

Departmental Committee Meeting Minutes

19 September 2014

Attendees: Chris Justice, Vivre Bell, Katie Holland Doyle, Ron Luna, Rachel Berndtson, Kristen Bergery, Tatiana Loboda, Julie Silva, Paul Torrens, Giovanni Baiocchi, Klaus Hubacek, Eric Kasischke, Louis Giglio, Shunlin Liang, Martha Geores, George Hurtt, Meei Ma, Bob Crossgrove, Rachel Moore-Marks, Ralph Dubuyah, Jack Ma, Laixiang Sun, Naijun Zhou, Konstantinos Chalvatzis, Fengming Hui, Rubio Han, Xi Li, Cristina Sarasa, Zhen Song, Weixiz Yin, Tetsuki Tanaka, Alice Alstatt, Elle Lim.

1. Introductions of new faculty and staff

2. Recent Developments and Chair's Updates

- Accept previous meeting minutes and approval of agenda
- GEDI was awarded over the summer
- Currently interviewing for the new GIS Center, developing GIS courses, establishing Department renovation requirements to accommodate Center
- HPC hire – search in progress, interviews are in the near future
- Lyterati officially in place – replacing FAR – will be released in October
 - Keep CVs updated, complaints should go to Liz Smith (committee member)
- Richard Moss JGCRI – hire currently stalled in ORA
- Chair's Council meetings are off to a good start
- Time sheets/effort reports must be signed off and approved in timely manner, lots of push from BSOS, give more attention to teaching evaluations as well
- State budget cuts on the horizon – discussion of immediate 2% cut, as campus is struggling, looking for ways to bring in additional funds
- New BSOS Dean (Ball) – welcome reception October 8
 - Attendees asked to reaffirm the Dept. is in need of more funding (different from grants) in spite of our success
- Brue James is retiring soon, Wendy Whitmore, too, a year from now
 - Big loss for ENSP program

3. Associate Chair Issues – Dubayah, Berndtson

- Spreadsheet displaying past and current course load/schedule is a result of May 2014 retreat discussion
 - Buy-outs and course releases
 - Discuss with your research coordinator to gauge where you stand
 - You will be responsible for finding teaching replacements if request buyout after the deadline. This will also require Associate Chair's approval
- Thanks to those who posted their syllabi, or at minimum their course instance, on the web

- Those who haven't yet done so, should post ASAP or send an email to Dubayah explaining why you haven't, or plan not to do so
- We try to accommodate class-scheduling requests, but this doesn't mean everyone will be satisfied
 - Trying to establish set schedules at least 1 year in advance
- Implementing 2+1
- Final note: Try to follow our chain of command – if you've an issue with a student, for example, go to Graduate or Undergraduate Director first then Associate Chair.

4. Undergraduate Committee Tasks and Status Report – Loboda

- First meeting first week of classes
 - 3 objectives:
 - Streamline the curriculum with new minors and concentrations
 - Discussing how to grow our number of majors
 - Tapping into potential/future students in local high schools (e.g. Anne Arundel)
 - Ensure
 - Geography Awareness Day: 19 November
 - Possible Department open house
 - Asking faculty and graduate students to the open labs, offer tour to high school students, Hartwick building, too
 - Keynote speaker
 - Torrens and Ma are creating an agenda
- ACTION** – post event to website [HOLLAND DOYLE]
- Current increase in demand for tech courses
 - Undergrad program is properly maintained
 - K. Russell is satisfied with current number of majors
 - We will continue to increase our major numbers, but TA numbers are disproportionate
 - Money for additional TAs?
 - College is starting to pay attention to quality online courses
 - Try to attract out of state and/or international (high school) students

5. Undergraduate Director Academic Issues – Luna

- Recap: last spring we graduated a record number of students (72), but problem is recruiting to maintain these numbers
 - Need to encourage non GEOG majors to make the switch
 - Recruit in high schools
- Dept. numbers disproportionate to University:
 - 260 majors (GEOG) vs. 208 (BSOS)
 - Why such a gap?
 - Military duty, study abroad, not registering, not changing majors yet, etc.
 - Despite this, BSOS is pleased with our numbers/effort, although we don't get money for each major

- All students are required to choose a track:
 - Development and Sustainability or Environmental Systems
- We are encouraged to further diversify the Dept., especially the GIS program, which could use more women and ethnicities
- GEOG is second largest minor in BSOS at 99 (or 68, according to BSOS)
- Lack of TAs since we don't pay enough – lack of incentive to attract outstanding undergraduate students/TAs – still short of TAs
 - We need to decide which classes really need TAs, and how to compensate them
 - Should we start reducing class sizes to balance the ratio? Or change the composition of a class (e.g. no discussion sessions)?
 - TA training – maybe offer a two-week summer training workshop
 - Can't afford to turn away students, which is happening, due to a lack of help/overloaded
 - We need roughly 20 total (under and grad) TAs for each year
 - Either teach course that don't require TAs, or find the funds to hire additional
 - Number of undergraduate TAs dependent on seats filled in course, since this is known last minute, effects quality of students selected as TAs.
 - Issues with undergraduate TAs showing up in student evaluations.
- ACTION:** Discuss at next Undergraduate Committee meeting [Loboda]
- Extra Dept. Enrollment Programs – Freshman Connection, Summer, Winter – surpassed what we expected (567 students)
 - High demand via word of mouth

6. Graduate Committee Tasks and Status Report – Sun

- Issues:
 - Short list for fellowship applicants (we can only nominate one or two)
 - Admission for standard master's students, which is compatible with our design strategy, but we want to keep openness to exceptional master's students (case by case basis)
 - Masters students must be fully funded
 - Make sure there is an advisor or co-sponsor
 - Qualified – must get approval from Graduate Director (Liang)
 - We must be careful not to limit the applicant pool – if an applicant can fund themselves, allow them into the program
 - PAC: Often students are not passing PACs as some committee members are requiring them to take additional courses
 - Shall we make a certain number of credits mandatory? Is the current PAC policy adequate?
 - Standard (should be): is the student sufficiently skilled to write and defend a dissertation/proposal?
 - Currently no consistent ruling across PACs as there are different expectations cast by faculty, which also varies from student to student
 - Perhaps we should have PACs each semester? (For those who do not pass their PAC at the beginning of the year. If they fail twice, out of program.)

ACTION: Make sure students turn in portfolios *at least 2 weeks before*, to give professors time to read their proposals [EVERYONE/ALL ADVISORS]

ACTION: Graduate Committee should instate ruling – if students are sub-par, time to exit the program

ACTION: Initiate a *mandatory* research conference in the fall – during Geography Awareness week? [GRAD STUDENTS]

- Graduate outcome assessment report due in November

ACTION: Last year's report provided to Sun as example - CROSSGROVE

- Open House at the end of February

7. Graduate Director Academic Issues – Liang

- Modify strategic plan – due Oct. 1

ACTION: Need to circulate to faculty before due date – [LIANG]

- Important to let Advisors know if PhD students are failing benchmarks
- Departmental climate and student stress
 - Student depression is becoming an issue – have had more than one case
 - Tom Ruggieri, Health Center can meet with faculty to provide counseling about what to look for and how they can help
 - Concern that enforcing the rules will provide more stress
 - Uncertainty can cause stress so clarifying the rules could help
 - Climate Survey could be useful
 - Important to frame it as what would make things better rather than just what is wrong

ACTION: Silva to send Liang example survey from other universities. Liang to modify as appropriate and send out. [SILVA and LIANG]

- Students are not filling out independent study forms
 - Required
 - Propose one week to turn in form or automatically kicked out of class
 - Copy of final report for independent study must be filed with department.

ACTION: Faculty review rosters and notify independent study students of form requirement [ALL FACULTY]

- Regarding the incoming cohort, careful not to pressure
 - Inspiration vs. intimidation

8. Research Director Issues – Hurtt

- Landscape developments: DOE and other Federal entities are being restructured, which effects Dept.
 - Joint Global Carbon Center – recently energized by awards (GEDI/LIDAR)
- We're formalizing partnership with Goddard, solidify vision of capitalizing on major awards
- Growing student participation (via fellowships):
 - 3 currently, 5 expected next year
 - Spend most of their time at Goddard
- Planning a social event at the end of the semester focused on the Joint Center, renewing vision and focus – how do we move forward?

- SESYNC passed its early review – doing well – expanding to provide more than workshops
- Trying to re-new Human Dimensions of Global Change
 - preparing vision report for Dean Ball
- Research faculty numbers continue to grow
 - Hurtt is getting a sense of the research climate from researchers point of view
 - Holding meeting with all
- FRA Titles – University is on verge of formalizing new titles, which will be adopted by Dept., so we are awaiting decision before implementing new titles

9. Diversity Task Force – Hansen – Silva

- Ideas that we want to pursue

10. GIS Center Update – Torrens

- Interviews going well, identifying good people, one in particular is already reaching out to Dept. members
 - Constrained by resources, began with a deficit
 - How can we raise money?
- ACTION:** Website article to advertise/raise funding [HOLLAND DOYLE]
- Meeting with VPR about center resources soon
 - We received our first big grant that mentions the GIS center – 2.6 million w/ START
 - Initiatives:
 - Motion capture studio –
 - remote sensing meets dancing – high cost, but we have the “know how”
 - Anne Arundel high school – organize meeting of minds w/ high school
 - Empower initiative bubbled up to Dean, submitting proposal soon
 - Courses – attempting to offer a set of three minors
 - Social science certificate (10 credits)?
 - Use money to fund GIS center
 - Gimple – teaching advanced GIS courses in the spring
 - Human environment side – students looking for GIS courses
 - Ruibo is offering course on GIS in spring, repackage as short course during summer
 - Synergy going on with MPS/GIS, GIS Center PHD students can provide MPS/GIS with TAs

11. Merit Committee Task Force – Hubacek

- Charged to look at review process problems from last year
 - Criteria for rating – reviewing guidelines and expectations of different ranks regarding publications, service and teaching
 - Cover letter and one page CV like last year?
 - Overhaul due to lack of clarity?
 - For research faculty merit – Hurtt and Giglio to coordinate same standards for each committee

- Service requirements between T/TT and research faculty
 - Relative performance vs. absolute number of publications
 - Should it be obligatory to publish?

12. Departmental Website – Justice

- Increased attention on website, so it's important to keep news and features items fresh
- Make a distinction between Feature and New items:
 - Feature items should highlight major recent accomplishments or events involving members of the Department that will be of interest to the University Community, our Students, Peers and the General Public and that highlight what we do (research, education, service, awards) and show us to be an outstanding Department
 - News and Events are more focused on accomplishments and upcoming-events of interest to the Department members (faculty, students) and our colleagues on and off campus, and can include papers published in lower tier journals, workshops attended, presentations, visitors, etc.
- BSOS wants us to start doing interviews with people who publish research and post to website

13. Other Business

- Senate report (Geores):
 - APT – how do you count leave? (stop the clock)
 - Include diversity at every stage of teaching
 - Undergrads requested to have a vote at University level – wasn't passed
- Smart Center issues continue
 - If you've any complaints, talk to Vivre Bell, provide evidence, Chris Justice will take case to college

14. Upcoming Dates:

- October 24th 9:30 – 12:30 pm Career Day
- October 31st Departmental Committee Meeting
- December 5th Departmental Committee Meeting
- December 15th – 19th AGU San Francisco
- December 21st 1:00 pm Graduation