

English Dept. meeting notes, 1/19

In attendance: Karen Chandler, Andrew Rabin, Frank Kelderman, Mary P Sheridan, Paul Griner, Marie Pruitt, Andrea Olinger, Joan D'Antoni, Megan Poole, Joshua Adams, Amy Clukey, Matthew Biberman, David Anderson, Bronwyn Williams, Timothy Johnson, Hristomir Stanev, Ian Stansel, Mark Mattes, Robin Mozer, Dana Touron, Julie Wrinn

The meeting began with introductions and Dean Touron's presentation/listening session. The Dean touched on her vision for A&S, her leadership values, and her goals for the meeting.

After the Dean's initial remarks, Andrew acknowledged the program directors and faculty members for their work, spoke about the undergraduate programs, & highlighted the launch of some of our new initiatives. Andrew mentioned some major challenges facing the dept., including attracting majors, and "cutting through the noise" with regard to conventional wisdom regarding the employability of humanities majors. He suggested we need better messaging about this topic from the A&S administration, as well as higher-quality recruiting events and marketing.

Frank followed with a report on the many successes of the graduate program, with an emphasis on job placement, time to degree, increasing applications and enrollment, and student satisfaction with teaching and mentoring by department faculty.

Dean Touron opened the floor for questions. Andy suggested she begin by addressing some of the questions that the department had shared with her. She began with questions concerning compensation. The Dean stressed that the college was facing a \$2 million deficit and that we do not have the budget we need to have to perform our mission.

Karen C. pointed out that the dept.'s research and travel money has to come out of our annual operating expenses. Andrew added that the small size of the budget means that faculty have to pay out of their own pockets to do research that their jobs require.

Dean Touron reiterated that we do not have the money we need to have. She explained that because we need more credibility with higher administration, she would need to find money where she could in the short term before advocating in the longer term. She is optimistic that the current study of faculty salaries will yield some results. In the meantime, she will need to find efficiencies in the current budget, and cultivate investment.

Matthew asked about these investments. Dean Touron explained she has had some 80 "external partner" meetings, but because many of the gifts to the college come through bequests, it is a long-term process.

Dean Touron went on to say that there is a narrative at the University that A&S is a service unit, we don't research, "we teach the core and complain." She said that we need to change this narrative. She also noted that A&S is without a communications director at the moment. In the meantime, she said that one way to change the narrative with central administration is to show how A&S faculty overwork is impacting academic outcomes and retention. There was some discussion of a pilot program to reduce composition class size and to study the effects to make the case to central admin that enrollment caps should be lowered.

Mark emphasized that he would like to see this pilot program presented as an investment in English in particular to highlight our contribution to the success of A&S.

David mentioned that the planning and budget committee was working on how to letting departments save more money that they do not spend during the year. *[I remember the Dean's response being inconclusive here but I cannot recall what she said exactly. —JA]*

- Karen C's addition: The Dean said it was not feasible for departments to save money because the Central Administration would see that as a sign that A&S really didn't need a greater infusion of money.

Amy pointed out that DEI is an added burden on A&S faculty for which they get neither money nor credit, and asked how A&S faculty would be protected from this in the future. Dean Touron said she was unsure but that she would at least point out the problem when she saw it.

Mary reminded the Dean that the use of the term "efficiencies" in administrative language was "tricky" because the added workload on existing faculty created by efficiencies (i.e. reductions) was not taken into account on subsequent evaluations. The Dean acknowledged this but also said that "sometimes efficiencies are not bad."

Bronwyn noted widespread burnout and cynicism among the faculty and asked what would be done to alleviate this. The Dean said that she was an optimist, and that she wants things to be better. This requires figuring out "how to show the value of what we do."

Joshua asked when a new communications director for A&S would be hired. The Dean said that the search was held up in HR and that the salary that had been proposed was too low.

Tim inquired about tenure lines and the system for their apportionment. "What's the system?" The Dean said that "There is no system," and the college and every department will develop a hiring plan.

Andrew stressed that the current situation was about more than just jobs and noted the substantial financial and mental health toll that the past years had taken on faculty in the department. He thanked the dean for coming and answering our questions.