

ST MARY'S

COLLEGE of MARYLAND

The National Public Honors College

BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

OPEN SESSION REPORT SUMMARY

Date of Meeting: February 3, 2023

Date of Next Meeting: May 12, 2023

Committee Chair: Peter Bruns

Committee Members: Paula Collins, Elizabeth Graves '93, Melanie Hilley '93, Larry Leak '76, William Seale, Tuajuanda Jordan, Susan Dyer

Executive Staff: Katie Gantz

Faculty Liaison: Libby Williams

Staff Liaison: John Spinicchia

Dashboard Metrics: N/A

Executive Summary:

Discussion Items

Faculty Senate Report

Dean of Faculty Report

Information Items

Minutes of October 14, 2022

Action Item(s) related to specific strategic goals as appropriate:

III. N/A



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 3, 2023**

**OPEN SESSION
AGENDA**

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. DISCUSSION ITEMS**
 - A. Faculty Senate Report
 - B. Dean of Faculty Report
- III. ACTION ITEM**
 - A. N/A
- IV. INFORMATION ITEM**
 - A. Meeting Minutes of October 14, 2022

The committee expects to close a portion of this meeting.

January 2023

Report to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees
Elizabeth Nutt Williams, Faculty Senate President

Managing Change and Moving Forward

At this point in the academic year, the faculty are primarily managing the “usual” (teaching, scholarship, service) and the “new” (navigating the new course matrix and engaged learning, working on strategic planning, launching our work on the upcoming Middle States review, and awaiting details of the new academic administrative structure). Given that much time currently is spent managing these issues, I will use this report to focus on three items that will need attention moving forward: bylaws revision, faculty workload, and joint shared governance review.

Faculty Bylaws Revision

There are several changes that must be made to the Faculty Bylaws to bring them into accord with current practices. Some changes are more minor (e.g., title changes), but other changes are more substantive, such as those regarding the new academic administrative structure. Work on the revisions to the bylaws will begin soon (with a focus on the minor issues first). The work on the areas of the bylaws that relate to the new academic administrative structure will need to be undertaken when more details are provided about that structure.

Faculty Workload

Given the reduction in numbers of tenured and tenure-track faculty at the College as well as continuing frustration regarding the process of implementing a new academic administrative structure, faculty burnout remains a critical issue. As one example, we are finding service roles to be more of a strain than in previous years. The faculty are looking at ways to improve functions in this area, including reviewing the composition of senate subcommittees and addressing discrepancies in advising loads. It is our hope that changing our service workload by streamlining what we do would result in more time for both scholarly pursuits and more time to mentor our students. We also hope improved processes in shared governance will improve faculty morale, as shared governance remains one of the faculty’s biggest concerns.

Joint Shared Governance Review

Per the suggestions of the Board of Trustees and President Jordan at the October 2022 Academic Affairs Committee meeting, I have met with Katie Gantz (VPAA) and David Taylor (Executive Associate to the President) to begin the process of a formal “review” of shared governance that mirrors the process we use for academic programs. We plan to invite a few experts in the shared governance process to provide a thorough review of our shared governance practices and as well as a set of recommendations for improvement. We have started the planning process and will provide more details before the May Board of Trustees meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Libby Nutt Williams, Ph.D.

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 3, 2023

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND DEAN OF FACULTY

I. New Program Growth

The College's four newest majors (Marine Science and Neuroscience in their second year, Business and Performing Arts in their first year) continue to exhibit strong growth. From Fall 2022 to Spring 2023, the three fastest growing majors were all new programs (Figure 1a indicates growth rates as percent increase from fall to spring, while Figure 1b illustrates the change in number of declared majors in the newest programs between Fall 2022 to Spring 2023). All four new programs gained new majors at rates higher than the college average. Academic Affairs will continue to monitor interest in these majors to make sure we are meeting the curricular and programmatic needs of students who join these programs.

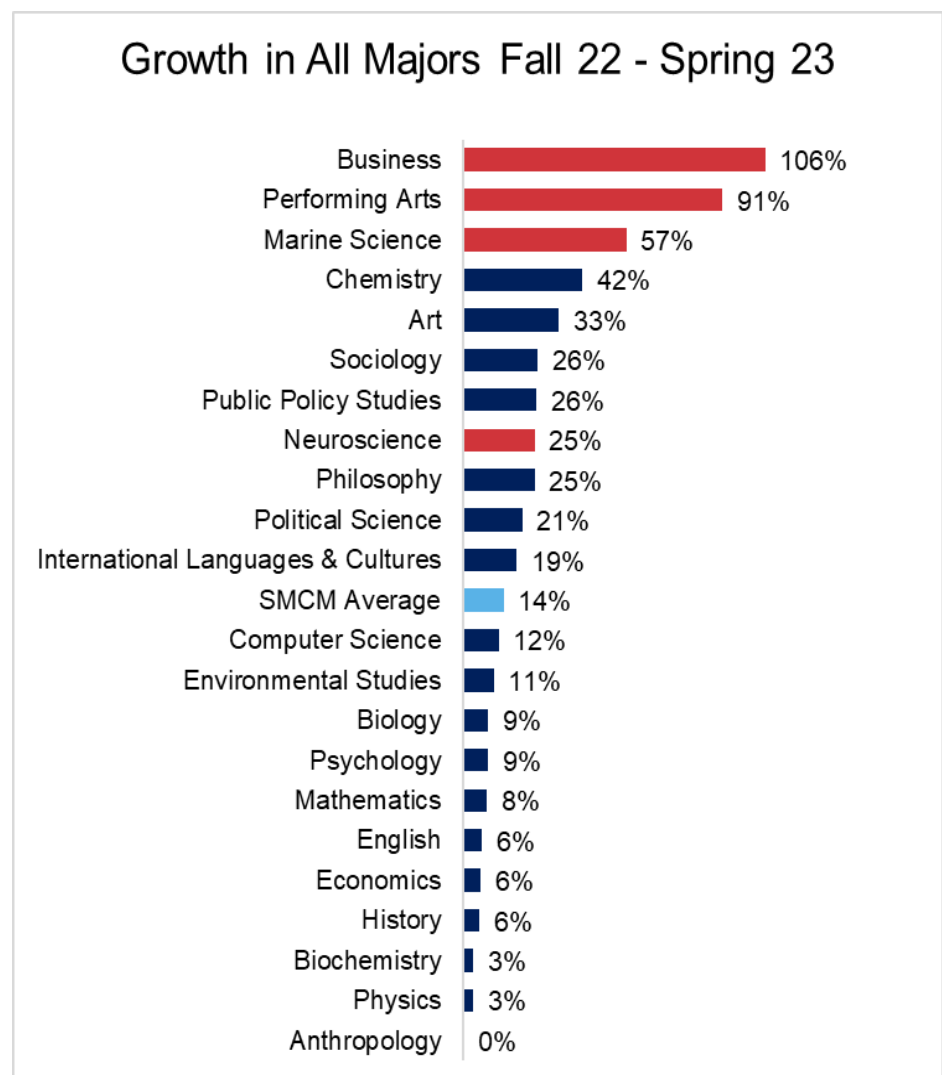


Figure 1a: Growth in all Majors from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023

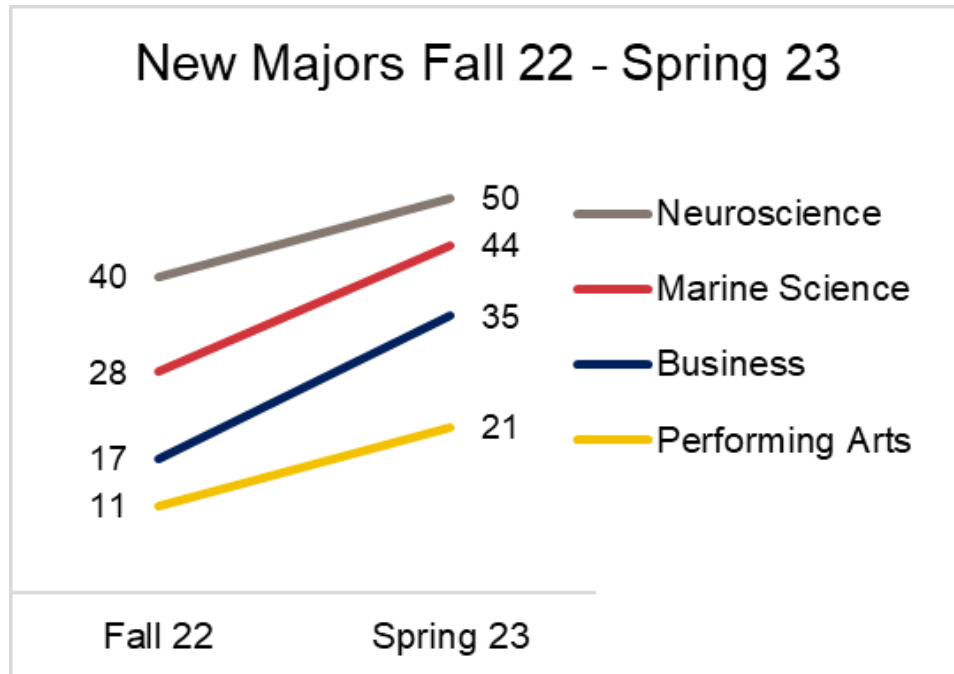


Figure 1b: New Majors Growth from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023

II. FY23 Hiring Updates

We continue to actively address staffing gaps that have arisen from recent departures, shifts in programmatic needs, and a surge in first-year course seat demand. Figure 2 indicates the departments undertaking a tenure-track hire this year and the status of the search.

Position	Status of Search
Asst. Prof. of Biology, <i>Ross Fellow</i>	HIRED
Asst. Prof. of Business	Reviewing applications
Asst. Prof. of Economics	Reviewing applications
Asst. Prof. of Educational Studies	Interviewing finalists
Asst. Prof. of Environmental Science	HIRED

Asst. Prof. of Environmental Studies, <i>Ross Fellow</i>	HIRED
Asst. Prof. of History, affiliated faculty in Museum Studies, <i>Ross Fellow</i>	Interviewing finalists
Asst. Prof. of Mathematics	Interviewing finalists
Asst. Prof. of Theater, <i>Ross Fellow</i>	Interviewing finalists
Asst. Prof. of Music	Accepting applications
Asst. Prof. of Political Science	Interviewing candidates
Asst. Prof. of Psychology	HIRED

Figure 2: Departmental Hiring Search Status

We continue to make strong strategic hires in our Ross Fellows cluster hire initiative, with the goal to complete the hiring sequence with a total of six new tenure-track faculty on campus in fall 2023. Faculty diversity continues to be a core priority in our efforts to support our students from underrepresented groups, and central to providing broad and cutting-edge pedagogical expertise across our programs.

More generally, the coordination and resources dedicated to this intense year of twelve tenure-track searches have been fundamental to reenergizing our programs. In the short term, the reliability of permanent tenure-track faculty across the disciplines helps to ensure that new students have access to well-credentialed, experienced instructors with whom they can forge lasting positive relationships--a central tenet of retention strategies. In the longer term, the influx of high-caliber faculty into both new and existing majors allows programs to think creatively about curricular innovation, and how to design the distinctive educational experiences that will attract students to the unique opportunities that LEAD will support. In sum, there is much to be excited about in this busy hiring season, and by extension, the better student recruitment and retention that will mitigate the coming enrollment cliff.

III. Department/Program snapshots

Our first folio of Program Snapshots, circulated to the program chairs in May 2022, has already proven beneficial in creating a shared and better-informed understanding of program health between Academic Affairs and the program chairs. Hiring plans and tenure-track line proposals (due in December and early January, respectively) reflect a more data-informed reckoning of

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program needs, and just as importantly, the five-year scope of data keeps the focus on the contemporary staffing picture.

The inaugural set of snapshots (see OnBoard for supplemental materials) also revealed a number of challenges related to calculation and interpretation of the academic data, primarily related to the highly interdisciplinary and overlapping nature of our faculty and curricula which resists simple evaluation of a single “program”. We are investigating ways to incorporate those complexities into future snapshots. At this time, at the Board’s request, Academic Affairs has made an effort to define a reasonable calculation to determine program cost, revenue, and financial yield. Here, the Board and Academic Affairs share the following understanding regarding this effort:

1. These are now department-level snapshots because that is the level at which budgeting and financial accounting occur. For example, there is one department snapshot for the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, rather than two program snapshots for the two disciplinary programs contained within.
2. The course and staffing overlap that exists in interdisciplinary programs common to the liberal arts presents the same significant challenges for determining how costs and revenue squarely fall within the curriculum as described for the academic data mentioned above.
3. While all programs would be self-sustaining in the ideal, a liberal arts institution takes into consideration that some elements of the program array must be maintained for the integrity of the curriculum even if they aren’t consistently self-sustaining.

With all this in mind, the current department snapshots include the following information for each department for FY21 and FY22¹:

- Majors and minors within the department’s programs
- Student credit hours (SCH) produced in all courses
- Faculty FTE
- Payroll, operating, and total expenses, including SCH-based share of college-wide expenses

¹ Regarding the shorter timespan represented in this data as compared to the previous snapshots: the PIVOT data that was referenced in TF3 spanned 5 years, but even then the skewing influence of the pandemic was significant. When approaching the work of adding comparable financial data to the newly-devised department snapshots, we saw no logic in another five-year span comparing the anomalous years of pandemic spending, pre- and post-prioritization. Instead, this initial calculation includes two years of data to reset the baseline.

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- Revenue, including SCH-based share of college-wide tuition and non-tuition revenue
- Financial yield (revenue minus expenses)

The department snapshots provide a high-level descriptive analysis of the academic programs, and provide a basis for year-to-year tracking of fiscal measures. One clear pattern that emerged is that nearly every department reported lower expenses overall in FY21 compared to FY22. This is almost certainly attributable to FY21 being the first full year of the pandemic, in which there were both mandated and practical limitations on spending. The FY22 financial measures will serve as a more relevant baseline from which to move forward, as departments return to more typical spending patterns including student events and professional travel.

IV. Restructuring update

Academic Affairs continues to move forward with the transition to the new academic administrative structure. In early January, the team convened for a retreat to plan next steps. Upon reviewing feedback from department chairs, faculty Senate, two town halls, and a meeting with the coordinators of Cross-disciplinary Study Areas (CDSAs), the team proposed a modification to the structure that would address the issue of the linked programs under a common department chair, the site of the most faculty concern and logistical issues.

This modification took two central givens as its framework :

1. The addition of the three associate deans each appointed to oversee a third of our programs is an important step forward in a more effective administrative structure. This shift would likewise remain committed to seeking out effective processes and principles.
2. Any changes would continue to remain within the resource parameters outlined in Divisional Model 2.5 and approved by the Board in May 2022.

The VPAA has spoken with the President and received approval to revise the administrative structure such that the 23 programs, presently linked into 13 units, will almost all be separated into autonomous departments. At the time of this writing, details are still being finalized; the faculty has been alerted that this modification is forthcoming and will be detailed at the February 1st Faculty Senate meeting, and a more comprehensive description will be forthcoming in the AAC open session. Throughout February, Academic Affairs will be meeting with department chairs and holding Q&A sessions to provide information on the implementation plans.

I am extremely proud of the teamwork that went into this modification; these efforts proactively address a number of the faculty's most central concerns while adhering to our fiscal and administrative objectives. I believe this will be positively received, and that this will help advance our implementation efforts.

V. Addressing Academic Burnout

A. Supporting Struggling Students

Throughout the fall semester — and made more concrete after midterms — faculty's reports of student disengagement coalesced into larger concerns of burnout, also reported in college-age students nationwide. Quite apart from the student issues of depression and anxiety that dominated the two previous years during pandemic teaching, faculty reported perplexing behavior this fall: students attended classes, participated in discussions, did the readings, but many were simply not following through with graded assignments, no matter what the stakes.

In November, student trustee Brayan Ruis Lopez met with the Provost's office to bring concerns from the students to the attention of Academic Affairs. Anecdotally, the group of students believed that the stressors they were experiencing were the direct result of the new matrix (both the shifted schedule and the new pedagogical approach related to Engaged Learning). Because similar difficulties were being reported across the country, it seemed unlikely that our new matrix was the issue; Academic Affairs circulated a short survey to faculty to collect impressions of student behaviors as compared to the year before (the data is summarized [here](#)). At the intersection of these various interactions with faculty and students, it was clear that students were struggling with their academic follow-through, and that faculty did not perceive a marked difference in their attendance or class participation. Overall, faculty did *not* see a causal link between student burnout and the new matrix.

At the end of December, an all-faculty email shared the results of the survey, and offered some possible— but not mandatory —approaches to mitigating the effects of overwhelm and burnout, especially critical in the last week of class before going into final exams. Faculty responded positively to the chance to express their concerns for our students, and to work collaboratively on a productive solution. In turn, students reported their appreciation for these proactive steps, largely meant to continue the transition from pandemic learning to the in-class expectations of their instructors.

This spring, faculty will be encouraged to adapt their approach (but not their standards) to continue this forward momentum.

B. Faculty Burnout and Service load

Much has been written about post-pandemic burnout in the higher ed workplace.² Academic Affairs has spent a good deal of time considering how to support faculty and staff experiencing overwhelm, fatigue, and disengagement as they themselves are called upon to address academic burnout from the student side. Maslach and Leiter (2021) make two central and interrelated arguments in their approach to addressing workplace burnout.

First: many efforts to address burnout--a basic stress response to chronic workplace stressors--have been ineffective in their medicalized approach. Burnout is not the same thing as fatigue or depression, and thus isn't typically resolved by a vacation or by therapy.

Second: burnout is the function of a misalignment between the expectations of the person and the job; alleviating the condition requires a dynamic and bilateral process that engages both the employer and employee to find a middle ground ensuring high job satisfaction and productive work outcomes.

In response to the issue of workload--a core domain in workplace burnout--Academic Affairs has turned its attention to the issue of service expectations, one of the three criteria by which faculty are evaluated for tenure and promotion. We see two key issues that require discussion:

1. While the total number of permanent faculty has dropped in recent years, the service needs (senate committees, curriculum review, advising, assessment, admissions engagement, etc.) has increased. This has created a greater service demand overall on faculty time.
2. The value placed on different forms of service varies among departments, creating inconsistencies on how faculty are evaluated. Further, the critical but less visible forms of “emotional labor” such as support for students from underrepresented groups, community-building, and mentoring require substantial time but have no formal recognition as service.

² For recent examples, see Pope-Ruark's [Unraveling Faculty Burnout](#) (Johns Hopkins UP, 2022) and [The Burnout Challenge](#) (Maslach and Leiter, Harvard UP, 2021).

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Senate's standing Faculty Issues Committee has begun a study of service issues as they relate to tenure and promotion. Academic Affairs will be partnering with the committee this spring to consider more practical, standardized, and less burdensome approaches to faculty service as one step toward addressing workload concerns.

VI. Assessment of Student Learning

A strong program of assessment of student learning - separate from the traditional means of assessing student achievement via grades - is a foundational expectation of the Middle States Commission, our regional accrediting body. This year, after several years of data collection and in direct response to faculty requests, faculty and assessment leaders are examining assessment results and reflecting on our processes to help guide internal conversations about optimizing student learning within our majors and minors.

Assessment of student learning is widely distributed across academic departments and programs. For example, Figure 3 below illustrates how all disciplinary areas contribute to the assessment of SMCM's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) which are expected of all graduates. In this way, we get a complete picture of student learning across the curriculum.

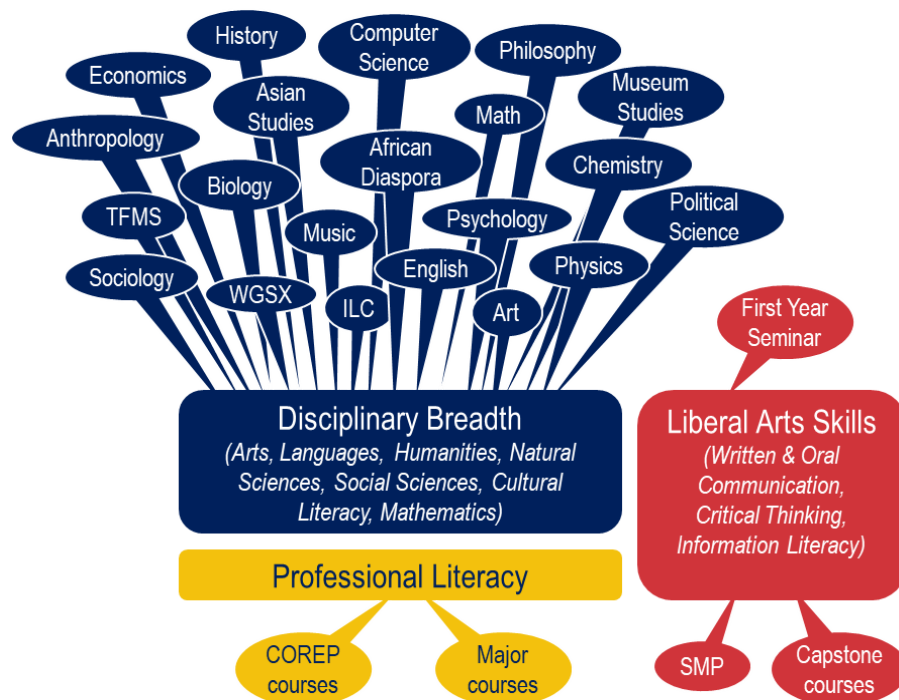


Figure 3: Assessment Areas of SMCM's Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

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In addition to institutional-level assessment, all programs (majors and minors) have their own assessment systems which align with the institutional framework, including program learning outcomes, curriculum maps, and assessment cycles. Virtually all programs are actively engaging in assessment practices, and the percentage of programs actively engaged has increased over the three years of Cycle 2 (Graphic B below). This commitment to data-informed decision-making and continuous improvement aligns closely both with the College's commitment to offering a rigorous and innovative curriculum, and with the broader expectations of Middle States. We feel confident that we are well positioned to show how our work fully meets the accreditation requirements for assessment of educational effectiveness.

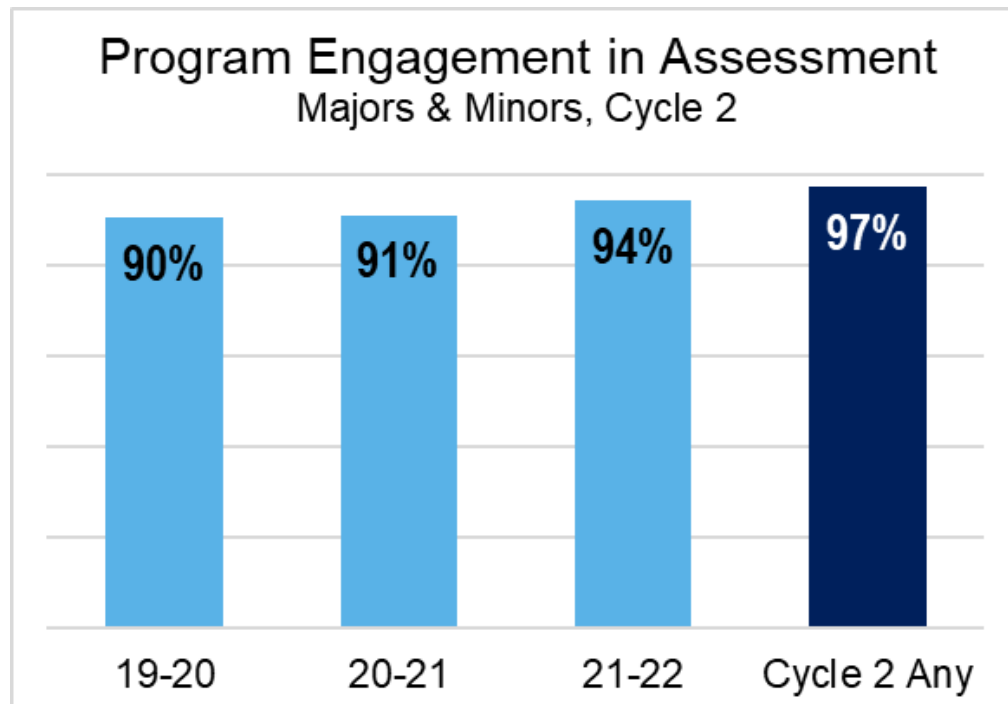


Figure 4: Assessment Engagement



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**OPEN SESSION
MINUTES**

Date of Meeting: October 14, 2022

Status of Minutes: Approved January 6, 2023

Committee Members Present: Peter Bruns (Committee Chair), Paula Collins, Susan Dyer, Tuajuanda Jordan, Larry Leak

Committee Members Present via Zoom: Elizabeth Graves '93, Glen Ives

Committee Members Absent: Melanie Hilley '93, William Seale

Executive Staff: Katie Gantz

Faculty Liaison: Libby Williams

Staff Liaison: John Spinicchia (absent)

Others Present: Nick Abrams '99, Betsy Barreto, John Bell '95, Alice Bonner, Geoff Bowers, Anne Marie Brady, Carolyn Curry, Peg Duchesne '77, Judy Fillius '79, Gail Harmon, David Hautanen, Sven Holmes, Jerri Howland, Elena Langrill, Brayan Ruiz Lopez '24, Doug Mayer '04, Jessie Price '92, Paul Pusecker, Bill Roberts, Dereck Rovaris, Mai Savelle, Shanen Sherrer, David Taylor, Aaron Tomarchio '96, Danielle Troyan '92, John Wobensmith '93

Executive Summary

Academic Affairs Committee Chair Peter Bruns called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

Faculty Senate Report

Faculty Senate President Libby Williams provided a brief introduction then proceeded to change the format of the report to an open forum for questions from the Board. The Trustees asked several questions regarding the Faculty Senate President Report given the strong negative assessment that the faculty are unhappy, undervalued, and feel disconnected from the discussions/decisions made by the Board. Trustee Holmes asked how the Faculty Liaisons to the Board Committees were sharing Trustee Committee activities with the faculty. He reminded Dr. Williams that the Board's work is conducted in Committees, so the liaisons have a direct connection to all discussions and are expressly there to provide input to the Committee and then to report back to the faculty. Dr. Williams conceded that sometimes reports are drafted and placed in a shared drive for faculty to peruse as they have time.

Dr. Williams then presented results from a new initiative from Faculty Senate, called *The Faculty Pulse*, in which faculty were polled via email across several areas and asked to provide their feedback on their experience at the College. She presented their findings and assessment of the

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survey results. Dr. Williams shared that faculty morale is still low. The faculty would like shared governance to feel more like a partnership. Several Trustees asked questions about how the survey was conducted. Trustee Wobensmith acknowledged the value of using surveys to understand the mood of a group. He asked that since there were no details of the survey provided by Dr. Williams that the Board be provided with detailed information on the survey so that further assessments could be made. This kind of transparency is essential to make the survey useful. President Jordan requested that the survey results be shared with both the executive leadership as well as the Board. Given the continued press for “shared governance”, President Jordan stated she would work to engage a team of consultants consisting of individuals from both AAUP and AGB to facilitate a review of the issue and recommend possible actions. She also encouraged Dr. Williams to work closely with interim Provost Gantz to develop the specific goals of shared governance to be addressed prior to a broader discussion with the Senate, and the consultants. Dr. Williams agreed this would be helpful. The Trustees shared Dr. Williams’ concerns about Faculty retention, emphasized their willingness to better understand the factors challenging the College’s retention efforts, and remarked that this would be a good area for the Community to work together to improve results.

Chair Dyer then asked Dr. Williams to clarify the mismatched tone between the optimistic Faculty Senate President presentation at the Board meeting and the less optimistic Faculty Senate President Report submitted with the meeting materials. Dr. Williams acknowledged the difference in tone and shared that while she tends to convey the report in a positive light, she acknowledges that there is continued unhappiness among the Faculty and would do her best to identify what these areas are. Chair Dyer affirmed that “the faculty are our most valuable asset” and questioned why more ongoing efforts are not undertaken to understand the cause of their unhappiness. She reminded Dr. Williams that as Faculty Senate President, she is the Board’s connection with the faculty and so the Trustees rely on her communications with them for assessment and suggested appropriate actions. Chair Dyer expressed concern that more discussions to define “shared governance” will not make a faculty member feel more valued and suggested that working together on specifics of topics like faculty retention would be more productive. She asked Dr. Williams to provide suggestions, given the urgency of her report.

Dr. Williams concluded the report by reaffirming her plans of working with Academic Affairs and consultants to identify and rectify the disconnect between Faculty and the Board.

Dean of Faculty Report

Interim Provost and Dean of Faculty Katie Gantz presented her report to the Board which included updates on Marine Science, Neuroscience, Business Administration, and Performing Arts. Dr. Gantz indicated that the enrollment impact of the Marine Science program is much greater than originally anticipated and Dr. Elka Porter has been hired as the first new faculty member in the department. The specifics for a large research vessel have been defined and a near-shore vessel has been ordered. Neuroscience is growing steadily as it shifts from a minor to

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a major. The efforts of the Music and Theater faculty to launch their joint major in Performing Arts have produced an exciting program, and the facilities available in the newly opened Nancy R. and Norton T. Dodge Performing Arts Center should be a significant draw in attracting new students to this program. Finally, the William Seale Professor of Business, Dr. Silvio Borrero, has been very busy building partnerships and ensuring that the program is externally visible and excellent. Dr. Borrero has already established an institutional membership with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

Dr. Gantz then discussed the status of Data Science and some of the hurdles the College has faced in hiring and making Data Science a stand-alone major. Hiring in Computer Science is difficult since the field yields a very small pool of PhDs and an even smaller group that chooses to enter academe. A solution, as supported by Dr. Jordan, is the concept of “Master for Hire, PhD by tenure”, to widen the pool and entice qualified candidates for these positions. Furthermore, the name of “Data Science” has become so broadly used that it is no longer meaningful. Additionally, Data Science requires tremendous funding to provide the infrastructure for the major and competitive salaries to recruit faculty to teach it. The solution may be to approach offering Data Science coursework by embedding Data Science skills within an existing major’s curriculum as either a minor in Data Science or a certificate program in Data Science.

The Board shared concerns about the workload for the “Master for Hire” plan, and asked Dr. Gantz if there would be a reduced teaching load for the candidates as they pursue their Doctorates. Dr. Gantz assured the Board that there are already course releases and pre-tenure releases to aid with this; further, part of the research that the faculty will need to complete will generate work included in their tenure package. Board members maintained a concern over the double workload these people would have: - i.e., graduate students doing research and finishing a thesis, and faculty members with teaching and service obligations. Dr. Jordan emphasized that this model “Master for Hire” is a pilot program to test its viability and therefore would not currently be used in other departments at the College.

Dr. Gantz proceeded to update on hiring. There were 12 new hires including Ross Fellows. There was perceived tension between the salaries offered to new hires versus those of existing faculty. The issue remains: what is equitable versus what is competitive? Part of this challenge is walking the line to find a salary that is enticing and competitive, especially for candidates coming to a small rural institution, while also bearing in mind that the College recently made an equity adjustment to roughly 60% of the faculty. The administration continues to underscore that this equity adjustment was the first step in an ongoing process to address salary concerns and affirms that it is critical that the College recruit excellent faculty.

Hiring differences by discipline emerged when recruiting Ross Fellows that affected the candidate pool. For example, Biology has several professional organizations dedicated to exploring and developing inclusive pedagogy in the natural sciences, whereas Economics does not have the same expansive disciplinary focus on teaching to support underrepresented groups.

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Last year a steering committee served as a liaison between the potential Ross Fellow candidates and the respective hiring committees. At the request of the search chairs, the steering committee has generated more concrete guidance on identifying and evaluating outstanding teaching practices that support marginalized students.

Dr. Gantz closed with a brief update on the course scheduling matrix. She shared that the faculty have been supportive of the shift, and while there are logistical issues to be addressed, Dr. Gantz was thrilled to learn from the Student Trustee that the students understand and appreciate the changes. She will continue to assess and reach out to all faculty and departments to learn what kind of support departments need to ensure that engaged learning continues to advance as a key teaching tool. The schedule changes that have been made are allowing for better student access to College support offices; community time has allowed for all kinds of opportunities that did not exist before.

Action Item:

III.A. Recommendation to approve 2022 Performance Accountability Report.

Committee Action Taken/Action in Progress:

The proposed action item was approved by the Academic Affairs Committee at its meeting on October 14, 2022.

Recommendation to the Board:

The Academic Affairs Committee recommended approval of this action item by the Board of Trustees at its meeting on October 14, 2022.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the open session and move into close session. The open session meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.