

Minutes of the Academic Affairs Committee
April 25, 2017

Present: Fernando Gouvea, Sahan Dissanayake, Adrienne Carmack, Lisa McDaniels, Barbara Moore, Beth Schiller, Margaret McFadden, Jim Sloat, Marta Ameri, Jim Scott, Jenner Foster

I. Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved as written.

II. Consent agenda: Course Approvals

The following courses were approved:

AFAM 2XX: From Ferguson to South Africa (S,U)

AFAM 3XX: Police, Klansmen, Colonizers, and Cultures of White Power (S, I)

EN 1XX: The Environmental Imagination (W1)

GS 297: Global Displacement (S,I)

III. Scheduling Subcommittee

Discussion of the Scheduling Subcommittee's two-part proposal continued from some weeks ago. While all agreed that the chart showing the excessive clustering of courses at midday proves there is a serious problem, there was vocal objection from some committee members to the "proposed policies and guidance" section of the document, which suggests that we require larger departments to schedule a small proportion of their classes at 8 am to alleviate schedule conflicts for students at midday. We had considerable discussion of the argument that students did not learn as well early in the morning (recent research on high school start times was cited); the subcommittee acknowledged that they had discussed this extensively and were not persuaded that students learned less well at 8 am.

There was also considerable support for this proposed policy, on the principles that it was not a big "ask," that students really did face very difficult choices because of the number of courses all offered at midday, and that college is different from high school. The subcommittee sees no other choices or lessening schedule conflicts.

We also discussed the idea of offering classes during "the zone," which the subcommittee had considered extensively, but decided would just create a different and equally vexing set of problems. Further, we discussed the option of asking departments to offer more evening classes, but this too is problematic, as there are so many valuable and educational 7:00 pm events that students want to participate in.

Conversation then turned to the second part of the proposal, which recommends the creation of an Academic Schedule Subcommittee of AAC to work with the registrar to help oversee the schedule of courses and to make recommendations about changes to the schedule. This proposal met with general support, with the suggestion that having two students would be preferable to one. There was also a sense that a standing committee would have the time to meet with departments to become fully informed about what is actually possible and to recommend changes like moving early courses to 8:30 over time.

The proposal was approved by majority vote, with two votes against. Those two votes register objections to the 8 am proposal, not to the proposal as a whole.

