

**Arts & Sciences Chairs Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 24, 2020**  
**9:00-10:30 am, via Zoom**  
**Minutes**

In attendance: Vandana Kohli, Phil Hampton, Chanda Cunningham-Spence, Stephanie Guerrero, Mary Adler, Liz King, Frank Barajas, Sean Anderson, Kimmy Kee-Rose, Andrea Grove, Geoff Buhl, Erich Fleming, Dana Baker, Colleen Delaney, Jose Alamillo, Sonsoles de Lacalle, Michael Soltys, Lynette Landry, Antonio Jiménez Jiménez, Greg Wood

Absent: Blake Gillespie, Christina Smith

**I. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Meeting minutes were approved for November 17, 2020.

**II. Information Items**

*Spring Planning Taskforce*

Dean Kohli shared an update on behalf of the Spring Planning Taskforce, as a member of both the main planning group and the subcommittee for Logistics and Communication. The most important update from Logistics and Communication is that Chairs should let the Dean know immediately when a change is made to a course modality so that this can be communicated to students as soon as possible. Chairs should also note that a course designated as asynchronous cannot be converted back to synchronous; only previously designated synchronous courses may be converted to asynchronous. Any face-to-face courses that receive approval may be converted back to a virtual format, which also requires immediate communication to the Dean if such a change is made. Chairs asked whether there is a status update regarding the approval of proposed face-to-face courses, to which Dean Kohli answered that we have not yet received an update.

AD Hampton is also a member of the subcommittee for spring planning entitled Instructional Support (previously designated as Virtual Instructional Support). He shared that the group is still in the information gathering phase, but that there has been expressed interest in being able to survey students and faculty in order to collect information about their experiences thus far.

A question was raised regarding a recently announced faculty mentor program developed by Teaching and Learning Innovations (TLI). The lack of communication to the program Chair regarding a faculty member who has been assigned to provide support to her department caused frustration, as she was not consulted or provided information about the program in advance. An additional concern was mentioned about the credibility of support to be provided regarding discipline specific needs. Another Chair was able to provide some additional context, as a faculty member in her program has been selected to be a Faculty Mentor and provide departmental/faculty support. The Chair clarified that based on her knowledge, the faculty member selected to be a Faculty Mentor will be providing general technical assistance for on-line teaching/ Canvas and not discipline-specific content. It was acknowledged that the Chairs' main source of frustration surrounding this new program is more so an issue with the communication and rollout, and not a reflection of any judgment on a particular faculty member's ability to provide support. Dean Kohli agreed that she would like to establish more

professional and formalized commitments for how campus programs are communicated and implemented.

Chairs asked whether there is an update on the status of faculty requests for either return to research or work from campus, to which the Dean replied that we are awaiting information regarding approvals.

### **III. Discussion Items**

#### *Academic Affairs Budget Advisory Council (AABAC) Update*

Chair Anderson shared that there are no major updates to report at this time.

### **III. Chairs' Items**

#### *Cross-Listed Courses*

The topic of cross-listed courses was revisited as a follow-up from the previous meeting's discussion. Dean Kohli asked Chairs whether they have begun to identify cross-listed courses for which they would like to change the nature of the cross-listing. She also confirmed the mutual agreement that Chairs will communicate with one another ahead of time if they are planning to offer a cross-listed option. AD Hampton has agreed to provide further support if needed.

A Chair raised a concern surrounding the potential removal of cross-listings, as their program has seen changes to how a course is taught when one department becomes the owner/manager of a cross-listed course. In cases, this results in the course no longer meeting the needs of their program. To address this point, another Chair suggested developing a framework for dialogue and communication between programs to ensure that courses taught outside a department can meet that program's needs. For example, the Mathematics program serves many outside majors but a framework for these conversations does not currently exist.

Dean Kohli agreed to support the development of a structure for this and asked Chairs whether they would prefer this being handled at the level of a smaller group versus the whole group. There was agreement that an all-Chairs session should be scheduled for a structured conversation on how to best move forward. In response to concerns about the need for curricular changes related to cross-listed courses, Dean Kohli stated that Dr. Jen Perry from the Academic Programs & Planning office will be attending a Chairs' Council meeting in the near future to address any questions or concerns; Chairs were asked to submit any inquiries to the Dean ahead of time.

#### *Students' Well-being*

Chair of Psychology Kee-Rose expressed her concern about the high number of withdrawals she has been receiving from students, and she asked the group whether this is a discipline-specific problem or whether it is happening across majors. One Chair shared that they haven't received an abnormally high number of requests but expressed frustration with the slow process of facilitating students' decision making regarding the credit or no credit option resolution being held at the Academic Senate level.

Academic Senate Chair Wood provided context surrounding this resolution and how its consideration by the Academic Senate was delayed while waiting for feedback from Student Government. Confidence was expressed that it will likely pass if/when it moves past a second

reading and Chair Wood stated that this item will be on the agenda for the upcoming Senate Meeting on Tuesday, December 1.

Another Chair spoke to the question about the level of student withdrawal requests they have received and stated that they have seen more course drops in comparison to term withdrawals. As they are a first-time Chair, they were unsure how this compares to historical patterns of drops in the program. Dean Kohli shared that at the Dean's level, she has seen more requests this semester and suggested that students may have reconsidered their request if they had more advance information about the credit/no credit grading option. Overall, based on other feedback shared from programs, it seems that the number of drop requests varies across departments and is a reflection of the challenging external life circumstances students continue to face due to the pandemic.

Chairs shared ideas about best-practices for handling student disengagement, as this has increased in some courses to about 20%. Faculty are unsure how to best address these students. One Chair spoke to their successful experience messaging students directly via Canvas to check in when they have not submitted an assignment and stated that students have responded almost immediately with appreciation for their faculty having reached out.

As a member of the campus CARE Team, Chair Baker encouraged her colleagues to file a report for students of concern and shared that there is a specific category of "disengagement" that can be selected for lower-levels of concern about a student's academic participation. She also shared that this kind of report is followed up by soft outreach to students from the Dean of Students office and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Dean Kohli asked Chairs to communicate out to their program faculty that, to the extent faculty are willing, one possible intervention regarding disengaged students is to file a CARE report. If faculty feel this intervention is not appropriate and have alternate means for student re-engagement, they are welcomed to pursue these approaches and they may also seek support from the Dean's office. Chairs were asked to stay in communication with both faculty and students, who continue to experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and issues with mental health.

### *Enrollment Numbers*

Chairs asked whether there have been any updated predictions or enrollment reports from the Enrollment Management office, to which Dean Kohli stated that she has not heard but will ask AVP for Enrollment Management Hung Dang for an updated report to share at one of the next Chair's meetings. University-wide, the numbers look down by about 800-900 students and Chairs expressed uncertainty about whether they should continue to wait for further enrollment or if they should begin to make changes to the spring schedule. Another Chair shared that they are optimistic some students may be waiting for their fall grades before enrolling for spring but shared concerns over the ability to maintain instructional capacity the following academic year (AY 21-22) if enrollment does not improve. While some programs continue to poll students in hopes of gathering their preferences for instructional modality and meeting times, they still face low enrollment in upper division elective courses. Chairs also shared their experience with synchronous versus asynchronous modalities being a factor in determining students' choice to enroll. Regarding concern for instructional capacity, one Chair spoke to the need for active

consideration that enrollments may bounce back in the next year or so, and that it would be a major loss of investment in faculty expertise if low enrollment meant discontinuance of teaching contracts. An appeal was made to retain low enrolled classes in order to avoid losing a qualified member of program faculty and facing a potential need to then fill a discontinued position if and when enrollments increase.

In response to a question from Chairs about whether they can open additional sections for which there is demand, Dean Kohli shared that she has allocated discretionary funds and authorized AD Hampton to approve the opening of additional sections, provided there is student demand.