MEETING OF THE
SENATE OF THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
The December 2019 meeting of the Senate of the College of Liberal Arts was be held at 3:30pm on Tuesday December 10, 2019 in STEW Room 202.  
Stacey Connaughton presiding.

I. JUST THE FACTS, MA’AM:

1. Approval of minutes from the November 19, 2019 meeting

Minutes were entered as read.

2. Chair’s Remarks (5 min)

Thank you for the wonderful reception for our EVPRP.

3. Dean’s Report and Discussion (20 min)

Reference documents from the University Senate can be found here:
https://www.purdue.edu/senate/documents/meetings/Grade-Inflation-Presentation.pdf

This report was commissioned by the Trustees, and each dean has been asked to write a response to the report. I need your help for that.

Context: Purdue University’s leadership had been very proud of the fact that for many years Purdue was a low outlier with respect to grades vs. comparable institutions. As “grade inflation” has become more of an issue for national discussion, there has been concern that Purdue’s low outlier status has been slipping. Hence this analysis was requested.

Certainly the average GPA has been moving up, from about 2.9 to 3.1 in the past 8 years. Our peer institutions are pretty much either at or above where we are.

Causes of “grade inflation” are a combination of better-prepared students, better-fit course selection, and some is unexplained. 4 colleges are responsible for most “grade inflation”: ENG, CLA, PPI, and Science (but for different reasons). The ENG and CLA grade increases are largely unexplained.

The results of having higher grades overall are not necessarily negative: higher grades increased graduation rates, help students persist in “higher-paying” majors, and they do not appear to have had any impact on starting salary for graduates.
Stacey: We need to form an advisory committee. If anyone else is interested in participating, please let us know. You can count me in as well.

4. Committee Reports

Faculty Affairs Committee – Ken Ferraro (10 min)
Summary of FAC Annual Meeting with the Dean (slides attached)

We met on April 29 with 6 questions for the dean.

From this discussion, the FAC has made suggestions for 2019.

• More direct communications with faculty.
• More faculty lunch meetings.
• Prioritize communicating vision and rationale for major initiatives and policies to the CLA faculty.
• Clarify the relationship between Cornerstone faculty hires and departmental or school hires.
• Articulate reasonable expectations for administrative and engagement work, and how existing high-demand courses are being supported.
• Sustain efforts to prioritize credit hours, minors, and certificates as metrics for budgetary decisions.

Curriculum committee – Taylor Davis (10 min)
First are the “normal” items on the agenda — a collection of moderate-to-minor revisions and tweaks to courses in Art and Design, all approved — we had a new course added in ASL (302), a new certificate program in Sports Studies and Production, some prerequisite alterations in German and Spanish to reflect the presence of the new 105 and 205 courses.

Approved.

Taylor: Next, there were a number of courses added to the Cornerstone Program. They have been approved by the Cornerstone Steering Committee, and by the Curriculum Committee; they are now to be presented to the Senate for approval.

Approved.

5. Report by Will Sartore, Director of International Programs and Study Abroad (15 min)

We’ve got a positive growth rate and expect to see more. We’ve got some upcoming initiatives for 2020, including improved intra-unit data sharing, a learning community for faculty to make it easier to take this on, inviting non-CLA students more explicitly to
participate in our programs, and a 5-year study connecting short-term to semester study abroad.

6. Brief FYI Presentation by CLA Senate Secretary Nush Powell regarding the work being done by the Task Force on Graduate Staff Minimum Salaries and Graduate Student Housing (5 min)

This task force was commissioned by the Provost’s Office and is supported by the Graduate School. We are data gathering and will make a report in the spring. If you have perspectives about either of these questions, please send them to Nush.

7. Old Business (15 min)

Senior Associate Dean Joel Ebarb to answer any remaining questions regarding the Cornerstone Report

Discussion of resolution read by Laura Zanotti at November meeting
Laura read this petition at the end of our meeting in November, but since the petition’s authors are unable to be present for the discussion today, we will hold the item to January.

Discussion of formation of a Committee for Diversity and Equity
   Tabled until January so that Rachel Brooks can be present.

Discussion of Land Acknowledgement
   Interest evident in a sustained discussion about looking for ways to encourage our faculty to be aware of land acknowledgments.

8. New Business

Joel Ebarb: It is my responsibility to have this body approve the slate of graduates for winter commencement.

Vote to approve our new graduates passes unanimously.

Rosie Clawson: I wanted to raise the issue of the new CLA policy on moderating our email list. I’d like to know whether faculty had input into that decision, and its rationale.

Dean Reingold: In terms of the process, I think it’s a topic that we’ve talked about over the years in terms of aligning the CLA IT environment with the university’s IT environment.

Dean Reingold: I would suggest that in the spirit of collaboration that we ask the Senate to work with us on this. I personally think this is a very soft form of regulation.

Stacey: We’ll continue this conversation.
Motion to Adjourn?

Eric Waltenburg boldly moves to adjourn

Al Lopez seconds.

And that’s the end for 2019.

II. THE FULL MINUTES, UNABRIDGED

1. Approval of minutes from the November 19, 2019 meeting

Minutes were entered as read.

2. Chair's Remarks (5 min)

Thank you for being here on December 10th and helping us achieve quorum; we’ve got important matters to undertake today. Thank you for the wonderful reception for our EVPRP; she was delighted to spend time with us and impressed by the work everyone put into representing the college; our dynamism was very apparent.

3. Dean’s Report and Discussion (20 min)

Reference documents from the University Senate can be found here:
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This report was commissioned by the Trustees, and each dean has been asked to write a response to the report. I need your help for that.

Context: Purdue University’s leadership had been very proud of the fact that for many years Purdue was a low outlier with respect to grades vs. comparable institutions. As “grade inflation” has become more of an issue for national discussion, there has been concern that Purdue’s low outlier status has been slipping. Hence this analysis was requested.

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The results of having higher grades overall are not necessarily negative: higher grades increased graduation rates, help students persist in “higher-paying” majors, and they do not appear to have had any impact on starting salary for graduates.

Margaret Tillman (HIST): Do we know what vector of the grade spectrum the increases are coming from? That is, are fewer students getting Fs, or are fewer students getting Bs?

Dean Reingold (DR): The slides have some of the information around grade distribution, including sometimes broken down by specific class and department/school. Many of the large section classes are included in the data. It varies considerably by class and unit.

MT: But it would seem that if we have mechanisms that help students who would otherwise fail out, that could account for statistically a very high increase.

DR: I think what you’ll see here is a shift of many students towards Bs and As than previously.

Rosie Clawson (POL): I’m curious about the analysis. They only analyze the part of grade data where it goes up (2008-2017), not the place where it’s flat. Methodologically that’s a real problem.

DR: But even if you extend the curve out, you’ll see the increase.

RC: We don’t know that. If you’re truncating your data; you may not see the same patterns at all.

DR: I can ask about trying to extend out the time series. It’s a good question; I’m not sure. This may correspond to when academic records were digitized at a class level, but that may have been a bit earlier?

Joel Ebarb: Let me frame this from our discussion at the UEAC. Within our body, led by Frank Dooley, we see this as a very positive report. 2/3 of the grade increase on our campus comes directly from very positive things. We believe our courses and instructors are better; we’ve invested a great deal in the CIE and IMPACT. We’ve also gotten better at mentoring graduate instructors in their teaching. It only stands to reason that once we really started talking about teaching seriously on this campus that we’d make some advances.

The question is this 1/3 unexplained. Might it not be natural to assume some professors are grading slightly easier in order to encourage student success in their programs? Do we think (just for example) that first-year ENG has been feeling pressure to ensure that their students are successful? Alternatively, they have been working hard to prepare their students for success in lower-level courses; perhaps that’s now paying off.
At our heads’ retreat before the semester started, we asked the heads to see whether recalibration was necessary? Can we poke around to see what’s happening? We’ve been asked for a response, but not for a plan.

Brian Leung (ENGL): I had a professor who evaluated a paper of mine, and called me into her office and showed me the difference between the grade on the paper, and the arc of my learning. That was a critical and important moment, but it falls into “unexplained” — I am not concerned about that unexplained; not everything can be a statistic. I am always concerned when we start have conversations about grades as connected to future salary. I want my students to do well, but that’s not a direct connection between GPA and salary.

Mike Johnston (ENGL): I think the smaller class sizes we’ve been experiencing might have something to do with this. Smaller class sizes mean more attention.

DR: They are controlling for class size. One thing that is not controlled is SATs; imputing them would be too messy.

Marlo David (ENGL): Where did these 1/3s come from? How were those causes determined?

DR: All the characteristics that are observable from these students (highschool GPA, AP scores) tend to explain about 1/3 average of the increase. We haven’t seen the full list of parameters examined, however.

MD: So the idea of “grade inflation”: is there a baseline grade that we’re supposed to be looking for? What is “grade inflation,” exactly?

DR: The basic question is what are the norms that we are working on as a faculty.

MD: What is the purpose of the report? Are we supposed to be doing something differently?

DR: We’re midstream on that.

Joel: Provost Akridge specifically asked for a response. For me, the response is, “hey, this looks pretty good.”

Steve Visser (DAP): The dates correlate pretty closely to when CLA split from HHS. The makeup of CLA changed right around there, and we may be able to correlate it to that. Also, a few years ago, Interior Design decided to do a “B or Better” program, which led to immediate “grade inflation”, so it’s since been removed, because it put tremendous pressure on the students and teachers.

Amanda Veile (ANTH): In response to plummeting enrollments, are people feeling pressure to make their classes more appealing by making them easier?
Ebarb: That’s definitely a hypothesis.

DR: Should I try to avoid or include such hypotheses in my response?

Al Lopez (SIS): We may be victims of our own success, in one respect so to speak. Purdue has gotten a lot better at supporting and accommodating students who benefit from learning accommodations. We’re good at it now. That’s got to be reflected in this; intellectually able students are performing to their abilities now instead of being artificially limited, and that’s got to be more significant than statistical noise.

Torsten Reimer (COMM): I know that many of us have had to refocus on assessment and course outcomes. That might be another important source of data. It gives some ability to track whether the improvement is real & measurable.

Nick Rauh (SLC): We started doing + and - grades in 2008; that may also be a factor.

DR: I’ll follow up with Stacey on this. I would like to work with some Senate reps on our response. I’m mindful that could have a variety of forms — maybe as reviewers or referees, maybe as co-authors.

Rosie Clawson: Will you get the full report before you have to write the response?

DR: As I understand it now, the documents on the Uni Senate website constitute the report. (It has the data variables but not the control variables, e.g.) I think the ask right now from the Provost’s office is to write a response (& we’re getting peppered with reminders).

Brian Leung: Quick query: I’d be happy to volunteer, but I want to remind you and all of us that it important that we be sensitive to not automatically validate the premise that “grade inflation” is both present, and a problem.

DR: I will be sensitive to that. The other big question is whether this is something the college wants to work on, or not?

Nick Rauh: If they’re concerned about slippage, there’s a lot of potential reasons. We’ve done away with language requirements, and our peer institutions maintain them, for example.

Mo Trout (Bands and Orchestras): When were B&O included in the Liberal Arts? Our 1200 students make high grades; it’s an attendance-based class.

Stacey: Brian, I heard you volunteer: thank you very much.

Brian Leung: Oh. (and then he smiled!)
Stacey: If anyone else is interested in participating, please let us know. You can count me in as well.

4. Committee Reports

Faculty Affairs Committee – Ken Ferraro (10 min)
Summary of FAC Annual Meeting with the Dean (slides attached)

It’s a pleasure to be with you today. I have had the responsibility of chairing FAC for the past two years. Today we are representing our charge to meet annually with the dean; it has come to include an evaluation, although that word is not used in the by-laws. In 2018 there was an evaluative Qualtrics survey presented on by Cheryl Cooky last year. The dean articulated some action steps in response, including faculty development in strategic planning, communications, and leadership development.

This year we have opted to follow up on those action steps. We met on April 29 with 6 questions for the dean.

From this discussion, the FAC has made suggestions for 2019.

• More direct communications with faculty.
• More faculty lunch meetings.
• Prioritize communicating vision and rationale for major initiatives and policies to the CLA faculty.
• Clarify the relationship between Cornerstone faculty hires and departmental or school hires.
• Articulate reasonable expectations for administrative and engagement work, and how existing high-demand courses are being supported.
• Sustain efforts to prioritize credit hours, minors, and certificates as metrics for budgetary decisions.

Curriculum committee – Taylor Davis (10 min)
First are the “normal” items on the agenda — a collection of moderate-to-minor revisions and tweaks to courses in Art and Design, all approved — we had a new course added in ASL (302), a new certificate program in Sports Studies and Production, some prerequisite alterations in German and Spanish to reflect the presence of the new 105 and 205 courses.

Move to approve these changes (Taylor)
Seconded by Dawn Marsh (HIST)

Mike Johnston: Asks clarifying question re: level of ASL class.
Seeing no further discussion, Stacey calls the question and the motion passes unanimously.

Taylor: Next, there were a number of courses added to the Cornerstone Program. They have been approved by the Cornerstone Steering Committee, and by the Curriculum Committee; they are now to be presented to the Senate for approval.

Motion to approve: Taylor

Rosie Clawson: Seconds

Motion passes with one abstention.

5. Report by Will Sartore, Director of International Programs and Study Abroad (15 min)

It’s an exciting time in CLA Study Abroad; we’re a new team of three (with Brooke Armstrong and Evelyn Washington) and we cover a lot of ground.

We’ve got a positive growth rate and expect to see more. We’ve rebranded and have a standardized template for our faculty to use to ease the marketing burden on faculty. We strive for visibility and do lots of callouts and tabling. Lots of bridge-building with academic advisors. We also provide in-house study abroad advising. We have the second-highest participation in Purdue Study Abroad for this year. (Next up: catching Engineering.) 29% of our graduating students have done some study abroad. We’ve got some upcoming initiatives for 2020, including improved intra-unit datasharing, a learning community for faculty to make it easier to take this on, inviting non-CLA students more explicitly to participate in our programs, and a 5-year study connecting short-term to semester study abroad.

Stacey: will you come to classes?

Will: Yes, we’re always ready to do that.

6. Brief FYI Presentation by CLA Senate Secretary Nush Powell regarding the work being done by the Task Force on Graduate Staff Minimum Salaries and Graduate Student Housing (5 min)

This task force was commissioned by the Provost’s Office and is supported by the Graduate School. We are data gathering and will make a report in the spring with our recommendations re: whether we should raise the minimum university-wide graduate stipend (CLA’s is above the minimum), and with a proposal about possibly replacing the graduate housing that was lost when Purdue Village was torn down and Hilltop Apartments were repurposed for undergraduates.
If you have perspectives about either of these questions, please send them to Nush. In particular, we’re concerned that the loss of housing will hit international students and students with families especially hard.

7. Old Business (15 min)

Senior Associate Dean Joel Ebarb to answer any remaining questions regarding the Cornerstone Report

Ken Ferrero: Is it the vision going forward that the number of sections taught by T-T faculty will be the majority of sections taught?

Ebarb: At least for me, yes; that is one of the features of Cornerstone that helps to ensure its success: exposing our faculty to first-year students and vice-versa. We concentrate a great deal on 101 & 102, but it’s the certificate that is really exciting to me; the goal is to get students moving toward the certificate, and we won’t reach it without faculty interaction.

DR: Can I interject, that as far as I know, when the university looks at enrollments, mostly it’s looking at majors, but that also includes certificates (but not minors). Certificates have a standing that is commensurate with majors.

Ebarb: At the same time, students are only reported once.

Discussion of resolution read by Laura Zanotti at November meeting
Laura read this petition at the end of our meeting in November, but since the petition’s authors are unable to be present for the discussion today, we will hold the item to January.

Discussion of formation of a Committee for Diversity and Equity
Tabled until January so that Rachel Brooks can be present.

Discussion of Land Acknowledgement

Stacey: I want to make sure we have not lost sight of the statement we read at the last meeting in respectful acknowledgement of Native American Indian Heritage Month. I wanted to know if this is something we would like to discuss as a body, perhaps looking for ways to encourage our faculty to be aware of land acknowledgments. Is there interest in this body in this conversation?

(Numerous “Yes” responses from audience.)
Rosie Clawson: This might be something we could incorporate into the Strategic Vision Planning.

8. New Business

Joel Ebarb: It is my responsibility to have this body approve the slate of graduates for winter commencement. They are in the special folder I hold before me.

Nick Rauh moves and Shannon McMullen seconds. Vote to approve our new graduates passes unanimously.

Rosie Clawson: I wanted to raise the issue of the new CLA policy on moderating our email list. I’d like to know whether faculty had input into that decision, and its rationale.

DR: In terms of the process, I think it’s a topic that we’ve talked about over the years in terms of aligning the CLA IT environment with the university’s IT environment. This was shared with the FAC for feedback. It is not designed to stifle access to communication, which is why we set up the separate opt-in space. Joel would be the moderator for email items going to the CLA-ALL site.

Joel: The parameters of what’s acceptable are in the document; it’s not for me to make idiosyncratic judgments.

Steve Visser: I would like to applaud reduced emails.

Rosie: Hypothetically, let’s say I wanted to forward an article critiquing President Daniels to the list. Would that be approved or denied?

Joel: I’d have to check the document.

DR: The parameters are clear. That would not go around; it’s not official business.

Dawn Marsh (HIST): That’s what the other list would be for, and I think that’s very problematic.

Marlo David: What’s the volume of the email to moderate and the potential for delays?

Joel: I will have some help.

DR: I think that if any of us wanted to send a note to all faculty or all employees on campus, we couldn’t: it would be moderated via the provost’s office. That’s pretty standard across campus.
Brian Leung: I want to semi-support the idea of less email. But I think a better solution would be to disable reply-all.

<there are widespread noises of agreement>

DR: I would suggest that in the spirit of collaboration that we ask the Senate to work with us on this. I personally think this is a very soft form of regulation.

Paul Draper: If the goal is to cut down in email volume, there are other ways to do this that would still allow faculty engagement.

Stacey: We'll continue this conversation.

**Motion to Adjourn?**

Eric Waltenburg boldly moves to adjourn

Al Lopez seconds.

And that’s the end for 2019.