Task Force on Future of CLAS
Minutes of July 25, 2012

Task force members attending: Robert D’Amico, Bonnie Effros (by speakerphone), David Foster, Martin Heesacker, Jean Larson, Rick Yost, Mary Watt
Task force members absent: Michael D. Martinez, Carolyn Tucker
Liaisons attending: David Richardson (Dean’s Office)
Liaisons absent: Scott Nygren (Faculty Senate), John Palmer (Faculty Council)

In the absence of Michael Martinez, Marty Heesacker called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm in the Dean’s Conference Room. The minutes of July 11 were approved with minor corrections. Marty Heesacker said the agenda he had distributed was the one prepared for the previous meeting; he described it as long enough for several meetings, and asked the group to focus on preparation for the August 15 presentation in the Chairs and Directors Retreat. Bonnie Effros, Michael Martinez and Mary Watt will be making the presentation.

The meeting then turned to the question of a document to bring from the task force to the meeting. A request for clarity on the audience focused the group on writing for the chairs and directors. The one page draft by Larson and Tucker based on earlier meetings of the task force was briefly reviewed. Discussion of the vision paragraph led to a reiteration of the Jeffersonian triplet of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, the introduction of the Martin Luther King triplet of go to school, go to work, go to vote, the review of the tripart college division into the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences and mathematics. Rick Yost reminded us of the recently revised mission statement of the college (see http://www.clas.ufl.edu/about/index.html), which Bonnie Effros looked up on her computer and read to us, and then provided a shortened version that incorporated elements of the paragraph from the Larson-Tucker white paper which resonated well with those present:

The Mission of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is to empower UF students with the tools for lifelong intellectual development, access to a breadth of knowledge from multiple disciplines, the opportunity for a diversity of learning experiences and venues, and a multi-cultural experience that engenders sensitivity to difference. Access to a broad liberal arts education in the humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences enables students (a) to innovate and adapt to the changing landscapes of the future, (b) shape and achieve their goals for employment and quality of life, and (c) think critically and find solutions to the “real world” problems that impact their community, state, nation, and the world.

The discussion of the proposed initiatives (Florida Virtual University, global and multicultural citizenship, and research on and service to the community and state) focused on potential benefits to the college in terms of increasing the size of the audience through expanding the pool of students we reach, increasing funding through off-book courses/degrees and community support. Such initiatives are called for in face of the decreasing enrollment in general education courses and the fact that we are not generating the SCHs required under RCM to maintain our current budget. Moreover the proposed reduction of general education course requirements to 30 credit hour and proposed requirement that general education core course options to consist of a maximum of five courses within the subject areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, and requires a student to complete one course in each of those areas proposed but not passed by the 2012 legislature and the university initiatives such as the good life course and its possible counterparts in science and social science serve to funnel students to a handful of general
education options. The channeling of students into a few courses lessens the exposures that lead students to “found majors”. Additional requirements such as the proposed internship requirement may put CLAS in a bind if revenues continue to decrease.

David Richardson is encouraged to see if monetary consequences of the three broad proposals can be estimated. The section 2b related to the SACS Quality Enhancement Plan is to be deleted since another group is working on assessment and no increase in either student credit hours or funding was identified for this proposal.

CLAS is developing structural and managerial problems because of uneven shrinking via attrition. Since 2006, we have lost of 25-30% of our intellectual core faculty. Very few or no young faculty are coming in to replenish the hardest hit programs. In light of the continuing decrease in size of the college, the question was raised of whether it would be better to have a few robust departments with strong graduate programs and others without or to have small, tightly focused programs in multiple disciplines.

Universities are facing a time of flux generally and UF has started the search for a new president. CLAS needs to be prepared to use new ways of offering the excellent education and the ability to continue learning and adapting that ever more necessary for our students we currently provide. CLAS is adapting by expanding its inventory of hybrid and online courses; it is rolling out its first 2 + 2 (community college + online) bachelor’s degree program in Criminology and Law. Distance masters degrees are another potential area for growth.

Martin Heesacker, Mary Watt and Bonnie Effros will draft a document for the Chairs and Directors retreat and circulate it for comment prior to our next meeting. Marty Heesacker will reserve a room for our next meeting on Wednesday August 8, 2012 from 3:30-5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Larson