The Arts and Sciences Senate meets on Monday, April 16th at 3:30 p.m. in the Javits Room of the Library.

Tentative Agenda
Arts & Sciences Senate Meeting
April 16th, 2001

I.   Approval of Agenda
II.   Approval of the Minutes from meeting of March 26, 2001
III.   Curriculum Committee-Guidelines for Online Courses - Review - Comments (Bob Cerrato)
IV.   A request about departmental governance
V.   Nominations
VI.   Other Old Business
VII.   Other New Business
VIII.   Adjournment

Arts and Sciences Senate
Minutes of the 3/26/01 Meeting

The Arts and Sciences Senate met on Monday 26 March 2001 at 3:30 PM in the SAC.

I. The agenda was approved by voice vote.

II. Item VI of the minutes was incomplete. The second sentence of the second paragraph should read "The numbers are down about 10% (46 lines) in the past 6 years." With this correction, the minutes of the 19 February 2001 A&S Senate meeting were approved.

III. Emily Thomas, Director of Institutional Research, discussed the Teaching Evaluations. Faculty, especially those who teach large courses in the sciences, have expressed concern about the objectivity of the teaching evaluations, and about the interpretation of these evaluations by the administration. Statistics show that smaller courses are evaluated more favorably, as are courses in the humanities.

Ms. Thomas conceded that there are lots of errors in the current evaluation system, and presented some possible fixes. Not only is the response rate (60%) low, but 30% of the submitted forms are unusable. This could be solved by affixing bar codes containing header information (course number, instructor line, etc) to each form. Preprinting forms with these data would be impractical. She also suggested replacing the university average, used for comparative purposes, with a predicted score based upon a model involving departments and class size and standing.

She proposed forming a small committee (including statisticians) to work out an appropriate methodology for predicting scores. A. Tyree agreed to work with Ms. Thomas on this matter.

There was some discussion of the possibility of making the algorithm public, but concern was voiced about what the non-technically-adept faculty would make of it. The suggestion that evaluation forms could be made accessible though Blackboard was not received well.

The sense of the Senate is that these evaluations should be constructed so as to place a teacher in one of 3 categories: Average, Excellent (should be rewarded), and Poor (warrants help). No finer gradations are warranted.

IV. R. McGrath (Provost) and M. Aronoff (chair of the committee) presented the Senate with the Report of the Undergraduate Administration Task Force. The report recommends a new position, "Vice President for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College". The main duty of this position would be to consolidate undergraduate programs in one location.

Concerns were immediately raised as to the nature of the position. Would it be a staff position or a university line (a staff position)? How would it impinge upon the role of the Deans? Why not a Vice Provost, answering to the Provost, and retaining authority with the Deans? Would this position have a budget (yes)?

Aronoff and McGrath responded this person would look at the big university-wide picture, and would have concerns different than the Deans. They noted that the structure should ultimately be chosen to facilitate the goals to be addressed, which are to improve undergraduate education.

Prof. Katz pointed out that perhaps we should first find out why the students are so unhappy here. This spawned a new discussion. R. McGrath suggested that Stony Brook could look at the college system as instituted at UC San Diego. The undergraduate student representative to the Senate input that the undergraduates find the campus impersonal, and feel that the faculty do not care.

V. Seeing as the Graduate Programs Committee duplicates the efforts of the Graduate Council of the University Senate, and that the Graduate Programs Committee has not met this academic year, the Senate voted unanimously to suspend the activities of the Graduate Programs Committee.

VI. There was no other old Business.

VII. There was no other new Business.

The senate adjourned at 5:06 PM

Submitted 6 April 2001
F.M. Walter
Secretary

Guidelines for Undergraduate Online Instruction Courses

What online courses are:

Online instruction courses are those courses whose sole or primary method of instruction is via the web; syllabus, "lectures" and other lessons are placed on the web; student-teacher and student-student interaction is conducted via threaded discussion or synchronous chatroom or both. Courses should use an established system such as the SUNY Learning Network or instructors must demonstrate that they have the technical skills to offer the course independently of an existing system.

What online courses are not:

E-mail correspondence may not be the primary means of student-teacher communication. Instructors may not simply post lecture notes on a website and call it online instruction. Online courses are not the same as computer-assisted courses. Online courses presume interaction between an instructor and the students. Computer-assisted courses presume interaction between a student and a computer program. The latter might be then offered to large numbers of students. These guidelines do not address computer-assisted learning.

All courses:

Credit hour requirement:

Courses must cover the same amount of material as a comparable in-person course. Since credit hours cannot correspond to meeting hours in determining how many credits a course bears, faculty should use the amount of material to be covered as a gauge of credit hours. If the amount of material to be covered is comparable to the amount of material in terms of readings and "lecture materials" in an in-person 3-credit class, this would be a 3-credit course.

Interaction:

All online courses must have an interactive component. Either the course can be conducted seminar-style using online "discussions" or, if it is conducted lecture style, it might include an online recitation. A TA may not be primary contact for students in the course.

Method of evaluation:

1. Exams and quizzes:
   Until the technology offers security options to ensure that the sender is the person who is registered for the course, instructors are encouraged to use additional writing assignments as a means of ensuring that the student who has taken the exams and quizzes is indeed the student who is taking the class, especially for smaller seminar-type classes. Testing centers might be an option for larger classes that have exams.

2. Papers, reports and "presentations":
   Research and other significant papers should be submitted either in PDF format electronically or via postal mail. Smaller written assignments may be emailed or posted in a designated place in the online course. Posting drafts or written "presentations" in a publicly viewable area would allow others to view and comment upon the submission to enhance the learning experience.

Security:

Small courses should be structured in such a way that the instructor can feel comfortable that the student submitting the exams and quizzes is the student who has been taking the class. Exams and quizzes should, as part of their makeup, require written answers. Larger classes adminstering exams might be able to take advantage of testing centers. *[Examples of effective methods of ensuring against cheating should be made available in CELT.]*

In-Person Meetings and Real-Time Communication:

The curriculum committee strongly encourages instructors to have mandatory in-person meetings to develop a stronger sense of community among the students in the class. These might include in-person recitations or an in-person get-together at the beginning of the semester to reduce the sense of disconnectedness that students often experience in online courses. In the event there are such requirements, students who are homebound or enrolled in a Study Abroad program should be given reasonable accommodation. In addition to asynchronous sessions, instructors are also encouraged to use synchronous chatroom-type sessions in which students are all logged into the class at the same time. However, some forums, such as the SUNY Learning Network, prohibit required in-person meetings or requirements that a student log on at a particular time.

Student requirements

Students registered for online courses are subject to the same rules and regulations, as set forth in the University's official publications, including the Undergraduate Bulletin, Student Handbook, and semester Class Schedules as students registered for traditional, in-person courses.

Guidelines for Submission of Proposals for Online Courses

The following guidelines obtain for new courses and for existing courses of which the instructor wishes to change the mode of instruction.

Note: First-time online instructors will be limited to a class size of no greater than 25 students. Should the instructor wish, after the initial offering, to increase the class size, this request must be brought back to the curriculum committee for review. (See "Change in class size" below.)

What online courses are:

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What online courses are not:

E-mail correspondence may not be the primary means of student-teacher communication. Instructors may not simply post lecture notes on a website and call it online instruction. Further, online courses are not the same as computer-assisted courses. Online courses presume interaction between an instructor and the students. Computer-assisted courses presume interaction between a student and a computer program. The latter might be then offered to large numbers of students. These guidelines do not address computer-assisted learning.

All proposals must clearly articulate:

- Ø   the learning outcomes of the course;
- Ø   how those outcomes will be accomplished;
- Ø   how students will be assessed as having met those outcomes;
- Ø   how the course will be conducted.

Purpose statement:

The instructor should indicate what benefits for the students he/she hopes to obtain in using this mode of instruction for delivering the material of the course.

"Classroom" interaction:

All online courses must have an interactive component. Email correspondence as the sole source of interaction is not considered appropriate. Either the course can be conducted seminar-style using online "discussions" or, if it is conducted lecture style, it must include provisions for significant student-student and student-teacher interaction. The presumption is that students will participate in the class via threaded discussion or chatrooms or both.

Instructor's responsibility and minimal student skills:

Instructors must indicate how they will ensure that students registered for the class are informed of the system and user requirements, are appropriately set up, logged on, and prepared for the technical aspects of the course. (Offering the course through SLN may resolve this.)

Instructional experience:

Instructors must indicate their experience with online distance instruction or indicate how they have gone about acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to design a course to be offered online. Instructors should seek the assistance of CELT and instructional design staff, as well as others who have experience with online instruction.

TA use:

> TAs may be used in the same ways they are used in in-person classes. A TA may not be the primary contact for students in the course.

Change of class size:

> Instuctors should initially plan to teach no more than 25 students in an online class. If the experience is successful and the instructor wishes to increase the class size, the instructor must:
>
> - Ø Outline how the instructional methods will support a greater number of students;
> - Ø Explain methods of testing that ensure against cheating;
> - Ø Explain how student-student and instructor-student contact will be maintained.

Change of instruction method:

> If the instructor proposes to teach an existing course, or section of a course, in an online environment, this is considered a change in mode of instruction and must be reviewed by the curriculum committee. The instructor should address all the issues above as though it were a new course.

Relation to major or minor requirements:

> The instructor should consider how the course relates to the department's undergraduate and/or graduate programs. Does the course replace an existing course? How does it complement other courses in the department's curriculum or integrate material from them? The chair of the department and undergraduate director of the major or director of the minor should request that the course be allowed toward the major or minor.

Relation to other courses:

> If the proposed course duplicates an existing course, the instructor should offer the online class as another section of the existing course. (This information should be clearly communicated to students in the schedule.) See "Change in instruction method" above.
>
> In addition, the instructor should consider the new course's relation to undergraduate (or graduate offerings) in other programs throughout the University, considering, for example, whether the course duplicates or overlaps with existing courses; whether the course would appropriately be crosslisted with another department; whether the course might serve as a prerequisite for courses in other departments; whether it will compete for resources now used for other purposes; and whether it affects major or minor requirements in any other department. *Note: If other departments are affected (e.g., the course will change a prerequisite or a major requirement or considers material typically considered the domain of another department), the committee requires that the department consult with the affected departments about the proposed course and its ramifications and that the affected departments agree to the offering of the course.*

The committee recognizes that online instruction is a new and fast-growing field using rapidly evolving technologies, the use of which most faculty are inexpert at best. The committee wishes to be a flexible as possible in the university's initial stages of online delivery in allowing faculty to investigate which methods work best for their discipline and type of material.