Task Force on the Future of CLAS
Minutes of May 14, 2012

Task force members attending: Bonnie Effros, Martin Heesacker, Jean Larson, Michael D. Martinez, Mary Watt, and Rick Yost.

Task force members in absence: Robert D’Amico, David Foster, Carolyn Tucker
Liaison attending: John Palmer (CLAS Faculty Council)
Liaison absent: Scott Nygren (UF Faculty Senate)

John Palmer began the meeting at 3 pm with some structural items. We will post announcements of meetings and minutes to the College Governance site. He indicated that Dean D’Anieri was interested in meeting with us, and we agreed to work on having a meeting with him as soon as was feasible. We briefly discussed who the committee would like as a resource person from the Dean’s office, and David Richardson was unanimous choice. Palmer will contact him. We set a procedure for electing a chair electronically in which everyone is considered nominated, some individuals choose to withdraw (Bonnie, Mary and Rick withdrew), ), and then an election will be held. John Palmer will see to the details of the election. The chair will then be responsible for setting up all meetings, ensuring compliance with the Sunshine Law, posting minutes on the College Governance web site, as well as the usual duties associated with chairing meetings of the task force. At the end of the meeting, we decided to meet from 3:30—5:00 pm on one of Monday May 21 or Wednesday May 23 with the hope that the dean would be able to attend one of those times. We also have a meeting planned for June 1 when Carolyn Tucker will be able to attend. John will arrange for the next meeting.

Palmer noted that we may draw on faculty council members for assistance.

We discussed what we knew of the reasons for the formation of the task force: (1) what effect is RCM having on the college? (2) what is the core mission of the college under the new fiscal constraints? (3) there is a need for a new narrative to present the college in a favorable light. We discussed the audience for the report we expect to produce, and decided that we would prepare a report for the dean and the faculty of the college, with an eye to students and alumni of the college as well.

We had a wide-ranging discussion on recent changes. For example, the legislature has mandated that general education credits be reduced from 36 to 30, and that a state-wide faculty led group should designate 5 courses in each of five broad areas (Communications, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences) which the state will mandate be offered and taught at every community college, college and university in the state system which would count for general education credit. Governor Scott vetoed the University of Florida proposal for 9 credits of UF courses to be required of all UF students. Other topics included the Innovation Academy, study abroad courses taught by CLAS faculty, and the possibility of new degree programs.
A tentative plan of action is to address the following three broad questions:

1. What are we already doing well? We will start from the time of the Sullivan cuts, include restructuring and other creative and entrepreneurial efforts. We will include good examples and note the role of shared governance in these achievements.

2. What are best practices elsewhere on campus? Possible avenues for us to follow are reading UF Annual Reports, talking with Glover, Fajack, Riffee and Kraft, perusal of relevant web sites, and having individuals or pairs research efforts in different colleges.

3. What are promising options for moving forward? We will look for adjustments to improve ratings on RCM metrics. We will look for ways to expand the reach of CLAS beyond the campus boundary, possibly with new online programs (e.g. we may wish to expand the program of Interns in the Legislature statewide). We will begin a conversation on what the normal load for faculty is and how it is split between teaching, scholarship and administrative and other service. Revisiting this conversation is critical as the number of adjunct faculty and graduate teaching assistants is diminishing. We envision part of the report being an action plan for implementation, and expect to recommend the formation of committees to address specific proposed changes.

The meeting closed at 5 pm.