

Faculty Senate

Year End Committee Report
2021-2022

Committee: Academic Policies and Services

Chair(s): Adam Anderson & Queen Henry-Okafor

Members: Liz Fazio, Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, Wonder Drake, Graham Hemingway, Dawn Iacobucci, Kevin Schey, Doug Christiansen, and Padma Raghavan.

EC Liaison: Elizabeth Catania

Standing Charge: To be concerned with new schools, new programs and new degrees. To consider policies regarding academic honors, leaves, grants, promotions, departmental and divisional chairmanships, programs abroad, the academic calendar, career planning and placement, Vanderbilt University Library, Information Services, the bookstore, and the University Press.

Focused Charges for this Academic Year

1. Continue discussing the University Libraries and engage constituencies across the University to identify and act on major challenges.
 - We met with Vanessa Beasley, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, in both the fall and spring semesters to discuss ongoing changes at the Libraries. An outcome of these meetings was a recognition that our committee could play a larger role in communication between the Senate and the University Librarian. This will be important for faculty as the Libraries make collection management decisions and consider transformational agreements with publishers, for example. On the other hand, the APS committee would be a useful venue for the University Librarian to learn about new degree programs (even before they are approved) and collaborate with the Vanderbilt Bookstore and University Press. For these reasons, we recommend that the Executive Committee considers requesting *ex officio* membership for the University Librarian on the APS committee next year (or at the least, offer to meet with her/him each semester to foster efficient communication).
2. Monitor changes in the operation of the Bookstore.
 - In the same vein (as #1), we recommend that the APS committee invites leadership of the University Press and Vanderbilt Bookstore (both David ter Kuile, in VU Business Services, and the Follett bookstore management) to future meetings to provide efficient communication between faculty and these academic service providers. In the case of the bookstore, some faculty voiced a concern that books appear to have a steadily decreasing presence in the 'bookstore.' This runs counter to the original motivation for the current bookstore and the fact that students, staff, faculty, campus visitors, and the Nashville community would all benefit from a wide and deep selection of books that reflect the diversity of interests at the university.

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3. Continue to evaluate the potential impact of online-degree programs.
 - We conducted a survey of each school regarding their adoption of and experience with online degree programs. The results vary widely between schools, which seems appropriate given differences in their goals and effective modes of instruction. We note that attitudes toward online education have probably evolved, due to the pandemic, in the time since this charge was originally written. In any case, survey results are available on the Senate APS committee Box folder.
4. Continue learning about the best practices within our existing interdisciplinary programs, across the University.
 - We recommend that the APS committee invites André Christie-Mizell, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School, next year to discuss the Graduate School's audit of interdisciplinary programs and to document best practices.
5. Recommend specific formal relationships with the Graduate School that would enable more continuous and timely improvement of our existing programs.
 - We recommend the APS committee considers this charge next year.

Suggestions for Future Charges/Actions

- **Communication with the Provost's new Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment, and Accreditation (OAPRAA)**
 - We recommend the committee meets regularly (e.g., each semester) with Eric Cummings, Director of OAPRAA, to get a heads-up on new degree proposals that will need APS review soon.
- **VERA system rollout**
 - APS should continue to communicate with Padma Raghavan, Vice Provost for Research, and her office regarding the rollout and development of the Vanderbilt Electronic Research Administration (VERA) system. APS can help publicize VERA to the faculty and carry back to the Vice Provost the faculty experience using the system.
- **VU/VUMC messaging**
 - We recommend that the APS committee contacts Tracey George, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, to discuss ways that VUMC faculty who interact with students can be alerted in a timely way about changes in VU schedules and policies. This is a charge from 2020-2021, but apparently communication problems had not been fixed by January, 2022 (when the start of classes was delayed by one week, but VUMC instructors were not informed).
- **Faculty mentoring**
 - The committee approached each school to get information on best practices for faculty mentoring (especially for practice and research line faculty). This was only partially successful, despite repeated requests. We recommend that the committee continues this work next year, moving forward with the responses they do get, even if some schools are not represented (maybe those are the schools that would benefit most from a final report).
- **Evaluation of academic calendar and passing time between classes**
 - Aligning the academic calendar with federal and other school holidays would support work-life balance of faculty and staff, particularly primary caretakers of school-age children. A recent development is the announcement that VU's spring break will be synchronized with

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the Metro Nashville Public School spring break, beginning in 2023 (this also aligns with Williamson County and most area private schools, at least in 2023). We recommend that the APS committee considers how the university calendar can be aligned with other school/federal holidays as well.