Faculty Meeting
College of Arts and Sciences
March 3, 2015
Smith Hall, 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Faculty Clerk Paulette Bierzchudek (Biology) called the meeting to order at 3:31.

1. Approval of Minutes: December 2, 2014

The minutes were approved.

A reminder for those who attended the Halfway to Graduation event: Jennifer Hubbert is collecting feedback.

This month’s News & Brews will feature Kellar Autumn (Biology) and Jessie Starling (Religious Studies) at the Buffalo Gap at 4:00 on March 16.

Dean’s Report
Interim Dean Detweiler-Bedell greeted everyone. Remarking on the rather distancing layout of the chairs, she encouraged faculty to think about how they would like these meetings structured in the future. Would they want to continue the practice of pre-circulating reports, or might there be another way to foster discussion? With a new Dean arriving next year, the faculty should discuss the extent to which they want to shape how the meetings run.

The Dean wanted to follow-up on academic advising. The past month had been full of vibrant, rich discussion through emails, face-to-face, water cooler chats, and department meetings. It was inspiring how much attention, thought, and concern the faculty brought to this question. Janet Davidson (Psychology and Director of Academic Advising) would describe how the Dean and others listened to faculty and what the next steps were going to be. But as a reminder of how the conversation proceeded this past month: At the last faculty meeting, the Dean had presented an overview of the work already accomplished in examining the role of advising. After that meeting, the Dean worked closely with the Advising Office as well Faculty Council to revise the two proposed models, which then were circulated for consideration. Faculty Council then reviewed feedback together with Janet Davidson and Assistant Dean for Student Success Carla Harcelroad. The Dean then met with department chairs prior to the faculty meeting.

The first question that prompted this conversation was whether or not most of the faculty wanted to be involved in some way with pre-major advising. The answer was a resounding yes. This discussion was an excellent opportunity to affirm this. The Dean acknowledged that not everyone agreed and that there were dissenting opinions. But the majority of faculty members confirmed that they wanted to be involved in pre-major advising.

The second larger concern was about our limited resources and the tradeoffs necessary to fund these new positions. The Dean commended the faculty for thinking about these limits. Creating anything new needs to come with careful scrutiny. Thus she wanted to clarify that the decision to fund these two positions was not made until the very end of the budget negotiations process—in fact, it was approved less than two weeks ago from the
Board of Trustees. Like most of the faculty, the Dean had never before had the privilege, joy, and torture of joining everyone in one room to discuss the budget, including the Office for Institutional Advancement, Chief Financial Officer Carl Vance, Dean of the Students Anna Gonzalez, and Provost Jane Atkinson. There was never any tradeoff between these two advising positions and other positions in CAS. The reality is that the faculty budget is separate from this budget that we were discussing. No funding was taken away from any person or program in CAS. Instead the Dean had to make a compelling argument for having this incremental growth in this area experiencing need. She was able to point out the serendipitous felicity in the hiring of Assistant Dean Carla Harcelroad. There was, prior to her assuming the deanship, the recommendations from both Janet Davidson and Jerry Harp (English), as Directors of Advising, for a co-director. Assistant Dean Carla Harcelroad is perfectly suited for this role. Past and current directors of academic advising also were on record having said that the office is terribly over-worked. There is clear demonstrated need.

Something else pivotal in the argument for these additional FTEs is that the faculty should recognize that there has been an extraordinary amount of excellent advising going on in the Office of the Registrar. Faculty would not believe the number of students who go to the Registrar’s Office to ask questions about classes and to receive terrific advice. But it makes more sense for those questions to be redirected, as the Registrar’s Office is already very busy. Do we need more staff in the Registrar’s Office, or should we reallocate the resources so students can get the support they need? Ultimately we need to support our students better in advising, for that will support them better in their classes and keep them here. This then required the coming together of funds from other pockets. People in Common Services devoted money to this to make this happen. Hopefully this clarifies the money question.

Janet Davidson reported that she and the Dean had been hearing from concerned faculty at all hours of the day and night. What emerged from this discussion was that there will be no changes to faculty pre-major advising. Starting in the fall all tenured, tenure-track, and with-term faculty will be assigned pre-major advisees. All faculty will meet with their advisees during New Student Orientation. Everybody will keep doing what they are doing. The size of the incoming class will affect the number of advisees assigned. Whenever possible, the hope is also to assign students to someone teaching one of their classes. Hopefully this will mean six to 10 pre-major students for every advisor. Every student also will be assigned a college advisor. There will be a team of six offering support for academic advising: Assistant Dean Carla Harcelroad, Maureen Reed, Kaiti Dugger, the two new hires, and the Faculty Director. The Academic Advising Office also will handle deep advising – that is, time-intensive cases that involve roommate problems, time management trouble, midterm-deficiencies, etc. Maureen will continue offering the workshops that she started this year on study skills and student success. There also may be optional workshops for faculty to provide assistance with Webadvisor or whatever faculty are interested in.

For the last two summers the College had summer advising, during which incoming students registered for all their classes over the summer, in phone consultation with faculty and staff advisors. This year’s goal would be to provide more continuity between the summer advisor and the advisor the student is assigned upon arrival on campus. Every student will be assigned both a faculty advisor and a college advisor; so if a student’s faculty advisor is unable to speak with them over the summer, their college advisor can do so. But faculty are urged that if they can do summer advising to please help out to make the incoming students’ transition to Lewis & Clark smoother.
The Advising Office will be moving to Albany starting the next academic year. Nothing will be taken away but a lot of support now added.

Dean Detweiler-Bedell thanked Janet Davidson for the explanation. She then addressed another set of comments that arose in the conversation about advising, namely how good faculty advising should be encouraged and rewarded. Should we have an evaluation form for advisors as we do for teachers? What sort of recommendation should the faculty make to the new dean about how advising should be recognized in salary review?

Finally, she wanted the faculty to know that the search committee for the two permanent advisors has already convened. These two hires will be joining the other four members of the Office of Academic Advising. The College would like to locate these new advisors soon so that they can be trained and ready to integrate into the College before summer advising begins. If anyone had any recommendations of who might fit these positions, please let the search committee know.

The Dean thanked the faculty helping with the searches: Ben Westervelt (History), representing Arts & Humanities; Ken Clifton (Biology) for Math & Natural Sciences; and Janet Davidson for Social Sciences.

She also thanked the entire faculty for a vigorous conversation, open and honest, that reaffirmed our commitment to advising while at the same time moved us forward in finding more support to those students who need help.

Rishona Zimring (English) thanked the Dean for providing such a detailed and informative backstory to advising, as without that the faculty wouldn’t have had this conversation. She also thanked the Admissions and Financial Aid committee for informing the community about past reports. The documents that AFA sent around showed that, in long and detailed investigations of retention, advising was not one of the main priorities the students reported; however, advising rose to the top in the previous Dean’s excerpted report. She was concerned that other priorities were pushed aside.

Moreover, as chair of the Budget Advisory Committee, she expressed concern that the funding was coming from Common Services. Given that the faculty still have not had restored to them the 1 percent contribution to TIAA-CREF that was retracted from them in 2010, a cutback that was presented at the time as a temporary one, the faculty budget needs increasing. There are several resource issues that still need to be addressed.

Lastly, when summer advising was previously experimented with advisors received a $500 stipend. Will that continue?

Dean Detweiler-Bedell confirmed that there would be a stipend, as summer advising fell outside our nine-month faculty contract. What that amount will be will depend, as instead of 25 students per summer advisor there will be a maximum of 10. But, absolutely, they believe in compensating faculty for that time.

Kurt Fosso (English) worried that, as the College develops a more staffed Advising Office, when students go to the Registrar’s Office they will be sent to the Advising Office instead of their faculty advisors. He acknowledged that these referrals often happen on the fly, and he is very grateful for all the Registrar’s Office does.
Faculty Clerk Paulette Bierzychudek requested clarification from Kurt Fosso. Was he asking for the Registrar’s Office to promise to send students only to their faculty advisor instead of the Advising Office?

Dean Detweiler-Bedell explained that the Registrar’s Office is often called upon to answer clear, concrete questions. If faculty recalled the example given last month about students discovering spring their senior year that they are not prepared to graduate, those cases are discovered through the program evaluation. Program evaluations can now be run much earlier, but as they come from the Registrar’s Office, it also means that panicked students now go there anxious about how they can graduate. In the future, students will be learning about their program evaluations from the Academic Advising Office, which has time to deal with their questions. There are still details to be worked out. But we need to entrust the rollout of this program to our Advising Director.

Janet Davidson added that the aim was to create closer partnerships between faculty and the advising staff. For example, Maureen Reed may be assigned as College Advisor for every student in English, so that all English faculty know who is helping their students, but the faculty advisor will still be the one giving approval for registering.

Kurt Fosso clarified that his remarks were in response to the example of students coming to the Registrar’s Office asking what classes they should take.

Judy Finch (CAS Registrar) emphasized that the Registrar’s Office’s policy is to send students back to their faculty advisors. When the student’s question is “What class do I need to graduate?”, the Office explains that the student needs, say, a course satisfying the Creative Arts requirement, but the office does not advise which class to take. When these exchanges occur over email, it is policy to copy the advisor of record. But these sorts of interactions are increasing. Sometimes students are even sent to the Registrar’s Office by their faculty advisors.

Molly Robinson Kelly (Foreign Languages) noted that this discussion has confirmed that advisors should be drawn from the ranks of tenure, tenure-track, and faculty with term. Will instructors be able to continue advising on an optional basis?

Michael Broide (Physics) expressed skepticism about summer advising. He made the analogy that when you see your doctor, they’re hands on, they feel your funny stuff, and you indicate where you are feeling queasy. You don’t talk with them over the phone. Advising is part of the student’s first relation with the school, and we’re not seeing each other? He asked if the College could return to having students over the summer enroll for E&D and one more class, discussing the rest of their schedule with their advisor when they arrive on campus for New Student Orientation.

Janet Davidson affirmed that we could. Because 2015 New Student Orientation and other programming are already in place, it would be too difficult to make the change this summer. But this might be the last summer we conduct advising for incoming students that way.

Isabelle DeMarte (Foreign Languages) responded to Michael Broide that she personally got a lot from the summer advising process; and if more people helped out with summer advising
so that they were speaking with their own advisees, then that contact would be a lot more productive.

Janet Davidson agreed that an attachment does form even on a phone.

Philippe Brand voiced concern over the suggestion that students would evaluate the effectiveness of their advisors. There already exists debate about the accuracy of teaching evaluations used as a metric measuring performance. He was sure he spoke for many junior faculty in expressing anxiety about how such evaluations would fit into tenure decisions.

Dean Detweiler-Bedell reassured him that, absolutely, others were aware of this concern, and that was why evaluations were not under consideration for the immediate future.

Jennifer Hubbert (Sociology/Anthropology) inquired if the dates had been set for summer advising.

Janet Davidson replied that advising would begin around June 3, with first-round registration beginning July 13, second round July 16.

Jerry Harp shared his appreciation for how the conversation about advising had unfolded and how faculty members were heard. He felt that the model now presented resembled closely what Jim Grant (Economics, then-Associate Dean) and he had presented to the faculty a year ago. Everyone who knows advising knows we need these FTEs. A key part of these plans was the maintaining of faculty ownership of advising. Do we know what the relationship between the faculty director and new co-director will look like?

Janet Davidson concurred that how Jerry Harp and Jim Grant had originally described the program is how they are currently conceiving it. Assistant Dean Carla Harcelroad would do the day-to-day running, while Janet Davidson would be the faculty representative. They will be modeling themselves a bit on the Center for Entrepreneurship.

Kurt Fosso asked if all college advisors would report to Janet Davidson.

Janet Davidson responded that those details still needed to be worked out.

3. Reports

A. Faculty Council
Cliff Bekar (Economics) asked if there were any questions about the pre-circulated report.

Rishona Zimring requested more details about the Council’s conversation about the College’s policy for non-sabbatical profession leaves. What was our current policy, and what changes were discussed?

Cliff Bekar deferred to Paulette Bierzychudek, who also was a member of the Council.
Paulette Bierzychudek explained that this policy was for what to do when a faculty member has an extraordinary opportunity present itself that does not coincide with his or her sabbatical. Currently the language in the Faculty Handbook is vague and inconsistent. The Council has tried to clean up the language to make clear the steps one must go through to request a leave when such an opportunity arises.

Dean Detweiler-Bedell added that the Council did copy editing, not constructing of a new policy. After the text is cleaned up they need to circulate to all members of the Council and then it will be brought forward to all faculty.

B. Curriculum Committee

Cliff Bekar inquired if there were questions on the pre-circulated report.

Karen Gross (English) asked for clarification about the report’s mention of accepting online credits because Lewis & Clark “is in the business of” offering online classes. She was aware that there were rare circumstances in which online classes were offered (e.g. overseas travel) but she wondered if the report alluded to a wider online offering.

Paulette Bierzyhudek clarified the wording.

C. Library and Technology

Mark Dahl (Director of Watzek Library) spoke on behalf of the Institutional Repository Task Force, which had representation from across all three schools. Their charge was to assess the needs for long-term preservation of documents and how to make accessible publicly the Lewis & Clark community’s intellectual and academic output. Some kinds of digital archiving already exists but not in the systemized ways that other peer institutions have. The Task Force would like to survey the need for Lewis & Clark and its various stakeholders. Many of the intuitions that have such a repository use it for faculty to deposit manuscript copies of their journal articles to allow their work to be more widely accessible. Other uses might be for student theses and capstones to be archived online as well as other student publications; also it could be a way to store audio/visual recordings of speakers on campus or symposia presentations. If you are interested in any of these use-cases, please get in touch with him.

Daena Goldsmith (Rhetoric and Media Studies) asked if a student paper goes up through this mechanism, then is it considered published, in which case would it need to go through IRB?

Mark Dahl responded that Watzek already has a senior repository, for which students sign a waiver, and it is only open to this community. The Library has not looked into IRB.
D. Curriculum Committee II

Cliff Bekar interjected that he had forgotten that the Curriculum Committee had requested a presentation from Jim Proctor (Environmental Studies).

Jim Proctor reported on his trip to Kansas City to attend the American Association of College and Universities conference on general education. He underscored that he was sharing his own thoughts as drawn from this conference, not speaking on behalf of the entire Curriculum Committee.

General education is a huge conversation in higher education right now. In fact, it is a racket. AAC&U alone is sponsoring nine conferences this year at which the College should have representatives attending. These conferences are a place to learn of cutting edge trends, for instance to stop thinking about general education as the thing a student does before his major. Moreover, there is a trend to see liberal education as both curricular and co-curricular, part of a bigger circle. Certainly the traditional distribution models and learning outcomes still exist. But he recommended that faculty members check out the radical transparency of Penn State’s GenEd site. There is also an interesting consortium of 15 institutions who are creating an integrated liberal learning approach, such as Spelman College, who has an interdisciplinary unit on Toni Morrison novel and narrative.

E. Admissions and Financial Aid

Julio de Paula (Chemistry) alluded to the documents from the Dean’s website that the AFA committee had forwarded to the faculty. He urged faculty to broaden our conversation about retention to take into account all of the items brought up in those reports, especially through the external review. Advising loomed large, but so did a number of other important issues. Particularly concerning was that the practice of gapping students was becoming a real challenge in recruiting and retaining students. The gap is the difference between the money a student needs for attendance and what the school can offer in way of financial aid. That gap this coming year is going to increase for entering first-year students; and while it is too early to tell by how much, it will be on average a larger gap. As a result, the business office is beginning to model smaller yields. Lewis & Clark is highly tuition-dependent. As we think about the other factors mentioned in those reports, financial aid is a concern shared by the students who sense a lack of community binding all of us together. It’s time for the College to address this gapping issue and to launch a fundraising campaign for scholarships. [This was met with applause from the faculty.] We should recognize that financial aid is a necessary piece for improving the quality of our students, not just in the form of academic scholarships but also in need-based aid, which can help students from feeling isolated in their financial difficulties. Thus, financial aid is key in improving our community.

Štěpán Šimek (Theater) asked if Julio de Paula had any ideas as to how faculty might encourage the Office of Intuitional Advancement to take this up.

Julio de Paula responded that we have different committees who can make recommendations. But there is also the faculty as a whole. We should be communicating with the Board of Trustees, the President, and the Office for Institutional Advancement
about how this issue is important to us. Ultimately it falls to a campaign by the Board of Trustees.

Štěpán Šimek pressed to learn what would need to happen for the faculty to encourage formally more fundraising for financial aid. Should the faculty pass a resolution?

Paulette Bierzychudek observed that there is nothing to stop any faculty member from writing directly to the Office for Institutional Advancement.

Julio de Paula concurred and also approved of the idea of a faculty resolution.

Kurt Fosso inquired if Julio de Paula felt that financial aid was not currently a front-and-center priority for the College.

Provost Jane Atkinson noted that the need to increase financial aid was discussed at the Board meeting, particularly by some of the newer members.

Julio de Paula believed that to keep the focus on scholarships, the faculty needs to make that endorsement loud and clear.

Paulette Bierzychudek thanked Julio de Paula for his report and regretted that there was no more time to discuss an issue that touches all faculty members so personally; she hoped that there would be time in the future to continue the conversation.

F. Exploration and Discovery

Paul Powers (Religious Studies and Director of Exploration & Discovery) read his report, included here. He first expressed his delight that Mo Healy (History) will be taking over as Director of Core, and he thanked her for taking this on.

He reminded faculty of his previous report that demonstrated that according to all the measurements Lewis & Clark uses, E&D does well—remarkably well, even. The College owes a debt of gratitude to the adjuncts who carry so much of the load. But as well as things are going, he is concerned that we are missing the opportunity to make Core a signal experience that is fully integrated into the academic mission of the College. He urged us to adjust our priorities as an institution and as a faculty so that we better serve our first-year and pre-major students.

More specifically, he is troubled that E&D is not well integrated into the intellectual life of the College. E&D is not a sufficiently high priority of the faculty, and students notice this lack of integration and commitment. If the faculty want Core to spark our students’ commitment to learning and to the College in that crucial first year, we need to show our own commitment.

Paul Powers recommended two interrelated things. Firstly, get more tenure-line faculty teaching in Core (50 percent seems like the right target). Secondly, continue to make changes small and perhaps larger to Core to make it the Core that faculty will teach in and that really grabs our students.

Last fall he was in a meeting of the LC Student Success Committee discussing our retention problem—our infamous, mystifying, stubborn, embarrassing retention problem.
After considering a dozen different contributing factors, someone in the room crystallized the conversation, saying: “We do a great job with our juniors and seniors, but we don’t do so well with our first-years.” We do a great job of teaching and advising and mentoring our majors, pointing them onward to great things past LC. But we as an institution, we as a faculty, don’t do such a great job of bringing our new students into the College, honoring and smoothing that transition, incorporating them into the intellectual life of LC, challenging them and helping them rise to the challenge, making clear that they are a top priority here.

For some years now, we have tried to solve this problem by making students into majors sooner. So far this hasn’t cured our retention ills. Moreover, this approach is, frankly, illiberal. Instead we should devote ourselves to making the first-year experience better, and more, not less, liberal. Core is the main mechanism we have for doing this.

Certainly our capacity to pay special attention to first-year students comes down, in part, to resources. We are all stretched about as far as we can be. I don’t question our general dedication to students—I see my colleagues pouring themselves into their work. I recognize that the growth of the student body has outpaced growth of the faculty. But there is no quick fix to our resource crunch. If we wait to serve our first-years better until we have ample resources, we will never do it. Moreover, one key element of our resource problem is our retention problem, and under-serving our first-years cannot possibly be good for retention. Retaining just a handful more students for four years makes a measurable impact on our bottom line.

The fact that we don’t positively incentivize teaching in Core means that we actually de-incentivize it. If it is not treated as a positive, it isn’t a neutral; it’s a negative. How so? Teaching in the Core is a special challenge—heavy grading loads, heavy student contact time, working outside our comfort zones. Required courses tend to produce weaker student evaluations. Teaching in Core takes us away from our majors and our research. Why should any of us want to do such a thing? The intrinsic rewards are there, as some of us know. But they aren’t enough to change our priorities.

For various reasons, when we put E&D in place, we adopted a purely voluntary staffing model. The effect at first was perhaps to reinvigorate a faculty that wanted to chose, rather than be required, to teach in Core. But over time, this staffing model has allowed the many other things we do to eclipse our commitment to the Core. We could make it required—either at the departmental level or the individual level. The former sounds more viable than the latter, and I think we should consider it. Other incentives might include money (an extra $1,000 for teaching in Core?) or, even more valuable, time (a course release for every three to four sections?).

Also, we should look for ways to incorporate adjuncts more fully into the life of the college, such as by offering the best of them multi-year contracts and teaching assignments in departments.

And I don’t think we really have a choice. LC cannot continue to limp along on 85 percent second-year retention and 75 percent five-year graduation rates. We cannot continue to lose some of our most promising students because they get here, look around, and say, “Where is the intellectual intensity I was promised?” “Why do I not feel challenged, and why does no one seem to notice?” “Why don’t I feel a sense of collective intellectual purpose here?” (I’m closely paraphrasing a recent advisee – Dean’s list, soon to transfer out.)

We the faculty need to lead on this. We cannot wait until we have stable leadership at Dean. We need to tell the incoming Dean that this is our priority. And we need to get working on making this shift in priorities regardless of who the Dean is or how long she or he is here.
E&D is such a flexible framework that it can accommodate a wide range of specific approaches, and it can change as those involved in it want it to change. If you’d like E&D to change, please get involved in it—be the change! If we re-prioritize, we could cap sections at 15, or 14, reducing the burden on each instructor and increasing the attention to each student. We could engage and challenge our new students even better than we do now. We the faculty could have a shared sense of purpose for our first-year curriculum that our incoming students find tangible, electric, and inspiring. We could and should consider teaching in Core to be an urgent collective duty and even a privilege.

In any case, we need to treat our dedicated first-year curriculum and the students it serves as a top priority.

[Paul Powers’s remarks were met with faculty applause.]

G. Festival of Scholars

Julio de Paula prominently displayed a poster advertising the upcoming Festival of Scholars on April 17. He warned faculty that they should be prepared for the Festival to take up the better part of the day. At the time of the meeting, there were almost 190 students scheduled to present or perform. The committee reminded faculty to encourage Festival attendance in their classrooms, talking within them beyond what was put on the syllabus (surprise! some students don’t read the syllabus) and emphasizing that this is the beginning of a campus tradition. This is part of the deal we struck. If faculty have any questions, they are welcome to contact the committee: Cara Tomlinson (Art), Todd Lochner (Political Science), and himself as well as Kim Ulrich (CAS Dean’s Office).

Michael Broide asked when the program would be posted.

Todd Lochner replied that the committee had received double the number of students that they had expected. The goal was that the entire program would be established by March 20 and then distributed as a .pdf.

4. Hate & Bias Policy.

David Ellis (Vice-President and General Counsel) and Janet Steverson (Law School) presented on the recent changes to the College’s Hate & Bias Policy.

If faculty wanted copies of the presentation or policy they were invited to write either dgellis@lclark.edu or jws@lclark.edu.

Adjourned 5:02.