College of Arts and Sciences
Educational Policy Committee meeting
Thursday, March 27, 2008


The meeting was called to order at approximately 4:00 pm.

I. Minutes from the February, 2008, meeting were distributed and approved.

II. David Quigley reported for the Honors subcommittee on the pending proposals for independent majors. These are from Natasha Baker, who proposes a major in Latin American Studies, and Sara Geek, who proposes a major in Irish Studies.

David reports that the subcommittee is impressed by the proposals, but does not yet believe that they are ready for approval. Natasha's current proposal needs to assure the depth and content of her program of study and what the payoff will be for her. Sara's proposal is farther along in its development, but the subcommittee wants to clarify whether Sara intends to use her program as preparation for graduate study in ethnomusicology. The subcommittee hopes to present her proposal for approval at the next meeting.

III. Reading and research/independent studies courses.

We are still waiting for requested data from Student Services

There is evidence that adherence to an understanding of the appropriate function of such courses is lacking, and their use varies widely among departments. Stuart Hecht's document outlining procedures for such courses in his department will serve as a starting point for a proposal that may be presented at the May meeting. The intent will be to ensure that the faculty member and student each commit to a detailed plan and goals for the course and it is used for an appropriate purpose.

IV. Cross and Crown.

Bill Petri leads the discussion, continuing that of a previous meeting. The current threshold for eligibility is a grade point average of A- or 3.5. This has not changed over time, while the median grade point average, which was 3.25 in 1998, is now 3.45, and has been rising for many years. Michael observes that on average our students are in fact much better now. The result is that approximately 500 student records must be reviewed by deans and then forwarded to the Honors Subcommittee in order to select 50-60 to be inducted, five to seven marshals, and a chief marshal. Raising the grade point threshold must be done with the understanding that this is a recognition of service and leadership as well as academic excellence. There are other awards and organizations that focus primarily on scholarship, notably Phi Beta Kappa. Clare describes the selection criteria and procedures for Phi Beta Kappa, which emphasizes academic achievement in depth, not only as measured by grade point average. Departments are sent the names of potential candidates and invited to suggest the most worthy among their majors. Returning to the discussion of Cross and Crown, the proposal to raise the grade point threshold to 3.6 is discussed. In response to questioning whether the new standard should be even higher than 3.6, Bill expresses the need for caution, lest deserving candidates be unjustly eliminated. Even a rise to 3.65 or 3.667 would not make a large difference. For that it would be necessary to go to 3.7. The motion to raise the standard to 3.6 is unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:35 pm.