

College of Arts and Sciences
MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY MEETING
November 15, 2016, 3:30 p.m.
242 Kresge Library

Members present: Andrews, Barry, Battles, Bekele, Berven, D., Berven, K., Cheng, Dulio, Eis, Freed, Gooren, Guest, Herold, Lorca, Meyers, Miller, Reger, Rigstad, Roth, Spagnuolo, Tardella, Tonsing, Tucker, Walwema, Wang, Welling, Westrick, Yang

Members absent: Navin, Orces

Ex-Officio present: Corcoran, Hitt, Stewart

1. Call to Order

Dean Corcoran called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

2. Minutes of October 18, 2016

The minutes of the Assembly meeting of October 18, 2016, were approved.

3. Proposal for a Bachelor of Arts in Dance Education (*second reading*)
Proposal for a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance Education and Performance (*second reading*)

The proposals for Bachelor of Arts in Dance Education, and Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance Education and Performance were approved unanimously.

4. Proposal for a Bachelor of Music in Piano Pedagogy (*second reading*)
Proposal for a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance and Pedagogy (*second reading*)

The proposals for a Bachelor of Music in Piano Pedagogy, and Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance and Pedagogy were approved unanimously.

5. "What Do I Do with a Degree in...? A Discussion in Preparation for Martin Luther King Day Event

Dean Corcoran provided an update on his attendance at a Deans' meeting at the Council of Colleges of Arts & Sciences (CCAS), where he attended a panel whose topic was what is being done to prepare students for life after graduation. He reported that the CCAS has identified essential learning outcomes primarily based upon skills and knowledge, but he believes it is a mistake to base our CAS goals on employment only. He would like the College to think in terms of a broader scope of skills that students can use in order to have a more successful life because our students should be prepared for a much fuller life than just work. He requested that Assembly members assist him in articulating what it means to have a major in any of the disciplines in the College of Arts and Sciences so that this message can be conveyed to students. He pointed out that the Admissions officers and those who work in Career Services are the ones who articulate our stories to incoming students, and so we need to make it clearer to them what our stories are because this is an important way for prospective students to get a better understanding of what it could mean to have a major in the CAS. He observed that it is clear what accounting majors do after graduation with their majors, but he said we need to make it clearer to prospective students why they should major in Philosophy, or English, or any of the disciplines in the CAS. He emphasized that this is especially important now because the

enrollment numbers for 2017 are way off. He gave the example of Engineering where the number of admits for next year is down 29% at this point, and he said there is no area in the university where numbers are up. He then opened up the floor for discussion on how the CAS can better promote itself so that students would know what they can do with a degree from one of the disciplines of the CAS, and the following is a summary of comments from the animated discussion that took place.

Mr. Cheng started things off by observing that the First Year Advising office has caused problems for a colleague's department (philosophy), and he asked if this was true for any other departments.

Mr. Dulio agreed that First Year Advisors had not done his department any favors.

With regard to the possibilities for students for future employment, Mr. Rigstad stated that the set of all jobs a person can get with a business degree that one cannot get with a degree in philosophy, history, or English, etc., degree is the null set, and he said that students should be told this when they go for advising.

Mr. Andrews said that the university is worried about retention, so the university has adopted a one-size-fits-all approach to try to get students to commit as early as possible to a major, but he does not think that this fits with the 18-year old mentality because students change after a year at the university. He believes that flexibility is needed, and it is very important to advise students well.

Mr. Tucker agreed that commitment to the major is not the most important thing for students.

Ms. Reger said that in her department, they have a field experience class where students list their skill set, but surprisingly it is often the case that students do not actually know what their skills are. She said they had a student/alumni mixer, which was a wonderful event, and it was amazing to find out the diverse things that alumni from her department are doing now. She thinks this kind of a meeting between alumni and students can be a big success and can be institutionalized.

Mr. Corcoran expressed his enthusiasm about this example of creating a partnership with alums to spread the word of what alumni are doing and how the skill set they learned helped them to get where they are.

Ms. Battles concurred that many of our students can end up in the same careers, no matter what their majors are, because the major is more of a disciplinary practice to learn the depth and breadth of a discipline, with a good global perspective, and this can prepare them for different careers.

Mr. Lorca said that we are not going about it the right way because our students are young and under a lot of stress to succeed and find jobs, but he pointed out that it is hard to find jobs, and he added that students are even stressed out in high school. He said that the first thing students want to know is that they are not losing their money by coming to the university, and our job is to tell them that there is an inherent value in learning. He believes that we should tell them to stop stressing so much and that we should tell students that they should enjoy the ride for what it is worth because the ride is interesting and adds value to life itself. He does not think that it is the job of the people in the advising offices to get this message to students, but rather it is the job of the faculty.

Mr. Berven said that he does not think the students are the problem as much as their parents who are paying for the education when it comes to convincing them that getting a job when they graduate is not the most important thing, so the parents need to be re-educated if they are to understand that the education is not just about employment but rather about preparing students to have a fuller life.

Mr. Cheng said that students wind up with \$30,000 to \$50,000 in loans to pay off after graduation, and so it should not be surprising that they want to know what their earning potential is.

Mr. Corcoran said that of course parents want their children to have a good job, but parents also want their children to be happy. He noted that the research shows that a good education is important for the public good and the public health, and in neighborhoods where there are better educated neighbors, there is a generally healthier community.

Mr. Guest said the university is competing for students in an environment that is difficult because there are ads on TV for cheaper ways to get employment skills, with claims that if you sign up for these programs you can get a great job and make more money without the \$30,000 debt you would have if you attended a university. He added that in MTD they audition their future students and this is a form of recruiting, and therefore his department is not really affected by what students are told by Admissions.

Ms. Berven observed that in her department, they do not know what most of the alumni are doing after they graduate, and the information that exists is mostly anecdotal which means it is not actually known if students are in jobs related to their major or not, or even what their employment situation is.

Mr. Lorca agreed that this is a problem, and he wondered why our alumni cannot keep their OU email address because they lose contact with us, and by losing track of our students we also lose funding opportunities.

Mr. Corcoran observed that life is made up of stories, and we need to fill our pockets full of stories to tell students to give them a broader idea of the possibilities. He provided an example of an OU history major who enlisted in the U.S. military after graduation, became a logistics officer in Afghanistan, and found that he was better prepared for his job than anyone else. Mr. Corcoran said it is important for students to hear this kind of a story.

Mr. Guest said that in MTD, there is an exit interview in which his department gets the students' regular email addresses, and in addition, his department has an alumni Facebook page which is a way of keeping up with what people are doing now.

Ms. Miller expressed concern that because we want to retain students, we have metrics to measure retention, but often we now end up alienating returning students which is an important group. She does not think we have been helping returning and transfer students enough and she recalled that it did not used to be this way. She provided an example of a woman who has an MBA and who is employed, but the woman hates her job and wants to return to OU to get a History major, which she would do by taking night classes. Ms. Miller expressed her belief that we need to focus on commuter, returning and transfer students, and she questioned whether we really need to focus on having more FTIACS living on campus which is the focus of the university these days.

Mr. Corcoran interjected that with reference to commuters, he had spoken with a 1990 graduate of OU who felt that he had had a full experience of an undergraduate education as a commuter during his undergraduate years, and it was not necessary to live on campus in order to have a great experience.

Ms. Welling said that she thinks it is difficult to get good information about the university from the outside because the OU website is convoluted. She said that it is often the case that there are not functional links but prospective students need to be able to get good information from the OU website. She noted that it is practically impossible to delete old pages, and so there is old information on the OU website about her department that her department cannot get rid of, and this has a negative effect.

Ms. Eis said that the issues of the OU website and advising are part of a general attitude by the university that everything needs to be consistent across the university. She expressed frustration that each department is not allowed to have its own character. She proclaimed that we should be allowed to celebrate our diversity, and this should be done on our individual departmental websites. She bemoaned the fact that all of our homepages have to look alike. She said it took years of fighting by her department to be permitted to put a video on their departmental website which was very frustrating because the video was important as far as letting prospective students know what they could learn in her department, and it seemed like an obvious thing for them to have on their website. She does not think these constraints by the university should be in place.

Ms. Barry agreed that we need to have a creative presence on our websites, and she mentioned that her department had also had to fight the university on this matter.

Ms. Battles remarked that there is a layer of junk between faculty and our students which makes it difficult for us to get the message to the first year advisers not to tell students to commit to a major in their first year.

Mr. Cheng said that the move towards consistency across the university is not just with regards to homepages and websites, but also is true with regard to teaching evaluations. He said that uniform student evaluations are coming soon and this is something he opposes.

Ms. Welling said she was also against uniform teaching evaluations, and noted that the university is going to push for online evaluations, but she worries that there will be an internet troll effect if this happens. She said that we can get better responses if the evaluations are done in class because the professor and students are there.

Mr. Tucker expressed his concern that the university is only interested in bean counting, whereas the purpose of student evaluations is supposed to be for the purpose of better pedagogy, and so he was not in favor of uniform teaching evaluations either.

Mr. Andrews said the move in the direction of consistent teaching evaluations is because the university cares mostly about control and management.

As the discussion drew to a close, Mr. Corcoran asked Assembly members to take this conversation back to their departments. He asked members to think of two things to suggest that the First Year Advising Center can do differently. He commented that, in his opinion, on Martin Luther King Day last year the presentations were stale and predictable, so we need to approach the presentations made that day differently. He declared that we want to hammer our students over and over with our stories so that it is clear to students why they should choose a major in the CAS.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dikka Berven (secretary)