

CLA Senate December 2019 Minutes
College of Liberal Arts, CC 3545,
December 9, 2019, 2:30-4:00

1. Approval of Agenda

Approved unanimously at 2:31pm

2. Approval of the minutes from November 2019

Approved unanimously at 2:31pm

3. Dean's Report

The Dean's report consists of two items.

Academic restructuring.

The Dean starts by giving us some history behind the email from the Provost about academic restructuring. When Interim Chancellor Newman came to us from the President's office, she came with the impression that the campus has too many schools and colleges. Although we have already begun to consolidate, there is a general sense that we have excessive academic structures. This drove Interim Chancellor Newman to take a look, but the Provost has put the brakes on, and wants to wait until we have a permanent Chancellor. The Dean suspects that everything will be on the table. We are one of the bigger colleges, and the administration may want to look at whether we are an optimal size. However, whether and how we are restructured will fall to the new Chancellor. The Dean emphasizes that the administration *does* want faculty input, but, at this point in time, he doesn't think we need to worry too much about this. He suspects that the administration is looking at McCormack primarily, and whether that school should be part of CLA. Or even splicing us. But no one has put a lot of thought into this yet, and it might be useful to come back with our own data.

Voluntary Early Retirement Program

He concludes his report by noting that the voluntary early retirement program has hit CLA harder than other colleges. We haven't had obvious staff replacement needs remedied, and the administration are now saying that they don't want to make decisions until they know how academic restructuring will work. Yet this restructuring is not going to happen for a while, and that hurts CLA. For example, CLA First doesn't

have a staff person! The Dean tells us that we need a university wide procedure for making fair staffing decisions across colleges.

Questions

There are three questions for the Dean.

1. A Senator asks whether we should be worried about academic restructuring. For example, are they talking about cutting CLA programs? The Dean reassures us that we shouldn't be worried. While they are looking to save money, they are primarily focused on two schools: the School for the Environment and McCormack. And even proposals we're hearing about, such as moving McCormack into CLA, are purely hypothetical at this stage. Moreover, it's not clear how many of these proposals actually make good on the goal to *cut* costs.
2. A Senator asks whether the Provost is going to put together an academic restructuring taskforce. The Dean says yes and encourages members of CLA Senate to get on it.
3. Another senator asks the Dean what he thinks about academic restructuring. Does he think that CLA is too big or optimal? The Dean says he wants to see the numbers. He wants to think about the benefits and the costs of making changes. However, at present, he's unwilling to spend a lot of time thinking about this issue because he thinks that there are more important CLA issues to be resolved.

The Dean's report ends at 2:48pm

4. Moderator's Report

The Moderator informs us that Jean Rhodes, Vice Chair of the Chancellor's Search, has told her that they will be interviewing candidates for the permanent Chancellor this week. The goal is to bring 3 to 4 people to campus in late January. The Moderator tells us that Rhodes seems *really* optimistic about the search, but she would like to hear from faculty if they have questions. There is a portal, and faculty can email her directly.

There are no questions for the Moderator.

The Moderator's report ends at 2:51pm

5. Motion from Majors, Honors, and Special Programs to approve the following new programs:

- The closure of Archaeology & History BA and Anthropology & History BA

A Senator from Anthropology explains that there are currently no students enrolled in these majors, and that the faculty generally agree that students interested in Archaeology ought to be enrolled in the Anthropology major.

Approved unanimously at 2:53pm

- Changes to Theater Arts Major

Approved unanimously at 2:54pm

6. Motion from the Academic Affairs Committee to approve the following NEW courses:

- English 209

Approved unanimously at 2:54pm

7. Motion from the Academic Affairs Committee to approve the following changes to existing courses:

- CINE 235L
- CINE 245
- CINE 276L
- CINE 285L
- CINE 320
- CINE 330L
- CINE 350
- CINE 355
- CINE 372L
- ENGL 204

A Senator has a question about CINE 350: it says that there is a change in course description, but it doesn't have the old description. And two forms are labelled CINE 350. That change is noted by the Moderator.

Approved unanimously as a block at 2:58pm

8. Discussion of the CLA TA guideline document

The meeting closes with a discussion of the revised guidelines for CLA faculty about best practices for working with TAs. Although another guidance document exists,¹ the Moderator explains that this document doesn't make ours redundant. Another Senator, who reached out to TAs, concurs, reporting that many TAs would like clarification on a range of issues (e.g. their responsibilities for note taking), and informs us that TAs are not governed by the Faculty Staff Union (FSU), but by the Office for Faculty Development (OFD) and Office for Graduate Studies (OGS)

The discussion starts with a Senator pointing out that this existing document (see footnote 1) was the subject of considerable disagreement at the new faculty orientation. The primary issue being: who developed it? And what is its legitimacy? Another Senator points out that it's routinely ignored because it states that MA students may not comment on undergraduate work, and yet that's *precisely* the work that many faculty *need* their TAs to do.² At the same time, there's nothing in the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) contract indicating that MA TAs can't do this work. Moreover, workshops offered by those who put this document together issue guidance that directly contradicts it. In short, it's unclear what authority, if any, this document has and what the consequences are for faculty who do not follow it. Moreover, it's clearly not enforced since many faculty *do* use their MA TAs to comment on papers and essay exams.

The discussion moves on from this guidance document to ours. A Senator strongly recommends that we work *with* the GEO on our set of guidelines. This Senator also recommends that we make it especially clear that this is a guidance document for *CLA* faculty, given our limited purview. Another Senator is worried that we might still be overstepping, especially if the guidelines are too specific. We may have the authority to issue general guidelines, but it should be up to individual departments to work out specific guidance for their faculty and TAs. With regards to involving GEO, another Senator asks whether that's appropriate. Do they give guidance about relationships, resources, or mediation? In response, the Moderator explains that our document is not

¹ https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/cla_a_c/TA_guidelines-1.pdf

² "MA students assisting in large lectures MAY NOT: • comment on or grade papers or essay exams*" https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/cla_a_c/TA_guidelines-1.pdf

designed to *re-negotiate* a TA contract or *define* departmental practice, but simply help foster a good relationship between CLA faculty and their TAs.

Working towards a practical solution to some of these issues, a Senator suggests that some of our bullet points should be in the form of questions, that way it's clearer that we're helping to *guide* and *establish* a good working relationship; not *define* it. There's a general agreement that the TA portion of our document should now take question form. Generally, Senators think that this revision makes it clearer that we're *just* indicating what the *CLA faculty's* responsibilities are; we're not also redefining the TA's contract.

The Moderator then asks: what's the best way to ensure this document has a life? Send it to all CLA department chairs? Office for Faculty Development (OFD) for training? A Senator thinks that this is too premature, expressing concern that our revised document, although now less controversial, side steps the original issue. It's still unclear exactly what we are allowed to ask our TAs to do. Are we allowed to ask MA students to grade papers or essay exams? Moreover, with regards to the existing document guiding work with graduate assistants (GAs) in large lecture courses (see footnote 1), was GEO consulted? Would OFD and OGS be willing to help us get clear on what the realities are for our use of TAs in large CLA lectures? If there's not an answer, then is it up to the department? The individual faculty member? The Moderator agrees to contact Judith Goleman, Director of the Office for Faculty Development (OFD) and Bala Sundaram, Vice Provost for Research & Dean of Graduate Studies (OGS)

Meeting ends at 3: 36pm