

Report of the Academic Affairs Committee

March 29, 2006

John Peters, Chair (Group II)
Michael Gibson (Group I)
Tom Jacobs (Group III)
Joseph Oppong (Group IV)
Lea Dopson (Group V)
Rudy Rodriguez (Group VI)
Elizabeth Estherchild (Group VII)
Dennis Fisher (Group VIII)
Mary Thibodeaux (Administrative Representative)
Suzanne LaBrecque (Administrative Representative)
Joneel Harris (Administrative Representative)
Rachel Fogelman (SGA Representative)

The Academic Affairs Committee met 4 times during the academic year 2005/2006, twice in the Fall semester and twice in the Spring semester. Attending at least one of the meetings were John Peters, Michael Gibson, Lea Dopson, Rudy Rodriguez, Elizabeth Estherchild, Dennis Fisher, Mary Thibodeaux, Suzanne LaBrecque, Joneel Harris, and Rachel Fogelman.

The charges for the Academic Affairs Committee and the resulting actions taken were as follows:

Continue the discussion regarding the feasibility of an online catalog that would become the official UNT catalog.

The committee met with those working on the on-line catalogue and were given an overview of how the project would take place and what its final would likely look like. We were also given an update on the progress. It appears that the project is continuing to make significant and rapid progress in its move toward a conclusion.

Recommendation: That the Faculty Senate and Academic Affairs Committee follow up with the process to ensure that legal issues are considered regarding the various changes that are made during the updating process, that academic issues are emphasized in the construction of the catalogue, and that a system for ensuring accuracy in updating is instituted.

Follow up on the process for dealing with incomplete grades via online grading in EIS.

The committee discussed the problem of dealing with incomplete grades, particularly regarding those coursed talk by adjunct faculty, who often may have left the university long

before a particular student completes the necessary work. The committee suggested that uniform informational forms required for all instructors outlining what a particular student must do in order to complete an incomplete should be considered by all departments. We believe that this would go a long way toward solving the difficulties of incompletes.

Recommendation: That the standardized form developed by the Academic Affairs Committee in past years be presented to the appropriate administrator and be incorporated into the EIS system so that a form must be completed in order to enter a grade of incomplete.

Continue the annual review of undergraduate admission standards.

The committee discussed the annual review of undergraduate admissions standards, both for this academic year and for the previous academic year. In both years, admissions have risen, while entrance standards have also risen. In addition, retention rates have similarly risen, particularly among minority students.

Recommendation: That the undergraduate admission standards continue to be evaluated on a yearly basis and that the trends be tracked accordingly.

Monitor the agendas and minutes of the Graduate Council, and make recommendations accordingly.

The committee monitors the agendas and minutes of the Graduate Council, but we did not feel it necessary to make any specific recommendations.

Recommendation: That the Academic Affairs Committee continue to monitor the agenda and minutes of the Graduate Council so that academic decisions can be well-publicized among the members of the committees responsible for considering these issues.

Work with the Oversight Committee on the Core Curriculum to ensure that the review of the inventory of courses for appropriate core content takes place.

The committee twice discussed this issue, and Suzanne LaBrecque and others gave an overview of the challenges facing the university in reducing both the number of hours required in the core curriculum and in the total number of credit hours required for graduation. The committee made a number of suggestions of how to approach this problem and possible ways in which these reductions can be met. Possibilities such as reducing required science courses from 4 hours to 3 hours or combining more than one requirement were discussed.

Recommendation: That the Academic Affairs Committee continue to work in an advisory capacity to the Oversight Committee on the Core Curriculum.

In addition to the above charges, the issue of changing the grading system to a plus/minus system came up. In this case, the committee considered the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed change, reading relevant materials and hearing reports on the issue and considering the wishes of the student body and recommended that the current system not be changed (which also appeared to be the wish of the majority of the student population).

Recommendation: That UNT not change its current grading system.