

Minutes of the University Council on Teaching  
Friday, March 27, 2009  
Waul House

Committee members present: Chris Hepburn (chair); Sue Barrett; Rita Olivieri; Virginia Reinburg; Akua Sarr; Lad Tobin; Peter Wilson

Also attending: Don Hafner (Vice Provost); Mary French (Associate Director, Admissions)

Recorder: Lad Tobin

Chris Hepburn announced that minutes from February 16 meeting would soon be distributed for the committee's approval,

The committee focused this meeting on two issues: (1) grade inflation and (2) advanced placement units.

- Discussion on Grade Inflation (11:10-11:25)

The committee discussed the two most recent versions of its "Preliminary Report and recommendations on Grade Inflation/Grade Compression at BC." After suggesting some minor changes in language in the longer version of the report, the committee agreed to approve and to submit that version to the Provost. The committee also agreed to post on the Provost's website earlier university studies on grade inflation, including "The Murphy Report."

Don Hafner reported that a researcher at Stanford studying grade inflation had requested BC's data for his own study. Don asked whether we should make that information available. The committee suggested that BC should make an effort to cooperate with other universities interested in the problem of grade inflation since it is important to highlight that this is a national problem; however, the committee also recommended that our data should only be made available after a researcher provides a written guarantee that BC's data would not be identified or singled out in any subsequent dissemination of the data.

- Discussion on Advanced Placement Units (11:25-12:30)

Mary French, Associate Director of Admissions, provided a detailed presentation on BC's policies and procedures regarding advanced placement units. Mary began her presentation by distributing (1) a summary report of AP scores for the class of 2012; (2) various college statements that have been made available to students and advisors regarding Advanced Placement Units (APUs); and (3) several representative examples of the requests the Admissions Office received from students seeking APUs.

Mary explained the AP classes and exams are the most common but not the only way for students to receive APUs. Many students, for example, request APUs for college courses they took through and while at their high school; for “dual enrollment” courses; or for international courses, such as British A-levels or International Baccalaureate courses. She also explained that BC students could use APUs to place out of a requirement but not to receive BC credit nor to reduce the total number of classes they need to graduate. The only exception is made for students who earn 24+ APUs and who may be eligible for advanced studies and early graduation. Students who wish to pursue that option, however, must wait till after their first semester at BC to petition their Dean for advanced standing.

Mary pointed out that vast majority of BC students apply to the university with at least one APU. The class of 2012, for example, entered BC with 4681 total APUs earned through AP courses and the Admissions Office received additional requests for APUs from students who had taken a dual enrollment, college, or international course.

There are many factors that make it difficult for the university to know how and how many students will make use of APUs. Honors students, for example, 1.15 Td0.xcept APUDean aege u(n)1

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would affect our recruitment abilities; that, while BC students do seem eager to get out of core courses they believe repeat courses they have already taken, most took AP courses primarily to get into a good college and do not seem overly focused on the details of our policy; that, on the other hand, BC's standards are already stricter than almost all of our competitors, particularly because many of them (including Harvard and Penn) offer credits and not just placement for APUs; that faculty over the years have been consulted about their department's policy on AP scores but that some departments, such as Math, Biology, and Chemistry, have been much more actively involved than other departments in studying, weighing in with Admissions, and advising students on this issue; that the Admissions Office would welcome more faculty involvement and discussion on this issue; and that she also doesn't know who ultimately makes the decision on what AP score earns APUs in each department but that she would be happy to try to find out where and how that decision is made.