Executive Summary

Academic Affairs Committee
Spring 2014

Overview

The College of Education and Human Services (COEHS) Academic Affairs Committee is one of two standing committees within the College to deal with matters requiring College-wide consideration or adjudication. According to the College Operating Paper, the Academic Affairs Committee shall have the responsibility for instructional, research and creative activities, and service activities related to undergraduate and graduate education in the College, including the following:

1) Recommend to the Dean changes in the undergraduate and graduate curricula of the College, including changes in course numbers, catalog descriptions, prerequisites, credit hour designations, and the addition/deletion of courses from the graduate and undergraduate catalogs.

2) Review periodically and recommend to the Dean continuation of or change in the research and creative activities, and service policies and practices of the College.

3) Exercise when necessary the prerogative of appointing ad hoc members or establishing ad hoc committees from among the Faculty and/or student body of the College to assist in the activities of the Committee.

4) Hear, consider, and make recommendations upon interdisciplinary and inter-Operating Unit graduate and undergraduate academic matters referred to the Committee. Serve as a student appeals agency for academic matters for the College. In this appellate capacity, all communications from the Committee, its sub-committees, and its members shall be privileged.

5) Recommend standards that are higher than, or not included in, the Graduate School statement of standards, for admission to, retention in, and graduation from all graduate programs in the College.

6) Recommend College-wide standards for admission to, retention in, and graduation from all undergraduate programs in the College.

7) Hear, consider, and make recommendations on other graduate and undergraduate academic matters referred to the Committee.

8) The Academic Affairs Committee shall make reports of its activities to the Faculty and students at scheduled Operating Unit and College meetings.
In fulfillment of the roles and responsibilities of this committee, The COEHS Academic Affairs Committee invited Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Non-Tenure Track faculty in the college to participate in a faculty conclave on Friday, March 28th from 8:30A.M. to 4:00P.M. at the Student Services Building. The purpose of the faculty conclave was to begin laying the foundation for establishing our collective identity, explore opportunities for bridging gaps in course delivery, develop strategies for faculty-student engagement, and explore opportunities for interdisciplinary research and instruction.

**Problem**

The COEHS Academic Affairs Committee invited the Associate Dean to share 10-year trend data regarding declining undergraduate and graduate student enrollment, faculty shortages, and budgetary deficits. The data presented highlighted key areas that aligned with the purposes of the conclave. The major problem areas included:

- Tenure-track faculty positions have been approved, but cannot move forward due to budgetary constraints
- Programs have difficulty offering required undergraduate and graduate coursework for matriculation
- Fewer faculty for committees, task forces, direct and indirect teaching responsibilities

The COEHS Academic Affairs Committee also invited the graduate student representatives to the Committee to share details with the faculty regarding a forum they sponsored for all COEHS graduate students. The purpose of the graduate student forum was to obtain graduate student perspectives regarding strengths and concerns of current graduate programming. Several themes emerged, including:

- Lack of or limited availability and scope of required and elective coursework
- More opportunities for Faculty-Student collaboration for research
- Consistency of program requirements for matriculation
- More training/mentoring in skill sets required for the workplace after graduation
- A need for a stronger sense of community among graduate cohorts
- A need for clearer expectations of graduate research and/or teaching assistants
• A need for better lines of communication and advisement between mentors and students

• A need for awareness of cultural diversity

**Deliberations**

Faculty was asked to brainstorm opportunities to address some of the challenges facing the College, such as course offering efficiencies, shared intellectual and academic resources, off-campus and online programs, and innovation in course delivery. The faculty was also asked to recommend opportunities for faculty-student engagement and interdisciplinary research collaborations. The ideas brought forth by faculty are categorized into themes, although some of the ideas could potentially address multiple initiatives within the College.

**Course Delivery and Efficiencies**

• Consider revising or creating current doctoral seminars to meet student needs. For example, EDUC 510: Introduction to Doctoral Studies could address student concerns regarding more training/mentoring in skill sets required for the workplace after graduation.

• The College needs to consider changing and/or enhancing the consistency of course offerings. There were several suggestions for how this might be accomplished.
  
  o **Load Sharing.** Courses with similar content could be taught by faculty across departments or within departments. Those courses could be cross-listed in undergraduate and graduate catalogs to insure student transcripts reflect the required acumen to matriculate with a respective degree. Instructors develop the curriculum and rotate in teaching the course.

  o **Co-Teaching.** Adopt a “co-teaching” model in which faculty course assignments are based on teaching content in their area of expertise across similar courses, rather than assigning faculty course assignments for an entire course. This model would allow faculty to share in the responsibility of multiple courses to be offered within a program that are needed for students to progress through their respective degree program.

  o **Consolidate Research Courses.** Discussion occurred at the Conclave regarding the number of research methods courses offered within and across departments that share similar content. Research methods are not inherently different; however, the challenges of using those research methods in a particular field should be addressed within the departments
by the faculty with expertise in a particular field. For example, experimental research designs are experimental research designs regardless of which field of education or human services they are used. However, the applicability of specific experimental designs within a particular field is where departments may differ. Therefore, a consideration for discussion may be to develop a model through which research courses are “split” into two or more categories (i.e., research methods, research designs, research in content areas). In this model, load sharing and co-teaching become additional options for insuring faculty time is used efficiently to offer content courses within their departments. Cross-departmental faculty could share in the delivery of research methods courses, while inter-departmental faculty could share in the delivery of research in the content areas. [see “Load Sharing and “Co-Teaching” above].

- Explore opportunities to create new graduate degrees and/or graduate certificate programs from multiple concentrations within the College to better prepare students for the workforce. Examples provided at the Conclave included (a) using interdisciplinary collaborations to increase curriculum innovations which better prepares students for different employment, such as designing instructional apps for education; (b) a certification program specific to societal needs (e.g., Autism, Diabetes); and (c) developing practitioner-oriented degree programs (e.g., Ed.D).

Interdisciplinary Research

There were primarily three purposes for brainstorming ideas for interdisciplinary research: Opportunities for grant development, faculty-student engagement, and enhancing College visibility. Although these three activities have traditionally been left to the discretion of individual departments within the College, a lack of human resources presents a unique opportunity to share in the responsibility of student development, nationally-recognized research programs, and procurement of external funding focusing on interdisciplinary research teams. As such, the following were some ideas proposed at the Conclave:

- Consider undergraduate assistantships to encourage a culture of inquiry, which could potentially help identify undergraduates with an aptitude for graduate study. Undergraduates could also be encouraged to apply for undergraduate researcher opportunities sponsored by the University.
- Develop research teams to work collaboratively with local school districts to procure grants for which they qualify. There are opportunities to collaborate with local school districts to procure federal grants for the College which focus on community development, professional development, and civic engagement. These relationships would need to be fostered by facilitating better relationships
with local superintendents, and to take advantage of the relationships that already exist between the College and local school districts.

- Facilitate collaborations for addressing societal problems through national institutes. For example, the National Cancer Institute provides a large number of grants for interdisciplinary cancer research which could potentially evolve into a research team spanning across Kinesiology, Social Work, and the SIU School of Medicine. There are also 13 grants available between 2014 and 2016 specifically related to Autism research. Collaborations could be facilitated between Behavior Analysis and Therapy, Special Education, Counselor Education, and Kinesiology, to name only a few. Autism research teams could also include the SIU School of Medicine, Psychology, and the Biological Sciences. Even if this is not one's specialty many people could add to research.
- Additional inter-departmental and inter-College research teams could be explored to “corner the market” on investigating societal problems. A few mentioned at the Conclave were Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) grants, Obesity, Diabetes, Early Childhood, Environmental Pollution, and Veteran Modality. Skill sets among faculty across departments and colleges could be explored to answer complex questions meaningful to current societal problems.

**Faculty-Student Engagement**

Although interdisciplinary research presents an opportunity to address graduate student concerns, the College can facilitate meaningful engagement with students to develop a sense of community. It was recognized that getting students to take advantage of opportunities within and outside of the classroom. However, some ideas to engage students are listed below.

- Solicit potential solutions from students that extend from their concerns brought forth in the graduate student forum.
- Sponsor a forum for undergraduate to also discuss their needs for student-faculty engagement. This could be done through a survey on D2L and from exit surveys from Teacher Education Program office.
- Have doctoral students take part in research workshop/colloquium, possibly for credit. This would allow the doctoral students to contribute to faculty research and learn the skill sets they will need for the workplace upon graduation.
- Create research and/or teaching apprenticeships for students to practice expectations of the workplace upon graduation.
- Extend communications with undergraduate and graduate students to Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. The students themselves could govern the social media.
- Create a graduate student portal or listserv where information could go out to all graduate students.
- Need a person to reach out to undergraduate registered student organizations (RSOs) to determine strengths, weaknesses, and potential for collaboration among
the RSOs. This could be facilitated by staff in the recruitment and retention office.

- Reintroduce events such as the ice cream social - have RSOs involved, have activities for students/staff, and faculty. This could also include less formal interaction opportunities such as picnics.

Faculty Assignments, Culture, and Retention

Additional suggestions were brought forth to facilitate collaborations and College culture among faculty within the purpose of the Conclave. Below is a summary of considerations.

- Appoint an ad hoc faculty committee to facilitate/coordinate cross-listed content courses, including research methods courses described above. This committee would identify courses with similar content or additional benefit to the larger student population, facilitate meetings with faculty teaching those courses to enhance opportunities for all students.
- Faculty time is at a premium. The College needs a grant professional to better facilitate proposals and targeting funding opportunities.
- Expand on the idea of interdisciplinary hiring and course development for teaching across settings (e.g., educational design). This would facilitate the development of skills sets for students across departments.
- Sponsor a College-wide Innovation Incubator Group to share ideas and network with each other.
- Consider mechanisms for giving credit to assistant professors who do extra work that competes with the time traditionally set aside for research, teaching, and service. This could help retain strong faculty who are being increasingly asked to fill the gaps in program delivery.
- Facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations by highlighting collaborative success at seminars, such as the Brown Bag Series sponsored by the College.
- Appoint an ad hoc faculty committee to facilitate/coordinate visiting scholars and/or post-doc applicants with an interest in interdisciplinary grant writing and inter-departmental collaborations, including research and teaching. Seek funding from foundations for visiting scholars/post-docs.
- Advertise for scholars on sabbatical from their host institution with an interest in interdisciplinary research.
- Emphasize Rural Education incorporating a number of disciplines.
- Incentivize programs to develop on-line and/or distance education opportunities. The current revenue allocation structure for distance education returns 70% of generated revenue to the College. In a time of financial shortfalls, it seems worthwhile to explore returning a portion of the generated revenue to the academic units and/or programs to facilitate programmatic health, stability, and integrity. Moreover, a return on the substantial resource allocation for distance education could be used to retain faculty by providing other-than-salary (OTS)
funds for professional development activities and other tangible resources.

**Recommendations**

The AAC worked together to create a suggested list of ideas and action steps for the AAC to consider for next year:

(1) Appoint an ad hoc faculty committee to facilitate/coordinate discussions for research faculty about inter-departmental research methods courses (specifically regarding paradigm/theory, design, and content/application).

(2) Facilitate connecting department representatives from SIU School of Medicine, Kinesiology, School of Social Work, and other interested parties for cancer research and interdisciplinary grant preparation.

(3) Facilitate the development of certificate programs especially if they present grant opportunities. According to the Graduate School, graduate certificate programs can be created between programs to enhance skill sets of graduate students. Up to nine credit hours of a graduate certificate can be counted toward a graduate degree; therefore, departments and programs can consider interdisciplinary collaborations without compromising existing degrees and/or programs.

(4) Explore the possibility of research colloquia for graduate credit to enhance research knowledge and skill sets of doctoral students within the college.

(5) Explore redesigning EDUC 510: Introduction to Doctoral Studies to include discussions about current research agendas from faculty across the college.