

Academic Affairs Committee—February 13, 2018

Present: Sandy Maisel, Loren McClenahan, Steve Saunders, David Freidenreich, Sam Scott, Jacob Adner, Beth Schiller, Barbara Moore, Adrienne Carmack, Russ Johnson, Jim Sloat, Dale Kocevski,

I. After a brief discussion, the minutes from the January 16, 2017 meeting were approved.

II. Consent agenda: two course proposals were approved

A. English 2xx (Introduction to Creative Writing)

B. History 111 (Europe from the Classical World to the Religious Wars)

III. Final Exam Schedule

Beth and Russ provided a short report on the feasibility of offering a “mixed-block” final exam schedule, composed of some 4.5 hour blocks and some 3 hour blocks. During the 2017 fall semester, 8 out of 17 exam blocks contained at least one exam that needed a 4.5 hour block. In the current spring semester the number is only 4 blocks. Given the many variables at play and the likely variation between semesters in the need for 4.5 hour blocks, the majority of the committee agreed that we should not attempt to implement a mixed block schedule at this time.

IV. Report on Grading for the March Faculty Meeting

This discussion began by revisiting the question of whether to create grading guidelines with only definitions of the letter grades, or to generate more specific guidelines also defining each + and – level of every grade. The discussion centered around two different proposed frameworks: a simpler one (included in the minutes of the January 16, 2017 meeting) and a more detailed one circulated by David. After considerable discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each framework, a motion was made to move forward with the shorter grading guidelines (while leaving open the possibility of additional wordsmithing at the next meeting). The motion passed with two members opposing.

The committee’s goal at this point is to present a “package” of information about grading at the March faculty meeting. The package will include background information showing the recent (upward) grading trends and the stark differences between departments and programs, followed by recommendations (such as the adoption of grading guidelines). At our next meeting, we will work on the details of exactly what information to present, and we will work toward finalizing the grading guidelines.