**Educational Policy Committee**

**May 1, 2019**

**Minutes**

**Committee Members Attending:** Watkins (chair), Webb, Lotto, Zhang, Bodzin, Gunter, Li, Liu

**Guests:** Sczcepanski, Tonkay, McClaind, Jensen, Bell, Wilson, Zalatan, B. Kroll, J. Marsh, C. Matherly.

The chair called the committee to order. Meeting minutes from 4/17/2019 were reviewed and approved with minor change.

**First agenda item: Selecting a Chair-Elect.**

After nominations and brief discussion, the committee elected Professor Frank Gunter as Chair-Elect for AY 2019-2020. The Chair-Elect becomes chair for AY 2020-2021. Current Chair-Elect Professor Edmund Webb will become chair July 1, 2019 for AY 2019-20.

**Second agenda item: Presentation by Cheryl Matherly, Barry Kroll, Jessecae Marsh and Jennifer Jensen re: Lehigh Launch planning**

Seeking early discussion and feedback from EdPol, VP for International Affairs C. Matherly, Deputy Provost J. Jensen, and Professors B. Kroll and J. Marsh overviewed Lehigh Launch, a program being designed is to serve as a (sort of) gap-year-like deeply immersive academic and cultural experience for matriculating first-year Lehigh students. The hope is to develop an innovative, distinctive and rigorous introduction to Lehigh, open to incoming students from all disciplines and colleges. A committee of faculty has begun meeting to develop ideas, which remain formative, with no decisions or specific proposals yet except for the expectation that the experience should be immersive and study-abroad-like in spirit and be credit-bearing—on the order of 15 credits or so, priced to be accessible, and eligible for financial aid. The program (whether abroad, wilderness, or otherwise) would occur before the students come to reside on campus. It could be in the summer before their first year, or it might take place during the fall semester after which they’d arrive for the first time on campus for spring term. A fall program would allow a different and more deeply engaged first semester of college.

Discussion ensued, focused mainly on the challenges of using the fall semester time frame. Several committee members remarked that students planning on majoring in business and engineering might have trouble keeping pace for graduation if they miss the first semester required courses in those curricula. That issue might be overcome if Lehigh Launch gets enough scale to offer specific tracks for different colleges or majors. A suggestion was offered that the planning group be sure to meet with college policy or other faculty from each college.

**Third agenda item: Proposal on requirements for good academic standing**

Associate Dean of Students McClaind said S.O.S is seeking guidance on inconsistencies over how we determine which students fall into (and get removed from) academic probation and academic dismissal under the revised GPA cutoff rules. With the recent change to the probation policy requiring a 2.0, regardless of class standing, the SOS Committee believes more guidance is needed for interpreting how this policy should be enforced.

The main discussion centered around whether dismissal should be considered in circumstances where a student’s cumulative GPA remains a 2.0 or above, but their term GPAs regularly fall below a 1.7. Providing academic warnings to students without the teeth of falling into probation was rejected by the committee as lacking the appropriate signal to drifting students. In other cases students are not making adequate progress in gaining credit hours towards graduation, failing or dropping too many courses.

A consensus emerged that even where cumulative GPAs remain above 2.0, instead of allowing an unlimited number of weak semesters below 1.7 before dismissal, a three-semester-strikes approach might make sense.

Deputy Provost Jensen shared language from her previous institution about requiring adequate progress towards degree completion, language which the Committee generally agreed with. Students should not have incentives to drop a large fraction of their courses in hopes of keeping GPAs higher. Consensus emerged that requiring at least 12 credits per term would be an appropriate standard, with exceptions for part time students.

Action item: The chair agreed to draft language, based on input from Associate Dean McClaind and Deputy Provost Jensen, for suggested changes to R&P to reflect these new standards, and the chair-elect would bring them forward to the committee in the fall 2019.

**Fourth agenda item: Possible requests for data from Institutional Research and other offices**

Following on his presentation at a previous EdPol meeting on teaching effectiveness and grade inflation, Professor Gunter suggested EdPol make several specific data requests from Institutional Research:

1. Student engagement, possibly a workload survey
2. Data on what fraction of credits/students are taught by Adjuncts, PoPs, tenure track.
3. Data on standard teaching loads, by college
4. Terms of PoP contracts (compensation, course load) by college
5. Is there evidence of bias in teaching evaluations (e.g. gender of instructor, US vs. international instructor, time of day, required vs. elective courses)
6. How education quality can be measured, and how Lehigh ranks on those; perhaps the National Survey of Student Engagement.
7. Graduation rates at 4, 5 and 6 years.

The chair also reminded the committee we’d also wanted data on:

(8) student success towards graduation for those receiving below C- in required courses

Discussion centered on the ideas that several of these might already exist in some form, while others might be difficult, and that balancing benefit/cost was in order before EdPol makes a formal request.

Action item: The chair and Prof. Gunter will request a meeting with VP for Institutional Research Yenny Anderson in Institutional Research to discuss the feasibility and availability of these items.