

Faculty Meeting  
November 18, 2015  
Minutes

DISC 1

1. Dean MacLaren opened the meeting by motioning for a **vote to approve the minutes** from the previous meeting. *The minutes were approved.* Dean MacLaren then turned the floor over to Dean Travis.
2. Dean Travis led a brief discussion of the proposed **revisions to the Honor Code**, which the faculty in attendance would vote to approve. Revisions included:
  - Mississippi campuses to develop their own Honor Board procedures
  - Improved/clearer standards for the threshold of evidence (added clauses requiring that all cellular devices are out of sight and turned off in a testing environment, making the discovery of one a violation in and of itself, for example).
  - The introduction of an array of sanction options for those found guilty of offenses – with the goal of preventing students from avoiding waivers, and faculty from withholding cases of minor offenses.

In addressing concerns from some of the faculty present, Dean Travis clarified that the burden of proof is on the one bringing forth the accusation, and the professor – or a proxy – must be present at the hearing. Additionally, students will continue to be disallowed to drop a course for which they have been found guilty of a violation.

*These revisions were approved.* Dean Travis returned the floor to Dean MacLaren

3. The final item up for a vote involved **the proposed reconfiguration of the Tulane Scholars Program and Honors Program**. The proposal stated that incoming freshman, designated eligible for Honors by Admissions, could opt into the new program (a union of Tulane Scholars and Honors), and take an Honors Colloquium that could fulfill, if the student so chooses, the TIDES Freshman Seminar requirement. This revised program would eliminate the application process to become a Tulane Scholar, and it is anticipated by the Curriculum Committee that the number of students opting into the program will be large, however should decrease from freshman to senior year.

*This proposal was approved.*

4. Next on the agenda was a discussion of the General Education requirement changes brought up at the last meeting. NO VOTING would be taking place; the discussion was a call for feedback.

Concerning the added requirement of a third writing course (wherein 50% of the final grade is earned through writing assignments), a faculty member inquired about who would teach these classes. The Dean responded that the classes already exist, but students who wouldn't have had to take them will now be required to.

Also at odds with the three-tier writing requirement were majors that see a high volume of students – particularly in science and engineering – having difficulty setting up in-major writing courses. However, the proposed added writing requirement does not have to be satisfied within a major.

On the issue of whether or not re-writing should be a required component of these classes, the Committee felt that individual instructors should use their discretion on the matter.

Using Science and Engineering lab courses to satisfy writing requirements was an idea met with some disagreement. Some faculty doubted that TAs, who do most if not all of the grading for such courses, were equipped to teach and grade writing technique. Other faculty felt that lab report grades should be about the data. The response from members of the Curriculum Committee was that “content should not be divorced from form,” and that for professionals in scientific fields, being unable to write effectively is a disadvantage.

Still, Science and Engineering faculty advocated for minimal added requirements, or at least increased flexibility when it comes to the percentage of writing in the final grade.

What the revised writing requirements would establish is a “common denominator” for all departments to require. However, departments for which writing is a larger factor (Anthropology, History, etc.), may add and adjust requirements accordingly.

A question about whether or not departments may adjust the criteria for a class to count as writing intensive was asked, using the hypothetical of allowing creative writing to count in place of expository writing. In response, the Committee reminded that creative writing still doesn't count toward writing intensive criteria, unless it is accompanied by at least 20 pages of expository writing. The Honors (or Departmental) Theses, satisfy the writing intensive requirement, and also follow this same guideline. Expository writing is the priority. Students may also still petition to have a regular class count as a writing intensive, with the addition of an extra writing component. Students who may skip ENGL 1010 due to AP credits will still be required to take 3 writing-focused courses in their time at Tulane.

Instructors will be expected to teach writing techniques to some extent in classes where written assignments make up 50% of the grade.

It was suggested that for scientific majors with large class sizes, scientific writing could be taught outside of their department – perhaps as a course offered by English.

Finally, the faculty felt that 50% of a final grade attributed only to writing is too high to implement with the resources we currently have. A suggestion was made to change that wording to “a significant percentage.” The Committee accepted this idea.

## DISC 2

5. **Public Service** was the next item up for discussion. Dean MacLaren asked the faculty to discuss the type of information regarding the Public Service requirements they'd like the College to research and present at the next meeting. He urged those responding to be cognizant of two factors: the number and type of students that the Public Service requirement brings in, and the fact that making changes to Public Service will have a direct effect on the community and may be difficult to reverse.

The discussion opened with a faculty member expressing some frustration about the way the Public Service program was initiated after Katrina and “foisted upon” the faculty at the time. There was some resentment to being asked for feedback at this point.

Tom Luongo redirected the conversation to what questions the faculty would like to investigate regarding the program. He suggested that it would be worth it to look into what exactly it is about the Public Service requirement (or if it is another factor) that is attracting students to Tulane. The following is a bulleted list of questions/requests on behalf of the faculty present:

- Some restructuring of the requirement with special attention to student's understanding the difference between “volunteering” and “service” is needed. This is a current issue that faculty who teach service learning courses can provide insight to.
- Data pertaining to the percentage of Public Service courses that actually involve students leaving campus.
- Definitions for certain categories of Public Service courses are needed – how many are volunteer courses? How many involve an exchange with the community? How many are outreach? What is community engagement?

- Data concerning how service-learning courses connect to majors or contribute to professional development. This could be done through contacting alumni.
- A course, perhaps at the TIDES level, that provides some theory and critical thinking surrounding public service for freshmen.
- Requiring a total number of hours, rather than the two-tier system, to allow greater flexibility for students.
- There should be ways for students to form long-term relationships with organizations if they choose. Perhaps a Public Service Scholars Program?
- What percentage of the faculty offer service learning courses?
- What data is there to support Tulane's claims that our Public Service makes us unique from other universities?
- There have been instances where service learning has gotten in the way of students' personal volunteering efforts.
- Students in some departments (like African Diaspora Studies) find that they don't have time for the department-specific service learning that they'd prefer to take.
- What are the issues faced by students who need to take their 2<sup>nd</sup> tier course earlier than anticipated?
- A faculty member heavily involved in public service lamented that the support CPS provides is minimal, and lobbied for more resources for faculty that are embracing the requirement.
- Pre-requisite courses offered through CPS could aid in departmental service courses.
- Another faculty member felt it was important to mention that the overall reaction to this program from the community is overwhelmingly positive.
- If the public service requirement is reduced from two-tiers, the remaining experience for students should be really effective and well executed.
- There are some disciplines (like sciences) for which service learning is an "uncomfortable fit" that doesn't really help students or the community.
- We could better design the requirements if we understood what factors attracted students.
- If a student's learning is not significantly enhanced by the service component, then that service-learning course is a failure. These courses should not default to forced volunteerism. Integrating service with a course objective is not always easy to implement in some majors, but CPS should pressure faculty toward that end anyway.
- We should contact alumni from when Public Service was first implemented for their feedback as well.

6. For some closure regarding the discussion from the last meeting, the proposed **Diversity** requirement for the Core Curriculum was addressed. Since the last meeting, attempts at defining “diversity” in a way that can apply to a general education strategy, have been replaced by the phrase “living in a diverse world.” Some faculty thought this language to be too broad, but the Curriculum Committee asserted that diversity has proven impossible to define with any specificity.

Comparative cultures and international perspectives were considered suitable categories. Another faculty member offered that global (non-western) perspectives are indeed important because such courses are somewhat unique to the university setting.

END OF MEETING.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Erin Cessna, NTC Administrative Secretary*