



HLC Accreditation 2016-2017

Evidence Document

Faculty Senate

Meeting Minutes, May 17, 2010

B.S./B.A. Program in Physics:
Discussion and Votes on the Recommendation for
Program Discontinuance

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WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE MINUTES of the meeting: Monday, May 17, 2010

Members Present: Anderson, Bolin, Bryant, Celestin, Craft, Decker, DeSilva, Hemans, Hershfield, Horn, Hu, Klunder, Kreinath, Lewis-Moss, Miller, Monroe, Moore-Jansen, Mosack, Myers, Pickard, Rillema, Rokosz, Ross, D. Russell, L. Russell, Scherz, Skinner, Smith-Campbell, Strattman, Taher, Wolf, Yeager

Members Absent: Baker, Baldrige, J. Bennett, T. Bennett, Brooks, Carruthers, Dale, Lezotte, Monroe, Spurgeon

Members Excused: Henry, Soles,

Ex-Officio members present: Miller

Summary of Action:

1. Voted on the recommendation for program discontinuance of the MA in Gerontology – 5 agree with recommendation, 26 do not agree.
2. Voted on the recommendation for program discontinuance of the BS/BA in Physics – 3 agree with recommendation, 27 do not agree.

I. Call of the meeting to order: The meeting was called to order at 3:30p.m. by President-Elect Hemans, because President Soles had a family emergency.

II. Informal Statements and Proposals: none

III. Approval of the Minutes: none

IV. President's Report: none

V. Committee Reports: none

VI. Old Business: none

VII. New Business:

It was moved, seconded, and passed to discuss discontinuance.

Provost Miller reported that the review process was going well. He discussed the Program Review Committee process as required by KBOR, and noted that the committee's report was presented to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, which endorsed the process. He noted that discussions have been underway with the College of Health Professions regarding Gerontology and with Engineering regarding Physics. He indicated that the forthcoming process would involve reviewing the advisement of this and all other meetings on discontinuance and then making a recommendation to President Beggs, who will decide the schedule of procedures at that point. He said that any decision to discontinue a program would trigger the process on faculty retention

outlined in Policies and Procedures.

A. Recommendation for program discontinuance of the MA in Gerontology-- Speakers were invited to make statements about the proposal to discontinue the MA program in Gerontology. Michal Birzer from Community Affairs announced that he had recently reviewed a proposal from the College of Health Professions to absorb the Gerontology program. He discussed the potential of and need for the program, noting that the aging of the population and increased life expectancy create a need for workers in geriatric care, and he pointed to predictions by the Department of Labor of a significant future demand for such workers. He said that for the past 3-4 years, one tenure-eligible faculty member (plus, when possible, one or two adjunct instructors) had taught several hundred credit hours per semester. He said that inadequate resources had been allocated to the running of the program and that there is a need to advertise the program. He said that the Gerontology program would fit well within the College of Health Professions. Richard Muma from the College of Health Professions said that Gerontology had been in CHP until moving to LAS in the early 90s, that the program had been successful within CHP, and that it was not known to him why the faculty of Gerontology had decided to move to LAS. He warned that discontinuing the program would jeopardize the offering of courses in Gerontology. He said that all department chairs in the college, as well the dean, supported consideration of the proposal to incorporate Gerontology. He said that a per-hour fee would be assessed to gain revenue to support the program. He said that Gerontology would fit well into the College of Health Professions because Gerontology is a sub-discipline of Public Health and because there is widespread support within the college. He said that the college plans to change the Gerontology curriculum so as to make the program more practical and focused on providing needed skills. He said that the college plans to make efforts to feed CHP students into the program. He said that if the program cannot meet KBOR quotas by 2013, the college will recommend discontinuance of the program.

Hemans then opened the floor for questions about the proposal to discontinue the Gerontology program. Someone asked about the implications of discontinuance for current students in the program; Hemans replied that university policy allows current students to finish under the existing curriculum structure. Scherz expressed support for the proposal to move the program to CHP. Gordon noted the general aging of the population, including current faculty. Hershfield asked whether CHP administration would commit resources to the program beyond the proposed student fee; Muma replied that at present the fee would be the main source of revenue and that he could not speak for the dean beyond that. Hershfield asked whether the program's viability would require further tenure-stream hires or whether existing faculty resources were adequate; Muma replied that two gerontologists would be ideal, but others already in CHP have teaching competence in Gerontology and could offer courses. The current faculty member in the Gerontology program said that the faculty arrangement outlined by Muma is common in Gerontology programs in other universities, which are often multi-disciplinary and use distance learning. Hershfield asked whether the faculty member believed that the program would be viable without another tenure-stream hire; she replied that it would be, and that the program's primary need is for administrative support to oversee, advise, and recruit students. Gordon said that interdisciplinary programs are necessary, but that universities must invest to provide administrative support for such programs. Myers asked whether Gerontology, with more administrative support, would be workable within in LAS, or whether it would be better to move to CHP; the faculty member in Gerontology replied that it would be better to move the program to CHP, since most students are coming to the program from CHP. Someone expressed support for the proposal to move Gerontology to CHP.

The question was called and a vote was taken. There were 5 votes for discontinuance, and 26 votes against discontinuance.

2. Recommendation for program discontinuance – BS/BA in Physics --- Speakers were then invited to make statements about the proposal to discontinue the BA/BS in Physics.

Nick Solomey, chair of Physics addressed the necessity of physics to engineering, the natural sciences, the university, the community, and industry. He said that he joined the program fewer

than 3 years ago, and found that lack of enrollment was due to inadequate advertising of the program. He said that there was an increasing trend of majors and graduates in 2007-2010, due largely to improved advising on the importance of a physics major. He predicted that the program would be able to satisfy KBOR quotas by 2012. He said that there was an increased trend in credit hour production, paired with low expenses involved in maintaining the program and its faculty. He said that physics majors could expect strong salaries, low rates of unemployment, and strong demand even in recession. He discussed the importance of the university's service to a local industry experiencing a shortage of physicists. He said that the program has sent graduates to many top graduate programs in physics. He said that four scholarships have been donated to the program by Boeing, and that there has been industry support for the work of several of the program's faculty members. He said that WSU had the potential for a leadership role among Kansas universities on the Auger Cosmic Ray Observatory project, and that the funds for that 25-year project would go only to those universities that had a physics program. He said that it is common for students in Mathematics and Engineering to double-major in Physics, even though the current system makes such a double major a double degree requiring 1.5 additional years; he said that moving Physics into Engineering would not solve that problem, although the problem could be solved between Engineering and LAS. He said that the program teaches classes for several colleges (Engineering, Health Professions, Education, LAS, Fine Arts) as well as for general education. He said that discontinuance would make it difficult to recruit faculty of the appropriate level.

Christian Wolf from Mathematics said that WSU needs a strong research emphasis in order to compete with other institutions, and that all research must be preserved equally in order to maintain the quality of the whole university, citing as an example the importance of a strong Physics program for a strong Engineering program. He said that the university needs to remain a part of discipline-wide progress in Physics, which has the potential for important social changes. He discussed the strength of the Physics faculty, including their earning of research grants. He said that program assessment should be about program quality, and not just about numbers of students. He said that Physics is an important area of general study for students in several specialized areas. He said that the university should be persistent in supporting Physics, and that efforts to grow the program have been given inadequate time, since a new chair was hired only 2.5 years ago.

Thomas DeLillo from Mathematics said that the discontinuance proposal was made on the basis of incorrect information and under time pressure. He discussed the contributions of Solomey to academic life in Physics, which had produced benefits for local educators. He explained the nature of the Auger project, its importance as a research opportunity, and its potential impact on knowledge in physics. He said that the program is important in order to attract industry to the area. He criticized the process that led to the discontinuance proposal, the rush of the process at the end of year-long reshaping, and a lack of transparency.

The floor was then opened for discussion. VP Miller responded that Auger project is not inevitable, that it has been discussed from many years, and that many obstacles remain; he said that the near-term prospect is not optimistic. David MacDonald from ORA affirmed this, and questioned especially the prospects of Kansas' involvement in the project. Solomey replied that important steps in the project are already underway and that he is already involved in them. Gordon said that the university must decide whether they want to be part of emerging research, whether the project is inevitable or not; Wolf said that it is important that the university make the most of what opportunities there are, whether they are inevitable or not, and that discontinuance would remove those opportunities for WSU. Horn asked about projections for Physics to meet KBOR quotas; Hemans replied that program review looked only through the Spring 2009 semester. Someone said that the advances that the program has made are significant. Keith Pickus said that Solomey's data on those trends are not accurate, as they are not based on criteria used to report to KBOR; he acknowledged an upward trend, but said that growth is not as significant as had been suggested in the meeting. Hershfield noted the historic centrality of physics to the liberal arts and sciences; he encouraged consideration of creative strategies to facilitate double majors in Physics and other programs, especially across colleges; and he encouraged consideration of

such strategies for smaller programs in general, so that students could earn double majors without having to earn double degrees. Gordon said it was difficult for programs to count majors in real time for the purposes of program review; Hemans replied that he and President Soles have met with Martha Shawver to address such concerns. Myers asked whether low programs in Physics at KSU and KU were also facing discontinuance; Solomey replied that the dean at KSU reports that their administration is taking no such action. Someone from Chemistry discussed the importance of Physics to Chemistry, noting previous beneficial research collaborations; he said teaching quality in Physics would suffer without tenure-stream instructors; he said it would be difficult to recruit chemists to an institution without a Physics program; and he warned of the difficulty of maintaining vibrant work in the sciences without a Physics program.

The question was called and a vote was taken. There were 3 votes for discontinuance, 27 votes against discontinuance, and 1 abstention.

The Senate then moved to executive session. There was discussion of a Senate response to the discontinuance proposals. Members offered comments and amendments to a draft statement presented by Hemans.

VIII. As May Arise:

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