

CALS Academic Planning Council Minutes

Meeting via Zoom

October 6, 2020, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Attendees: William Tracy (arrived 1:05pm), Nicole Perna, Jill Wildonger, Erika Anna, Xuejun Pan (arrived 1:05pm), Laura Hernandez, Jed Colquhoun, Michael Thomas, Jeremy Foltz, Rick Lindroth (arrived 2:10pm), Scott Lutz (arrived 1:05pm)

Not Present: Barb Ingham, Jamie Nack, Dietram Scheufele, Karen Wassarman

Ex Officio: Kate VandenBosch, Mark Rickenbach (arrived 2:00pm), Doug Reinemann, Bill Barker

Guests: David Wassarman, Mark Stephenson, Julie Scharm

Minutes taken by: Sarah Barber/Megan Ackerman-Yost

Meeting began at 1:00pm without quorum. Quorum met at 1:05pm.

Welcome and introductions

- *Introduction of guests*

Review agenda

Revisions to current agenda

Consent Agenda

1. Approve minutes for September 15, 2020 meeting

Item 1 was approved by consent.

Action and Discussion Items

2. Biology Major Program Review (1st discussion)

- *Affiliated with both L&S and CALS*
- *Reminder that reviews cover two meetings in CALS APC – first week to hear from the review committee, and second to discuss review with program*
- *David Wassarman, Professor in Medical Genetics, Chair of the review committee, joined the CALS APC meeting to provide an overview of the review, the committee's key findings, and the committee's recommendations.*

Overview and Findings:

- *Biology major is doing well and has improved over past 10 years, but there is still room for improvement*
- *Three main strengths:*
 - *Broad, flexible curriculum allows students to get a degree without requiring a defined specific interest toward the beginning of their career and benefits students who transfer from other colleges or universities*
 - *Advising – all advisors showed strong knowledge of curriculum and degree of caring for students*

- *Administrative structure provides a solid foundation for the major, ensuring high quality student learning and experiences*
 - *Three main challenges:*
 - *Size of major – 1100 students in major and 500 graduate each year. Difficult to have a sense of community, provide one-on-one experiences with faculty, and identify with alumni*
 - *Not having a departmental home – can't create new courses easily, difficult to persuade faculty to participate in major, difficult to control direction of courses*
 - *Assessment – complex curriculum makes it difficult to determine where issues might be occurring that could be solved through improved curriculum and advising*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *Assessment – leverage different avenues of data collection and analysis to identify ways student learning can be improved, e.g., using advisor interactions to inform qualitative assessment or surveying the 500 students who graduate every year*
 - *Community Building – need a way for students to interact*
 - *Students felt alone and developed connections in other ways*
 - *Additional systems for different kinds of advising/mentoring – faculty, peer, alumni*
 - *Establishing other named options that make sense for the major*
 - *Ending the Plant Biology Named Option*
 - *Not used by many students – maximum of 7 students enrolled*
- *Questions for the review committee chair:*
 - *Q: Where do students go after graduation?*
 - *A: I don't remember exactly, it's in report, and didn't seem any different than other majors*
 - *Q: Did the review committee meet with students specifically from the named option?*
 - *A: No, we met with the chairs of the named options, but not with those specific groups of students.*
 - *Q: Do students in the Evolutionary Biology named option report the same feelings of alienation as the other biology students? It seems like they have a strong identity.*
 - *A: It seemed like the Evolutionary option had a lot of structured activities and allowed students to identify strongly and interact with each other.*
 - *Comments: I wonder whether that and the Neurobiology major could be models to establish subgroups through other named options.*
 - *It seems like the Plant Bio option overlapped with some other majors, which might contribute to its low enrollment.*
 - *Q: What do successful numbers look like for a named option?*
 - *A: The committee didn't discuss a specific number - the key was having support from the faculty and providing interactions outside of coursework to create identity and allow for*

memorable and impactful experiences. The overall number is not as important as the quality of education and experience students receive.

- *Q: Is the community issue based on a lack of faculty interactions?*
- *A: I think it is, as meeting with advisors is different than engaging with faculty. Faculty fill a different role than advisors and can provide mentoring and career advice. More faculty interactions could also open up more opportunities for student research.*

- *Q: It seems like making a named option is difficult. I think ecology might be a beneficial named option because it is not well-represented elsewhere.*
- *A: The committee didn't discuss the process for creating a named option. Academic Affairs can discuss the process, which requires governance approval through Lumen and academic planning committees at the department, college, and university level.*

- *Q: I am thinking about the incentive aspect. If getting more engagement from a department is important, has the program discussed moving into a department?*
- *A: The committee did not push them to do so. It would be a lot of work to move to a department, but it could be very valuable.*

- *Q: It seems like a lot of these students are likely going on to medical school, and this is where alumni might be really valuable for mentoring. Faculty are great at mentoring for academic or PhD careers, but they aren't as likely to know about other careers such as medical school. It seems like the program is thinking about alumni engagement in terms of giving, but alumni could be a valuable aspect of mentoring. This would also increase alumni engagement.*
- *A: Agreed. That path would take work, but it is a good idea.*

- *Q: What's the reason that the Neurobiology option increased, and then had a sharp decrease?*
- *A: The Neurobiology named option became its own major, so many of those students became Neurobiology majors and were no longer biology majors as the named option was closing.*

- *Comment: The report makes it sound like this is a good major, but it sounds like we are really falling short in serving our students. When this major started, there were a lot of faculty that did advising. As the advising core got more professionalized, we as faculty were pushed out of advising. There does need to be some incentive, but I think this is a serious problem.*
- *Comment: As I was reading the report, it struck me that we should be thinking about what we should be doing for all these programs that are cross-departmental and cross-college, and when we accept the report, we should get together with the associate deans and the program chairs and discuss implementation.*
- *Comment: Just as a note, the review committee was concerned about the response of the program directors to the critique of assessment. The directors felt that it was working sufficiently.*

- *Questions for the program:*
 - *Are there any updates to the information you supplied in your self-study that you would like to fill us in on? For example, the impact of COVID on the program, or any information on fall 2020 enrollment?*
 - *In the self-study, you observe that at 20 years old, the Biology Major is moving into a mature phase. What goals does the program committee have for the future of the major? Some areas you might address:*
 - *Is it appropriately sized? What goals do you have for enrollment?*
 - *Are there curricular needs that you want to highlight, that you would like to work on together with contributing departments?*
 - *How would program assessment, as suggested by the review, and the recommendations of the review impact your planning?*
 - *Assessment approaches used by the program fulfill the assessment requirements of the university, but how else is the program assessing how their students are achieving the program's learning outcomes? How is the program identifying opportunities for improvement?*
 - *How will the program address the lack of sense of community among many students? Has the program considered collaboration with the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program to enhance community? How might the program reallocate resources to incentivize more faculty participation?*
 - *What opportunities does the program see for increased faculty, alumni, and peer mentorship?*
 - *Named Options*
 - *Please comment on the recommendation to discontinue the Plant Biology named option.*
 - *The Evolutionary Biology and former Neurobiology named options seemed to foster a sense of community among students and faculty with student and faculty interaction. Has the program considered other named options?*

3. Agricultural Safety and Health Center Review (1st discussion)

- *Note that CALS developed a process to review centers a few years ago, so this review is part of the initial review for all centers. The review process works similarly to the academic program reviews. One of the associate deans serves as the point of contact, which was Doug Reinemann for this review.*
- *Mark Stephenson, Center for Dairy Profitability, Chair of the review committee, joined the CALS APC meeting to provide an overview of the review, the committee's key findings, and the committee's recommendations.*
- *Overview and Findings:*
 - *The Agricultural Safety and Health Center has two members – John Shutske, the Director, and Cheryl Skjolaas, the Associate Director*

- *The Center interfaces with extension and outreach*
- *Review team met with internal and external stakeholders*
- *Both members of the center have a lot of visibility within the state on safety, emotional health of farmers, etc., and are well-respected*
- *Work done on tractor safety was invaluable*
- *John has accepted an affiliate position in a different center, so would be part of both*
- *Recommendations:*
 - *The Center should consider working more in tandem instead of individually - working as a team would increase opportunities to leverage the existence of the center. Most of the stakeholders were aware of the individuals at the center but weren't necessarily aware of the center itself.*
 - *The website has been updated to a modern format but was still a bit uneven.*
 - *Investigate working with other centers to leverage their expertise*
- *Questions for review committee chair:*
 - *Q: It seems like every time I'm talking to audiences outside the university, mental health for farmers is brought up. Do you think this is a feature of the center, and could they be doing more there, since this will be an issue for a while?*
 - *A: It was not a huge part of the program at the time that the review was done, but it is a personal interest of the Director, and since then that project has ramped up. The center has been quite mobile to respond to these issues.*
 - *Q: You mentioned several times the conundrum of the lack of visibility of the center compared to the individual work done by the staff. Could you talk a bit more about what being a Center means?*
 - *A: For me, one of the important pieces of a center is that the individuals can become more than the sum of their parts. The ability to deliver projects and materials that you couldn't do on your own is an important aspect of being a center.*
 - *Comment: From a campus perspective, there are centers and "center-like entities", so there isn't a great division between centers, programs, labs, institutes, etc. There isn't uniformity in naming convention.*
 - *Comment: There is a governance process for recognizing centers, and this has gone through the process to be a recognized center. It is worth thinking about whether this should be a center or something else.*
 - *Q: It seemed like during the review there were questions about the origins of the center.*
 - *A: There is a lot of legacy in these centers, and the legislative mandate to fund and provide these centers. This one does have legislative language establishing it as a center about 30 years ago.*
 - *Q: Is it possible that this is somewhere where we can declare victory? Since it was created, initiatives like tractor safety have been very successful and is no longer the problem that it once was. There are future directions that the center could go to, but I'm wondering about the trade-off for an entity to do something that was largely completed*

and successful, versus going off and finding new things, or finding new people to be part of the center. It sounds like there is also a possible issue with funding, and relationships might help with grants.

- *A: That's an interesting point – many centers have affiliates and other connections with individuals.*
- *Questions for the Center director:*
 - *Please comment on any progress you have made regarding the review committee's recommendation for the small staff to work more collaboratively to increase the strength and visibility of the Center.*
 - *How can the center expand its connections with other groups or entities, including researchers on campus?*

4. Discussion regarding future agenda items

- *This is an opportunity for members to indicate what items APC should consider this year*
- *Q: Is there a way to address or start a conversation on how we assess service with faculty? It's something we have been talking about in other places, particularly with new and ongoing initiatives related to diversity and inclusion.*
- *A: This would be an appropriate place to discuss this issue. Mark Rickenbach already has this in mind, and we may be able to provide more information soon.*
- *Q: The current events may have affected people's teaching assignments, and it's possible that people's personal responsibilities may also be affecting assignments. I'd also be interested in discussing how summer teaching load is treated and how it relates to the academic year. How does the CALS expectation for teaching interact with the university's expectation for summer teaching and the faculty 9-month appointments?*
- *A: We will add this to our discussion of summer teaching in November. Regarding the pandemic, certainly we have the opportunity for pre-tenure professors to take an extension, and there is an expectation that people will be flexible.*
- *Q: The pandemic has caused a significant difference in job responsibilities, which is causing a lot of concern regarding evaluations. For example, the yearly winter meetings that extension normally does will probably not be happening in quite some time.*
- *A: As an advisory committee, there is an opportunity for us to provide some guidance and information for programs regarding evaluation processes.*
- *Q: How are administrative programs reviewed?*
- *A: There isn't a process for reviewing offices. Kate solicits feedback from directors and other people each year, which might include information about how offices work.*
- *Comment: It would be good for effectiveness if this committee reviewed administrative offices every 5-10 years for process improvement.*
- *Comment: As we are going forward and considering the structure of the administration and the college, it would be a good idea to solicit feedback. There is a university initiative to update administrative processes (ATP), and this is likely to have an effect on the college.*

5. Teaching Load Policy

- *CALS hasn't had a teaching load policy – some departments have their own policy and some don't. This is an issue for department chairs because some evaluations of faculty are relying on offer letters written 20-30 years ago. The university policy was written in 1994 and is fairly dated but has the expectation that each college has a teaching load policy.*
- *A draft policy was circulated in January 2020 and received feedback from this committee, departments, and chairs, and the policy was revised.*
- *The college needs a teaching load policy as a baseline and to develop minimum expectations. Departments determine how the policy is implemented. The policy is focused on the individual, not at the department level, so isn't focused on metrics.*
 - *Teaching load is the equivalent of one 3-credit course per year*
 - *Includes considerations of other activities that might affect teaching load discussions*
- *Departments will make their own policy identifying how the college policy is implemented in their department, which then must be kept on file at the Provost's office*
- *Q: How do you rectify discrepancies going forward with faculty that are strictly adhering to their initial appointment letter? How do you ensure that newer faculty aren't taking the brunt of teaching load, and that teaching is redistributed fairly?*
- *A: Bascom has made it clear that the appointment letter is only valid for three years, but discussions with legal indicate that the letters are not binding. Departments are responsible for allocating their teaching.*
- *Q: How are some of the terms defined – "exceptional" and "high level"?*
- *A: It is the department's discretion to define those terms.*
- *Q: The additional activities outlined in the policy can reduce the expectations below the CALS minimum expectations, correct?*
- *A: Yes, that is possible. The importance of this policy is that it provides a baseline alignment for departmental policies, since some departments still have two-and-two requirements.*
- *Q: I'm sure you wouldn't want departments to teach low enrollment courses only to establish teaching loads for individuals.*
- *A: That's true- departments need to think strategically. If there is a need for more instruction, this could indicate opportunities for departments to develop good courses and increase CFI. Additionally, as we develop new interdisciplinary majors, there is a need for departments to make commitments to these majors.*
- *Q: Are there any repercussions here? Is there anything CALS is prepared to do if departments don't follow this policy?*
- *A: No, this is a tool to support faculty to understand expectations.*

- *Q: What is the college going to do if chairs report that faculty refuse to follow the policy?*
- *A: This could be the case for any policy at the college or university, and there are mechanisms to deal with that. CALS would be a partner to the department for those processes.*

- *A committee member suggested that there be some language in the policy on minimum class sizes, either a college-wide number or requiring departments to have their own policy. L&S has such a policy.*

- *The committee was nearing the scheduled end of the meeting, and the Dean recommended to bring this item back for a future meeting to ensure a thorough discussion followed by a vote.*

Informational Items and Announcements

6. Update on Nutrient Pest Management (NPM) Director search

- *Center searches are being standardized and will be appointed by the Dean*
- *Damon Smith, Associate Professor, Department of Plant Pathology selected as new NPM director and started October 1, 2020*