

Minutes of October 4, 2013 A & S RAC Meeting and Next Steps

The Arts & Sciences Regents Advisory Committee (A & S RAC) met on the campus of Middle Georgia State College on October 4, 2013. The meeting began at 10 AM with Chair Chuck Kutal (UGA) welcoming the attendees and asking each to introduce him/herself. The first main order of business focused on several procedural matters.

- The A & S RAC bylaws are out of date. Specifically, they do not reflect (1) the consolidation/renaming of several institutions within the University System, and (2) the new groupings of institutions as Research Universities, Comprehensive Universities, State Universities, or State Colleges. It was suggested that an *ad hoc* subcommittee be formed to revise the bylaws and submit the draft revision for approval by the entire committee. **If you are interested in serving on this subcommittee, please contact Chuck Kutal (ckutal@uga.edu).**
- After the revised bylaws have been approved, an election for members to the Executive Committee will occur. A new Chair and one representative from each of the four categories will be elected. Details of the how the election will be conducted will be spelled out in the revised bylaws.
- The A & S RAC is asked on occasion to provide an opinion on the suitability of a course/program proposal that has been submitted to the University System by one of its institutions. The suggestion was made to create a standing subcommittee for reviewing these types of proposals. **If you are interested in serving on this subcommittee, please contact Chuck Kutal (ckutal@uga.edu).**

Discussion then turned to the relationship of the A & S RAC and the A & S committee associated with EPAAC (Educator Preparation Academic Advisory Committee, which brings together Deans of Education and A & S to discuss issues related to K-12 teacher preparation.). There is considerable overlap of the A & S membership on these two committees, so it was suggested to schedule a RAC meeting during one or both of the semi-annual EPAAC meetings. It was decided to try this consolidated meeting format for the Spring 2014 EPAAC meeting to be held next March. More details will be forthcoming as planning proceeds.

The trend toward offering more online courses provoked considerable discussion. The group was asked to provide guidance on the proliferation of online degrees and their relationship to eMajor and eCore. The rigor of online science courses with labs was debated. Questions were raised about how to measure the quality of online courses, and it was noted that some institutions use Quality Matters as a formal assessment tool. To what extent should students be awarded credit for competency-based knowledge? Many of these topics will be considered at the USG *New Models: MOOCs and Beyond* symposium to be held November 6 at Georgia Tech.

Houston Davis, Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer of the University System, joined the meeting. He had been attending the meeting of the System Presidents on another part of the campus and was gracious in taking time to interact with our group. He provided a useful overview of several topics of current interest and importance to the System. What follows is a capsule summary of his remarks.

- Complete College Georgia is an important initiative to increase the retention/completion percentages at System schools. While that is the common goal, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for accomplishing it.
- The recent request by the System for information about programs with low numbers of majors and graduates is only one part of the process for assessing performance. Some programs with low numbers are important to the identity and mission of an institution by, for example, generating a large number of credit hours in core courses.
- Evaluation of new programs needs to be separate from reviews of existing programs.
- Task forces are examining the issue of learning support, which will vary among institutions. Access to higher education must continue to be a core value of the System.
- Symposium on November 6 to discuss New Models will consider the many opportunities and challenges related to online learning. How can online learning be brought to scale? What is the fiscal model? How is faculty workload defined?
- There likely will be further consolidations of System institutions.

Houston then responded to questions.

- Faculty/staff salary raises is a top priority for the Board of Regents.
- Funds have been requested to close the gap between the ORP and TRS retirement plans.
- There is no consideration being given by the Regents to eliminating tenure.

With that, the group thanked Houston for his insightful and candid responses.

Following a summary of next steps to be taken with regard to subcommittee formation and Executive Committee election, the meeting was adjourned at 1 PM.

Minutes recorded by Kelly McCoy
 Reviewed and edited for brevity by Chuck Kutal