Minutes of the Academic Program Liaison Committee Meeting

Friday, April 23, 2010
3:00-4:00 PM
Osborne 107C

Members Present:
Steve Adams, Cheryl Addy, Sally Boyd, Jim Burns, Janice Byrd, Mary Ann Byrnes, Nancy Floyd, Kris Finnigan (Chair), Andy Gowan, Miriam Johnson, Sarah Keeling, Sheryl Kline, Amy Lantz, Aaron Marterer, Mike Perkins, J.T. Thornhill, Irma Van Scoy, Nancy Zimmerman

Members Absent:
Wayne Buff, Marsha Dowell, Dan Friedman, Gary Geer, Dave Hodson, Martha Moriarty, Suzanne Ozment, Jennifer Vendemia, Robert Wilcox

Guests Present:
Paul Solomon

The minutes for the February 19, 2010 meeting were approved by all members present as accurate.

K. Finnigan distributed the following handouts: meeting agenda, an excerpt from ACAF 2.03 on Special Topics, APL Meeting Memorandum for Summer 2010-Fall 2010, Academic Programs e-Newsletter Draft, 2010-2011 CHE Timeline for New Programs, 2010-2011 CHE Timeline for Program Modifications, Neon List # 3 with instructions, Gamecock article: “USC Cuts Programs, Looks to Save Money”, a handout regarding Office of Fellowships & Scholar Programs Award Winners, and the most recent list of courses newly added to the “Courses Approved for Distance Education” list.

The meeting schedule for the balance of 2010 has been established, and the correction of the November meeting date was noted (now November 12, not the Friday after Thanksgiving). Summer meetings have been tentatively scheduled in preparation for work on SACS documents. These meetings will be cancelled if there is no need for them. Following the suggestion of Committee members, the summer meetings were changed to Thursdays, rather than Fridays. The May-July meetings will now be May 20th, June 17th, and July 22nd, subject to conference room availability.

The APLs were reminded that Bulletin Updates are due by May 15, 2010. A. Marterer noted that program changes which have passed Graduate Council and Faculty Senate which are not yet in the bulletin should not be added, as these would be duplicated.

K. Finnigan briefly addressed the handout from Novella Beskid, Office of Fellowships, on student winners of national fellowships. Ms. Beskid requests APL assistance in identifying faculty who teach courses early in major, who could steer the best students to the Office of Fellowships early in their academic careers.

N. Zimmerman reported on Graduate School efforts to clean up courses in the Graduate Bulletin which are erroneously listed as special topics, without having been approved as such. Under ACAF 2.03, the phrase “special topics” is reserved for special topics courses only; all other courses which are not approved for this format must change their wording to “Seminar in…”, “Selected Readings on…”, etc. A special topics course will always have a suffix along with the term “special topics” in the title. N. Zimmerman requested the APLs’ support in helping their departments clean up special topics courses. Departments must determine whether the content of the questionable courses varies by suffix and title, and the number of times courses can be repeated. A. Marterer will provide a comprehensive list of undergraduate topics courses to help APLs clean these up at the undergraduate level as well.

The draft of a new Academic Programs e-Newsletter in the style of the Council of Academic Deans weekly mailing was presented to the group. This weekly e-Newsletter will probably be distributed.
Wednesdays, and will list future meetings, impending deadlines, program approvals, and links to
supporting documents and/or SharePoint. Members agreed that a weekly communication would be
preferable to one-at-a-time SharePoint alerts.

Changes to the revised CHE timelines for 2010-2011 were discussed, including earlier due dates to
Academic Programs, and simplification of Cycle names.

K. Finnigan reported announced that data collection for the pink Neon List #1 (Internship/Field
Coursework project) is complete. It may in future be necessary to collect copies of all contracts with all
service providers, but we hope to avoid this. Several units — Arts & Sciences, Education, Law, Honors
College, USC-Upstate — are still finishing up the Program Distance Education Calculations project (white
Neon List #2). The Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance asked to relay the message that
the APL’s work has made a tremendous difference in their preparations for SACS. We still have a lot of
work to do, but we are already so much more thoroughly prepared for this accreditation than we were for
the last one, because of the data that APLs are collecting. This will greatly aid in future compliance with
new SACS reporting standards and guidelines.

A question was raised as to what distinguishes “blended” delivery from “hybrid” delivery of distance
education. S. Adams explained that “blended” delivery (as used by CHE) indicates multiple distance
modalities. “Hybrid”, as used by the distance education industry, indicates both face to face instruction,
along with distance delivery. Discussion ensued on including mention of a course’s delivery method in
the Bulletins.

A list of courses newly added to the “approved-for-distance-list” was distributed. A copy is posted on
SharePoint, and Academic Programs is currently working to synchronize this list with others (HRSM,
Distance Ed offerings).

A new “Neon List #3” was circulated, at the request of a recently formed University Working Group on
Distance Learning. By September 1, 2010, SACS requires a detailed report on USC’s distance education
offerings, infrastructure, and procedures. In order to comply with this, the Working Group on Distance
Education requires information on individual unit distance education activities, administration,
infrastructure, and strategic vision. Responses are due by Friday, May 21, 2010. Professor Paul
Solomon, Chair of the new working group, addressed the APLs’ questions about this new data request.

Several new policies are being drafted over the next few months, and drafts will brought before the APLs
for review and comment. These include policies on Academic Bulletins and Program Terminations.
Recent program terminations brought before the Board of Trustees led to an article in the Daily
Gamecock, in which K. Finnigan addressed existing requirements governing the process. A copy of the
article was provided to help APLs address faculty and student questions.

The discussion on revising Academic Forms and Procedures was begun. Finnigan. Academic Programs
has identified three broad types of problems with the forms: 1) technical/mechanical issues (Adobe forms
don’t have enough spaces; formatting problems; etc.), 2) instructions - missing, unclear (routing, which
forms go where, who needs to see what, should forms be consolidated), and 3) policy-related issues –
policy must be changed before we can adjust procedures (terminations, for example).

Problems encountered by several colleges included signature delays, confusion over the use of the APA
form as a “cover sheet”, and uncertainty about which forms should be paired together for program
actions. It was suggested that certain forms could be merged to limit confusion (such as a justification
section being added to each form). Several members suggested that it may be a good idea to re-think
“why we are doing this”, to see if the forms can be made more coherent, or perhaps find a digital method
to use one form entry “portal.” Drafts of revised forms and procedures will be forwarded to APLs by the
time of the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.10 PM. The next meeting will be Friday, May 21, 2010 at 3:00 PM in
Osborne 107C.