study-abroad program in Florence, which is a unique opportunity for students to continue their participation in Honors while they are abroad. A motion to accept the report passed.

5. Annual Report of the Curriculum Committee, 2004-2005

Professor Russell Shafer-Landau (Philosophy), the 2005-2006 Chair of the Committee presented the report. He noted that, in addition to the committee's usual pursuits as they relate to course approvals and approval of revisions to existing academic programs, the committee spend considerable time and attention on matters related to the implementation of revisions to the L&S BA/BS degree requirements which were approved last year. In addition, the committee formally installed the Disability Curricular Accommodation Committee as a subcommittee of the L&S Curriculum Committee. A motion to accept the report passed.

6. Discussion Item: Supporting Education in the Liberal Arts and Sciences

Dean Sandefur noted that the topic of promoting liberal education in the arts and sciences has been receiving a lot of national attention. UW-Madison and UW System institutions are participating in a ten-year effort sponsored by the American Association of Colleges

and Universities (AAC&U) called “Liberal Education: America’s Promise”. Professor Jolanda Vanderwal-Taylor (German), who serves as one of UW-Madison’s representatives to the UW System project, led a discussion of LEAP, noting the following:

- While L&S is clearly be the leader in this initiative, liberal education can and should appear across all UW-Madison schools and colleges.
- The role and value of liberal education seems to be poorly understood; however, AAC&U evidence suggests that employers want employees to have critical thinking, oral and written communication, problem solving, and other skills fostered by liberal education.
- Students confuse “studying a major” with job training; LEAP seeks to change that.
- Although the term “liberal education” as an educational philosophy has a long history, more recently that term is misunderstood as one that espouses a particular political view. LEAP seeks to emphasize that “liberal” education refers to a broad education, with subjects of study freely chosen from among a wide variety of materials.
- LEAP-related projects are under way in the UW System. UW-Oshkosh asks instructors to include statements about courses’ contributions to liberal education on the syllabus, which emphasizes that courses do not merely convey particular content, but that the content itself resides participates in a broader disciplinary perspective.

Several issues were discussed:

- In reaching out to students, UW-Madison should reach out particularly to first-year students (e.g., by working with First-Year Interest Groups). Advisors should be encouraged to communicate with students about liberal education.
- L&S Career Services and similar units could help students gauge the skills they’ve acquired, and how broad learning in the classroom applies to their work lives.
- The value of liberal education may be particularly challenging for students who are resistant to the completion of breadth beyond the major.
- The liberal education students attain in L&S may not always be a choice explicitly made by students who enter the college after attempting other programs. L&S may need to work to develop a “certain esprit” for seeking a degree in the Liberal Arts and Sciences.
- Lew Friedland (Journalism) noted that students who complete portfolio projects accumulate a record of experience that reflects what they have learned and provides opportunities for students to “see the utility of the experience, and give them something literally that they could carry forward” as evidence of the connections they have made.
- Statements on syllabi help professors articulate their understanding of what a particular course contributes to the broader discipline. One senator noted that this type of “branding” marks explicitly what it is that a particular course offers. When asked whether members of the faculty might consider adding such statements to their syllabi, several indicated that they would be willing to do so.

Dean Sandefur and the members present thanked Professor Taylor for her efforts, and invited her to return to provide updates on LEAP activity. In conclusion, Dean Sandefur noted that L&S must play a role in this important work, and that the faculty in the college do this work well. Although the college only has 33% of the faculty, L&S confers more than half the degrees awarded by UW-Madison, and L&S departments and programs teach over 60% of all the student credit hours. He noted the excellence of the faculty, citing the prominence of L&S faculty and staff in winning Hilldale awards, Chancellor's teaching awards, Sloan Fellowships, and Kellett Mid Career awards; in addition, he cited well ranked departments both in our national ranking systems (*US News*) as well as in the newly-developed Chinese survey of 100 best world universities, in which UW-Madison is ranked the 16th best university in the world.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Submitted by:

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Assistant Dean

Academic Planning, Program Review, and Assessment of Student Learning

Secretary, L&S Faculty Senate