Minutes, BOR Philosophy and Religion Advisory Committee
Saturday, November 12, 2016

Committee members present:

- Banas, Mark (Religion), Georgia State University
- Du, Ke, USG System
- Fry, Karin, (Philosophy and Religion), Georgia Southern University)
- Hoffman, Michael (Philosophy), Georgia Institute of Technology
- Jackson, Ron (Philosophy), Clayton State University
- Matusek, Ed (Philosophy, Religion), Atlanta Metropolitan College
- Peck, Larry (Philosophy), Georgia State University (committee chair)
- Rainbolt, George (Philosophy), Georgia State University
- Riker, Walter (Philosophy), University of West Georgia
- Smith, Greg (Philosophy), Georgia Highlands College
- Waskey, Jack (Philosophy), Dalton State College
- Winchester, Jim (Philosophy), Georgia College and State University
- Wisdo, David (Philosophy), Columbus State University

Guests present:
- Melanie N. Clay, University of West Georgia, Executive Director of Extended Learning and Dean of USG eCore
- Christy Talley Smith, University of West Georgia, Director of Curriculum & Instruction for eCore
- Jason Huett, University of West Georgia, Associate Dean | Online Development and USG eCore
- Christine A. James, Professor of Philosophy,Valdosta State University, who has taught the eCore philosophy course and participated in revisions of it.

I)**eCore**

Our guests gave a commentary on eCore in general and the eCore philosophy course in particular. They distributed the new *eCore Factbook 2016* of the USG, and the Memorandum of Understanding that the eCore faculty have to sign.

The committee members expressed their concerns to the guests. One of these was that we had heard from some eCore faculty that they felt pressure to inflate grades and to be too flexible with students, for instance giving students endless extensions on papers they write. Some faculty members had feared that if they did not to this, they would not be invited back to teach. Melanie Clay showed us the Memorandum of Understanding that faculty have to sign, which, among other things, outlies the amount of contact that they need to have with students. Faculty would have to take those steps, but that did not amount to coddling students. Jason Huett said that no faculty member had ever been

fired from eCore for giving grades that were too low, although if those grades were extremely low eCore administrators would talk to that faculty member. Christine James gave examples of how faculty can and should make clear the requirements for their courses in their syllabi.

Committee members had seen that for the eCore philosophy course faculty had the option of making any source either required or optional. At least some of the faculty members had required the secondary material, such as videos, while making the reading of the primary courses optional. The eCore members present agreed to put into the Instructor's Guide that the reading of the primary courses will now be required.

The issue of academic honesty came up. After hearing from Jason Huett the different ways that eCore instructors dealt with academic dishonesty, there was some concern among committee members that this might be too lenient, but it was decided that this had to be left up to the instructor, as it is for other instruction in the USG system. Regarding the reporting of cases of academic dishonesty, our guests acknowledged that this had not been required in the past, but Melanie offered to go to the eCore RAC and ask that it be made obligatory for eCore instructors.

Update. On 11/21/16, Jason Huett emailed the committee with the following: "The eCore RAC approved your advisory committee's recommendation to require academic dishonesty reporting at the professor level (when a consequence is applied) and to maintain and share a database of such events. We are currently working on new procedures and training and will implement this change soon."

Mark Banas pointed out that some faculty members who are full-time at their own institutions also teach in eCore, for financial reasons. He thought that this may stretch them too thin and make all of their instruction worse.

The committee decided to invite all eCore philosophy instructors to our meeting in spring, 2017, to hear about their experiences.

There was some discussion, after the guests left, about whether committee members would participate in the next revision of the eCore philosophy course. This was not resolved at the meeting.

II) **Committee Documents**

The committee decided that the Value of the Degree document for philosophy needed to be updated. George Rainbolt, Walter Riker, and Jack Waskey agreed to work on this project, and to circulate their draft before the spring, 2017 meeting of this committee.

Update. This draft is now finished and will be distributed with these Minutes.

Mark Banas and Ed Matusek agreed to write a Value of the Degree document for religion. (This would be the first time such a document has been written.)

The committee decided that the Committee Bylaws, Area F Guidelines, and Area F Learning Outcomes documents do not need revision.

III) **Philosophy Course Numbers**

George Rainbolt noticed that five institutions in the USG have not adopted the right philosophy course numbers. Committee members volunteered to contact the out of compliance institutions or to contact absent committee members to ensure that their institutions reach compliance:

- Albany State – Karin Fry

    Update. On 1/30/17 Karin wrote, "Good news. The new version of the catalog at Albany State has PHIL 2010 as the only option."

- Atlanta Metro College – Ed Matusek
- Kennesaw State – George Rainbolt will contact Susan Rouse.
- Savannah State – Larry Peck will contact Lisa Yount.

    Update. It was ascertained that Savannah State's course numbers were correct after all.

- Bainbridge State – Greg Smith.

    Update. "Here's what I've found out just from the website. The BSC directory lists no FT or PT faculty in Philosophy and has taught no on-campus or BSU online courses in philosophy since 2014 (oldest online course schedule). The good news is BSC started offering eCore PHIL 2010 every semester (Fall, Spring, Summer) starting in 2015. The PHIL 1000 is probably listed in the eCore Factbook because it is still in the BSC Catalog as a transfer course. Since any BSC student taking philosophy now is taking it under the PHIL 2010 number, I don't see we need to do anything here." (Greg Smith)