

5-22-2001

AS Minutes 2001 05 22

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Recommended Citation

"AS Minutes 2001 05 22" (2001). *Faculty Assembly Documents*. Paper 75.
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SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the Meeting of May 22/23, 2001

Terrence Gavan, Speaker of the Assembly, presided.

1. **Call to Order and Minutes:** The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM. The minutes of the meeting of April 2 were approved with one minor correction.
2. **Procedures:** A Motion was presented: "That the Faculty Assembly adopt and follow the process described below (this page to page 4) at its meetings of May 22/23, 2001." This Motion was printed at the beginning of a document entitled "Process for Recommending a Model for a Revised Core Curriculum," which the members of the Assembly had received in the mail. The Motion was carried unanimously in a voice vote.
3. **Remarks by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies:** Stephen Trainor, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, thanked the sponsors of proposals and the Core Curriculum Steering Committee, which was disbanded before this meeting. He reminded everyone that this was a faculty project: the faculty had approved a "Definition of the Task" (i.e., criteria) for a revised core curriculum and individual faculty had volunteered to submit possible models. He asked that a decision be made to choose one model: not a finished product but a model for further development. We are now "so close" to reaching an agreement about the core curriculum, he observed, "closer now than in many, many years."

The temptation is to stay with the current core and make no improvements in it. We must resist that temptation and keep in mind the fact of change. The times, universities, and Salve Regina have all changed. The students are now better prepared. There are more faculty than in the past and they have more credentials. The Mission Statement has remained consistent with past traditions but has also changed. It is important to keep in mind that any model that is chosen will itself continue to change over the years.

All of the proposed models are certainly not perfect, but they are better than what we have now – which is a series of separate courses that seem to have no connection.

This meeting is about selecting a model. "Choose wisely, but please choose."

4. **Discussion:** The discussion began in an unstructured fashion with random remarks about all four of the proposals. This proved to be unsatisfactory. The Assembly then decided to discuss each proposal separately

General remarks made during the meeting included the following: *All of the four proposals have good features. All are based on successful programs at other institutions ... Many students have the impression that the current core is a meaningless series of hurdles, something to "get out of the way." At some other institutions, the core is a matter of institutional pride. Students are given the message that they are fortunate to be a part of it ... Whatever core is eventually put in place, advisers must emphasize its importance for students. The entire Salve Regina community should promote the importance of the core curriculum ... We all want so much for our students. A danger to be avoided is putting too*

much strain on a four-year education. Perhaps we should have a limited core and then suggested adjunct courses ... The current tuition regulations limit the number of courses a student may take without paying extra. This can cause problems for students who are in professional programs that require a large number of courses. Some accommodation has to be made in this area ... The professional programs prepare students for professions, but most of these students are going to change their careers more than once in a lifetime. A good, broad core curriculum in the liberal arts prepares students to make those career changes ... It is important to keep in mind that this institution, from its foundation, promoted both the liberal arts and professional programs.

How can we even have this discussion when we still have not determined what we want a core curriculum to do for our students? ... The Faculty Assembly stated what it wants the core curriculum to accomplish when it voted to approve criteria for a core curriculum. The Assembly also asked the sponsors of proposals to answer questions about how their proposals would fulfill these criteria. All of the sponsors answered the Assembly's questions about criteria. All of the proposals define their goals for students. There is more work to be done but, at least since last December, the Faculty Assembly has established general guidelines about what it wants from a core curriculum.

Proposals #1, #3/4, and #5 all begin with a general "portal" or "gateway" course for all students. This is done at Providence College, Villanova, Notre Dame, St. Mary's University (Minnesota), Columbia, Brooklyn College, and other institutions that belong to the Association for Core Texts and Courses. At some of these institutions the "portal" course may have large numbers of students in general sessions and smaller discussion groups. At other institutions the course has perhaps no more than 25 in a class. Whatever the structure, the purpose of the course is to (a) announce themes that will help to tie together what students will learn in their undergraduate education, (b) develop a "learning community" by giving students a common set of themes and texts to discuss, and (c) function as a rite of passage with this message: "High school is over; your intellectual development will now begin in earnest."

Proposal #2 is modeled on what is done at many colleges and universities: the student is free to make many choices in selecting courses but must make those choices within certain "thematic exposures" and competencies.

Proposal #1, Seven Frames

Comments. *This proposal is the most thorough in the way it integrates the Mission Statement into the curriculum ... The program seems to be large and unwieldy ... The large number of required credits would force students in professional programs to stay here for five years ... "Skills" should not be a part of a core ... Changing the mathematics requirement to a "college level" course is not workable. The present mathematics requirement should be kept.*

The sponsor of the proposal responded that this curriculum model should be thought of as a work in progress, just a draft. At this stage it is flexible, not fixed. The sponsor then made the following change to the proposal:

"The Frames, descriptions and objectives would stand.

The current credits attributed under each frame will be determined at a future date according to the endorsement of the faculty.”

Proposal #2, Millennium Core

Comments. Some faculty spoke in favor of the proposal and its flexibility. When asked how this proposal is an improvement over what exists now, the sponsor responded that the curriculum would give the student not only choice but also direction. The thematic and competency exposures could be tailored to meet a student’s needs in a way that a “one size fits all” curriculum could not. Adjustments could be made to accommodate the needs of professional programs that face pressures from outside agencies. Many different roads lead to Rome. Many different courses can lead to the goals we establish for the core curriculum. It is important that students be given the opportunity to sample different disciplines in different courses.

Proposal #3/4, World Citizenship

Comments. *One goal of the program – to develop the abilities of students to become “autonomous thinkers” – seems to be somewhat pagan. The goal should be to develop someone who is connected to a Judeo-Christian tradition ... A “History of Ideas” required course is questionable. This title suggests a chronological survey of “ideas” taken out of their historical context and studied as pure ideas that have their own independent existence ... The proposal would seem to require science majors to take a general science course for their core requirement. This is impractical ... In the Social Sciences students are given no direction about courses. A student could avoid any exposure to history or politics or other Social Sciences ... The title of the “History of Ideas” course is put in quotation marks because it is temporary; it is the kind of “gateway” or “portal” course that is found at some institutions. Nevertheless, the title is misleading and confusing ... The proposal mentions Religious Studies and Philosophy as “lead departments” for certain courses. This term is not adequately explained. Perhaps the Religious Studies and Philosophy Departments do not want to be “lead departments.”*

Comments were made in favor of the program. The sponsors wanted to assure everyone that the proposal was not intended to be “aggressively secular,” as some have suggested. The proposal was only trying to find a balance in that old and familiar tension between “Athens and Jerusalem.” The proposal makes it clear that the institution’s Catholic identity would remain paramount. Developing the capacity of students to “think for themselves” is laudable and is the goal of any liberal arts education. At a Catholic institution this goal will be connected to Catholic values ... The sponsors did not want to tell the Social Sciences what to do. The intention was to let the Social Science departments decide how they would contribute to the core curriculum. The sponsors did, however, hope to encourage more interdisciplinary courses in the Social Sciences.

Proposal #5, Classics

Comments. *The language requirement is a “departure from the status quo.” We must adhere to national standards when it comes to languages. If we want students to appreciate diversity there is no better way to do this than in a language course ... The proposal seems to permit students to be exempted from courses in cases of “advanced placement.” This gives the impression that some of our courses are high school courses.*

Students should be allowed to be exempt from certain courses if they have achieved a form of “advanced placement” but they should go to the higher level and take a more advanced college-level course in that area ... It helps our recruitment to say that we offer small classes. That is our draw. The emphasis on large classes in this proposal would not help recruitment ... It would be impossible to emphasize writing and public speaking in a class with 140 students and a small-group session that meets once a week ... The mega-course (a large lecture session with discussion sessions for smaller groups) is inevitable. We should develop this type of course. Unfortunately, the only location for large lectures would be the TB room in O’Hare. The droning noise from the overhead fans and air conditioning is excessive; it is hard to listen and concentrate with so much interfering noise; the seats are uncomfortable.

A sponsor of the proposal emphasized that various aspects of the proposal could certainly be adjusted to accommodate faculty consensus.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies made comments during the debate: At this point, the primary concerns should be (a) the type of student we hope that the core curriculum will help to shape (b) and the framework of model. Do not become bogged down with the details ... It is easy to find a fault in a proposal and declare “Gotchya.” It would be better to find the strong points in each proposal and see how they can be useful ... What should the core curriculum model consist of? Make that decision first. Then, adjustments can be made in things like credits and tuition. The task today is to deal with the “theme” of each proposal. This is not the time to fine-tune the details. At this stage, come up with the framework of the model. A camera-ready curriculum proposal would come later.

5. **Informal Poll:** The procedures adopted for this meeting required that an informal be taken. Some members of the Assembly noted that the sponsors were changing their proposals or stating that parts of the proposals were only temporary suggestions that would be decided on later. This made it difficult to reach an informed decision. The Speaker, noting these difficulties, nevertheless decided to conduct the poll at this stage. He pointed out that members of the Assembly had the option of adding comments to the poll forms and choosing “none of the above.”

The wording of the poll was specified in the procedures for this meeting. Before the meeting each member of the Assembly had received a folder with his/her name and the poll form; the Secretary of the Assembly had supplied the folder.

6. **Recess:** The meeting was recessed at 11:45 AM. Members of the disbanded Core Curriculum Steering Committee volunteered to tabulate the results of the poll.
7. **Results of the Informal Poll:** The Speaker of the Faculty Assembly announced the results of the informal poll in the Miley cafeteria during lunch. They were as follows:

“At this point in the discussion I am in favor of recommending”

#1 Seven Frames	18
#2 Millennium	9
#3/4 World Citizenship	36
#5 Classics	7

“I do not support any of the above” 12

Two other responses called for a “hybrid” that combined available choices. Two said, in effect, “I do not support any of the above,” but that choice was not marked.

Delegates to the Faculty Assembly (administration, Professional Librarians, half-time faculty, part-time faculty) received separate poll forms in a different color. Only two were handed in. The responses were in the form of comments.

8. **Continuation of Meeting – May 23, 2001:** The meeting continued at 9:06 AM. A copy of the poll results was distributed.

The Speaker asked Patricia Hawkrigde to read aloud the comments that were written on the poll forms.

Paula Martasian announced that she was proposing a merger of her proposal, #1, with Proposal #3/4. She presented copies of what a curriculum might look like if the two proposals were combined. The sponsors of both proposals agreed that their proposals had so many similar features that could be merged.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies commended the faculty for the seriousness and civility of the meeting. He noted that most of the faculty, in the poll, had selected one of the proposals. This is a sign of moving closer to a decision. Whatever the faculty recommends, he added, the administration has certainly heard a clear message: (a) There is a need for flexibility. (b) There must be some relief for professional programs. (c) The University’s Catholic character must be maintained. He asked that this stage of the project be brought to some kind of closure.

9. **Vote:** The procedures adopted for the meeting required that the Assembly pass a Motion in order to authorize a ballot. The suggested Motion, as printed on the procedures, was passed by voice vote.

Members of the Assembly could write one of the following on the ballot: (a) The name of the core curriculum proposal that s/he supports as a model for further development. (b) “I do not support any proposal.” (c) “Abstain.” The first two choices were counted as a vote. Handing in a blank ballot or writing “Abstain” on a ballot was not counted as a vote.

Part of the Motion stated: “The proposal that receives the majority of votes cast is recommended by the Faculty Assembly as a model for designing a revised core curriculum. The votes for ‘I do not support any proposal’ are also counted.” This procedure follows the guidelines in the Faculty Assembly’s constitution (current Faculty Manual, p. 106).

The Assembly recessed from 10:40 to 10:48 AM. After it reconvened, discussion continued. These points were made: *We are not at all sure about the actual contents of a Proposal that is a merger of #1 and #3/4. How can we make an informed choice? This merger would result in something entirely new ... The sponsors are talking about making changes in minor details. What may be a minor detail to one person may be a critical feature to another. This is confusing ... Writing should be incorporated into all courses.*

Paula Martasian announced the following: (a) She was withdrawing her proposal for a merged #1 plus #3/4. (2) She was now supporting Proposal #3/4. This would clarify the voting choices.

The Speaker ruled that the vote should proceed and that members of the Assembly were permitted to vote for any one of the four proposals – #1, #2, #3/4, and #5 – as well as for “I do not support any proposal.” This would create a five-way “contest.” With five choices, it was very possible that no one model would receive a majority of votes on the first ballot. The Speaker indicated that it might be necessary to conduct more than one ballot.

The results of the first and only ballot were as follows:

72 votes were received.

One was not counted because it called for a hybrid of the different proposals.

#1 Seven Frames	6
#2 Millennium	24
#3/4 World Citizenship	38
#5 Classics	0
“I do not support any proposal”	3

Jane Bethune, Thomas Day, Mary Louise Greeley, Patricia Hawkrige, and Frank Maguire counted the votes and signed the results.

Proposal 3/4 received the majority of the votes and, according to the constitution of the Faculty Assembly and the procedures approved for this meeting, it was recommended by the Faculty Assembly.

10. **Course of Action:** The procedures adopted by the Assembly presented three possibilities for a course of action that the Assembly might follow at this stage: (a) Establish a joint faculty-administration deliberative committee that would further develop a formal core curriculum proposal based on the “voting results” of this meeting. (b) Return the proposals to the Core Curriculum Steering Committee. (c) Choose another course of action determined by the Assembly at this meeting.

A Motion to accept the first of these three possibilities was presented and seconded. The Assembly passed amendments to change the membership of the proposed deliberative committee from eight to nine members, all appointed by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Assembly, with no more than one member from any single department.

Comments during debate: *This committee should be as representative as possible ... It would be good if “clusters” of departments could somehow have a voice on the committee ... This type of committee will have a central group but it will depend heavily on official faculty advisers and subcommittees that work with the committee... A committee like this works for and answers to the Faculty Assembly ... Departments and individuals will have to make their opinions known. They cannot just passively watch from the sidelines ... Appointed committees (especially committees appointed by an*

elected committee) are the norm at colleges and universities ... The Motion calls for the formation of a joint faculty-administration committee. It is reasonable for the administration to appoint some members ... This is a committee that sends a recommendation to the Faculty Assembly. It makes sense for all of its faculty members to be appointed by the Executive Committee ... All of these proposals should be sent back to their sponsors for further work ... The sponsors are heavily invested in their work and perhaps reluctant to make changes. The time has come to send the matter to a group that will be more objective and willing to make changes.

The Assembly, in a voice vote and without objections, passed the following:

Motion. The Assembly requests that a joint faculty-administration “Deliberative Committee on the Core Curriculum” be formed.

Charge: To submit to the Faculty Assembly a formal and detailed structure for a revised core curriculum; to base that proposed revision on the voting results of the Assembly Meeting of May 22/23, 2001.

Membership: nine members of the Faculty Assembly (full-time Teaching Faculty) appointed by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Assembly, from volunteers, with no more than one individual from any department; the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Vice President for Academic Affairs / Dean of Faculty. The President is a member *ex officio*. The committee shall be formed during the summer months. A member of the Faculty Assembly (elected by faculty members of the committee) and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies shall be co-chairs.

Representation: In accordance with Robert’s Rules, the membership of this committee, as far as possible, shall represent different “points of view” or “interests.” Those who are opposed to the committee’s work may not be members of the committee.

11. The Speaker thanked all those who had participated in the meeting. He indicated that his term as Speaker would soon end and Sister Johnelle Luciani, RSM would be the next Speaker. He thanked the faculty and administration for their cooperation and support during his term. A Motion to adjourn the meeting was passed at 11:46 AM.