MINUTES
Executive Committee Meeting,
Boulder Faculty Assembly
February 4, 2013

Attending
Jerry Peterson, BFA Chair
Carmen Grace, BFA Secretary
Greg Carey, BFA Executive Committee Member at Large
Peggy Jobe, BFA Executive Committee Member at Large
Karen Ramirez, BFA Administrative Services & Technology Committee Chair
Ted Stark, BFA Faculty Affairs Committee Chair
John S. McCartney, BFA Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee Co-Chair
Adam Norris, BFA Instructor-Track Faculty Affairs Committee Co-Chair
Elizabeth Bradley, BFA Intercollegiate Athletics Committee Chair
Robert Parson, BFA Libraries Committee Chair
Horst Mewes, Student Affairs Committee Representative
Robert Ferry, Arts and Sciences Council Chair
Bill Kaempfer, Vice Provost, Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget and Planning
Steven Koenig, UGGS President
Laura Michaelson, UGGS Executive Vice President
Sierra Swearingen-Todd, BFA Coordinator

Guests
Kris Livingston, Assistant Athletics Director for Academics

Not Attending
Paul Chinowsky, BFA Vice-Chair
Jerry Rudy, BFA Budget and Planning Committee Chair
Ruth Ellen Kocher, BFA Diversity Committee Co-Chair
David R. Kassoy, Retired Faculty Association Representative
Joe Rosse, Former BFA Chair
Nikki Comer, CUSG Director of Academic Affairs

The Boulder Faculty Assembly Executive Committee held its regular meeting on Monday, February 4, 2013 in Norlin Library Room N410. BFA Chair Jerry Peterson presided. The meeting convened at 4:00 and adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

I. Old Business

The Executive Committee held a short Executive Session to discuss the contents of a letter it has prepared for the Chancellor, to be considered in the Chancellor’s review of the Provost.

II. Chair’s Report

a. COIA – The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics is an Association of about 85 faculty governance representatives from the bowl-eligible higher education institutions. Most members are presidents or chairs of faculty senates. A COIA steering committee composed of about 12 members, includes BFA Chair Jerry Peterson. The COIA conference last week was also attended by several NCAA representatives. Highlights included the following:
• The NCAA has a staff of about 500. There are about 450,000 student athletes in the United States. Only about 25 of the 1100 athletics programs nationwide pay for themselves.

• The NCAA brought several issues for discussion to the COIA meeting, including concussions, a class-action lawsuit (O’Bannon v. NCAA) touching on the implicit coercion present when young people are asked to sign releases, and a Knight Commission survey on faculty perceptions of Intercollegiate Athletics.

• Ohio State has sold its Campus parking concessions to a venture capital firm, on a 25 year contract, for $50 million up front.

• The NCAA is planning a partial deregulation: some of the content of its extensive rule book will be retired, and those matters delegated to the Campuses.

Discussion followed.

III. Special Report: Academic Tutoring of Student Athletes, and Faculty Feedback

Kris Livingston, Assistant Athletics Director for Academics, distributed handouts [available from the BFA office] and gave report that included the following points:

• The Herbst Academic Center is the academic support service for UCB’s student athletes. The NCAA mandates that any institution that has intercollegiate athletics must provide academic support for those students, because of the amount of hours the students spend in their sport, both in and out of season. Herbst has nine full-time staff members, including academic coordinators who coordinate academic resources, provide accountability, provide academic guidance, and communicate with coaches and faculty.

• Herbst uses an academic tier program to target its resources towards the students who need them the most, including a special program for those with learning disabilities.

• In addition to its full time staff Herbst employs quite few part time tutors (up to about 90 each semester), all of whom require training, including volunteers. Due to the extensive NCAA rulebook training is also extensive, to avoid the several pitfalls that can lead to violations. Most tutors are graduate students, but some are upper division undergraduates.

• Herbst can use the faculty’s assistance in two areas: referring tutors, and providing feedback on student athletes in their classes.

• Tutors: Faculty are encouraged to refer their graduate students or high performing undergraduate students to Herbst, as tutors. These are paid positions. Herbst often has difficulty finding tutors in certain areas: Business, Math, Integrative Physiology, Chemistry, Biology, Communication, Sociology, and Ethnic Studies.

• Mid-Semester Feedback: Three times per semester (weeks 5, 9, and 13), Herbst sends email to all faculty that have student athletes in their classes, asking for progress reports. The faculty’s feedback is vital for intervening where student athletes may be struggling. The response rates to these emails have been 45% to 50%. Herbst has been working on making the feedback system as easy to use as possible, and is currently using a third party vendor called “Grades First.”

Discussion followed. Peterson proposed writing an article for UCB’s online newsletter, explaining the importance of the requested feedback, and encouraging faculty to respond.
Other general discussion involving athletics followed, including these ideas and perspectives:
- Student Athletes’ average GPAs have improved significantly.
- Each spring, Athletics holds an awards breakfast, to which BFA Executive Committee members are invited.
- UCB students are very rarely suspended for issues of academic performance, compared to other institutions.
- UCB’s Athletics Department is already doing many of the things that the NCAA deregulation process would delegate to the Campuses.
- CU has a guaranteed articulation agreement with other institutions in Colorado, in which certain courses automatically transfer to CU. At its inception a committee reviewed individual courses to determine to which CU course each would correspond. It is not clear what mechanism exists for re-review when a course’s content has changed. Re-review is particularly important now that MOOCs are becoming more widespread. The Executive Committee will discuss the matter further at a future meeting this spring.
- The BFA should begin making regular contact with UCB’s coaches.

IV. Old Business – Continuing the Quest for Learning Excellence

Peterson re-introduced the subject of learning excellence, begun last Monday during discussion of a review of APS 1009 - Multiple Means of Teaching Evaluation. Peterson called the attention of the committee to a draft letter to the CU Community, including a proposed policy requiring a coherent curriculum. [Addendum below.]

Discussion followed. It was suggested that a future draft of the draft letter provide more explicit information about the audits the policy would require. Ted Stark, Chair of the joint Faculty and Academic Affairs Committees, will present the draft letter to the BFA at its meeting on Thursday, to begin a broad discussion.

V. Committee Reports and Updates

Administrative Services and Technology Committee

Committee Chair Karen Ramirez gave a brief report of the status of UCB’s response to the problems involving D2L, the campus’ new learning-management software. Her report included the following:
- It is important to distinguish between MyCUInfo, which is a CU-wide system managed by University Information Systems (UIS), and D2L, which is a Boulder Campus system, managed by the Boulder Campus Office of Information Technology (OIT).
- The Boulder Campus purchased the D2L service two years ago, as did many other education institutions. D2L’s servers are not on the Boulder Campus. They are at a facility owned by the company that sells D2L’s services.
- A data migration conducted by the D2L company on its servers is responsible for the problems the Boulder Campus has been having with D2L.
- OIT is now pursuing a project to move its D2L servers to the Boulder Campus.
- D2L executives will be on the Boulder Campus on February 6th, to discuss these matters with Larry Levine and others in OIT.
• The Boulder Campus is looking into liability against D2L. OIT is holding feedback sessions, to get a sense of the types of harms, and how much harm, is being caused by D2L’s problems.

Discussion followed, including these points and perspectives:
• This has been an extraordinarily difficult semester for campus technology, considering the problems with MyCUInfo and ISIS early in the semester, and ongoing problems with campus printing.
• Has the OIT governance structure been sufficiently interactive with the faculty, to keep them informed and provide sufficient oversight and advising to OIT?
• Has OIT been successful in communicating with the faculty? What methods of communications would be more effective, considering that ‘more communication’ may not be the most effective way of improving the situation.
• Advance notice of extended outages would be much more helpful than continuous notices over several hours or days that a given system is on the verge of being fixed.
• The default message that the D2L system provides when it is having problems is controlled solely by the D2L company: UCB cannot control what it says. Ideas for assessing the impact of the outages could include this: the five days that D2L was down equates to 1/15th of a semester, which equates to 1/15th of each student’s tuition. The Campus could also poll the faculty on how much time and effort each put in to developing work-arounds for the services D2L was supposed to provide: designing and populating webpages, for example. The extent to which learning was impacted may not be known until the end of the semester.
• It was suggested that polling a random sample of faculty would be a more effective way to generate data in preparation for a lawsuit.

Ramirez reported that she will invite OIT director Larry Levine to attend this Thursday’s BFA meeting, to make a report on these matters.

VI.  New Business

4/20

There was discussion of preparations for April 20th. The Executive Committee will invite Louise Vale, Vice Chancellor for Administration, to an Executive Committee, to discuss her plans. It was suggested that the BFA find out the position of student government.

VII. Adjournment.  There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:31.

Respectfully submitted by Sierra Swearingen-Todd, BFA Coordinator.

Addendum below: proposed discussion of cohesive curricula.
An open letter to the UC Community,

President Benson’s recent email calling for support of the athletics program got me thinking about the purposes of the University and how its performance is assessed. A unique aspect of athletics is that there is a highly visible and widely accepted measure of success: wins and losses. This is (perhaps unfortunately) often the primary basis of how an athletics program is judged.

Monitoring success in research is less straightforward, but grant and royalty dollars and faculty prizes serve as accepted proxies for a program’s overall success or failure. These can be balanced against the costs for faculty and facilities when judging our successes and identifying our weaknesses.

This raises an interesting question: how does the University monitor its effectiveness in terms of educating students? A naive answer would be by evaluating student learning, but sadly we use few objective measures to reveal the effectiveness of our teaching programs. This despite the fact that the majority of the University’s operating budget comes from students who pay, presumably, for a well designed, well delivered and cost-effective education.

We are moving into a new era of educational and institutional challenges, brought on in part by on-line courses and degree programs and made more urgent by growing costs to students and their families, both in terms of dollars per semester and time to degree completion. In this competitive new world, it seems critical that we commit at least as much energy to the design and delivery of effective educational programs as we do to athletics and research.

On talking with Provost Moore, I believe that we agree that a critical discussion, based on the following policy statement, and involving faculty, administration, technical experts and students, could help guide us to successfully adapt and improve our educational efforts through this potentially revolutionary period.

**Commitment to a coherent & effective curriculum**: The Faculty and University Administration recognizes and is committed to the premise that students can expect that each department’s common requirements for a degree (a major’s core) represents a thoughtfully considered, realistic, and effective course of study and that producing and maintaining such a “coherent core curriculum” requires an administrative commitment to provide faculty and departments with the necessary pedagogical resources. This implies

- that each course in a major’s required core be justified in terms of explicit learning objectives and performance expectations;
- that these same standards are applied to on-line courses;
- that periodic audits are carried out to insure that a department’s curricular goals can and are being attained by the majority of students; and
- that the results of outcome audits are used by departments to reconsider, and where necessary, revise their core course requirement to optimize student learning outcomes.

Sincerely,

Professor, MCD Biology, Co-Director, CU Teach,
Interim Chair, BFA Student Affairs Committee, and Founding Fellow of the Center for STEM Learning

Sunday, 27 January 2013