

Minutes of University Council on Teaching
Monday, December 10, 2007
10:30-12:00 Waul House

Present

Joe Burns, Don Hafner, Chris Hepburn (Chair), Jackie Lerner, Louise Lonabocker, Paula Mathieu, Bill Petri, Virginia Reinburg, Elizabeth Rosselot, Danny Willis, Peter Wilson, and Fred Yen

Recorder of Minutes

Peter Wilson

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of November 18, 2007 were accepted

Discussion of Potential Credit-Based Graduation System

Three colleagues presented their perspectives on a credit-based system and responded to committee questions: Elizabeth Rosselot, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Registrar at the Law School; Joe Burns, Associate Academic Vice President for Undergraduate Programs, and Louise Lonabocker, Director of Student Services. Highlights from these discussions are presented below.

Elizabeth Rosselot

- Law schools in general and Boston College's Law School in particular have long used a credit based system to comply with American Bar Association (ABA) standards.
- For non-seminar courses, the ABA defines a credit as 700 classroom minutes, which at BC translates into approximately 50 minutes per week per credit hour. Seminars usually involve more outside work and credits can be awarded accordingly. For example, a 3 credit seminar that requires a term paper might meet for two hours per week.
- Credit hours do not necessarily reflect faculty or student work loads. For example, responses to course evaluations questions that address work load indicate there can be significant variation in student work loads across 3-credit courses.
- There are course requirements at the law school but also flexibility.

- The Law School uses SIS and, in particular, it can handle either a credit or course based system. Elizabeth Rosselot indicates the Law School does audits manually because they have found the SIS system is targeted for the undergraduate programs.
- The assistant deans generally determine the credits for courses.

Joe Burns

- In response to the question should BC convert to a credit-based system, Joe Burns stated the overarching question should be “What is the philosophy of what an undergraduate degree means at Boston College?”
- The primary benefit of a credit-based system, according to Joe Burns, is its flexibility. For example, it would give cache to the one credit freshman seminars (because they would count towards graduation). However, flexibility can also create a slippery slope if it is abused by departments and/or students. In particular, determining whether one-credit practical learning experiences would qualify for academic credit could become problematic.
- An issue that remains unresolved after a lengthy discussion is whether students who are currently not receiving credits for science or language labs will be allowed to take fewer courses if they begin to get credit for labs. For example, if a science student takes three labs, would they be relieved of taking an extra course?
- A second issue that remains unresolved is who determines the credits assigned to courses.

Louise Lonabocker

- Louise Lonabocker distributed a table that reported by college the credits students tend to earn by graduation. Of particular note, over 70% of the students in the School of Nursing and School of Education currently graduate with at least 120 credit hours. By contrast, approximately 45% of the students in the College of Arts and Science and School of Management currently graduate with at least 120 credit hours.

- Louise Lonabocker predicted BC would likely have to add 53 3-credit courses if all students were required to graduate with 120 credit hours. This presumes the credits for courses currently offered in Arts and Sciences and Management would not increase, which could happen if, for example, labs started receiving credit.
- Louise Lonabocker also cautioned that departments would have to offer enough 1-credit courses for students to meet graduation requirements and that additional money might be needed for special programs that benefit athletes and/or AHANA students.

TAM/TAME

Chris Hepburn, Jackie Lerner, and Virginia Reinburg agreed to serve on a sub-committee to read the TAM and TAME grant proposals.