

## Minutes

April 23, 2016 Meeting

### Of the BOR Philosophy and Religion Advisory Committee

The following committee members attended:

Mark Banas (Religion, Georgia State University)  
Finbarr Curtis (Religion, Georgia Southern University)  
Michael Hoffman (Philosophy, Georgia Institute of Technology)  
Ron Jackson (Philosophy, Clayton State University)  
Sandy Martin (Religion, University of Georgia), standing in for Carolyn Medine  
Kathryn McClymond (Religion, Georgia State University)  
Larry Peck (Philosophy, Georgia State University)  
Susan Rouse (Philosophy, Kennesaw State University)  
Jack Simmons (Philosophy, Armstrong Atlantic State University)  
Greg Smith (Philosophy, Georgia Highlands College)  
Steve Weiss (Philosophy, Augusta University)  
Sarah Wright (Philosophy, University of Georgia), standing in for Vicky Davion  
George Wrisley (Philosophy, University of North Georgia)

Minutes from the November 14, 2015 committee meeting were approved as distributed.

### eCore Instruction

Larry Peck led off the discussion by reading a message from an eCore philosophy faculty member forwarded to him by a member of this committee. The instructor complained that eCore faculty were being held responsible for student success, rather than the students themselves taking responsibility for that. This had led to an “on demand” attitude among eCore students who, for example, would demand to be able to make up assignments they had missed no matter what the reason for their having missed them. The faculty member also charged that there was little faculty involvement when the course was redesigned, and that now YouTube segments had taken the place of reading content in the course. The faculty member concluded by stating that the content and expectations of eCore philosophy courses had slipped well below those of either face-to-face or online courses offered at the individual USG institutions.

George Wrisley added that he knows of faculty who have taught eCore course but were not invited back because their students “weren’t doing well enough” in the courses. The faculty had interpreted that as pressure to inflate grades.

Jack Simmons described how at AASU the college president and the faculty were at an impasse about whether or not to affiliate with eCore, with the president in favor but the faculty having voted twice not to join. One objection the faculty have is that if you affiliate you have to state that eCore courses are equal to the on-site courses at your college – something that a lot of faculty suspect is not true. One of the president’s concerns is revenue. If an institution does not

affiliate with eCore, its students can still take eCore courses, but the institution does not receive the corresponding revenue.

While it was pointed out that eCore courses can be advantageous for non-traditional students and that they sometimes cost less than on-site courses, the problems associated with eCore seem to be these:

- a) Faculty have lost control of the design (or redesign) of the courses.
- b) There is pressure to make the courses easy for students.
- c) There is pressure to inflate grades.
- d) It is easier for students to cheat in eCore courses than in normal online courses because the instructors don't put enough effort into preventing cheating.
- e) eCore courses have higher DFW rates than normal courses, which suggests that they may not be good for student retention.

The committee decided to pursue the possibility of improving eCore philosophy courses, probably by trying to find a way to set higher standards for them. Michael Hoffman volunteered to get a discussion going on eCore.

### **Mergers/Consolidations**

The committee then engaged in an exchange of information and views on recent consolidations in the USG system. Steve Weiss reported that since the consolidation of Augusta State University with Georgia Health Sciences University there has been a decrease of students for humanities and social sciences courses in the resultant Augusta University. Susan Rouse and George Wrisley discussed the challenges that Kennesaw State and University of North Georgia have faced in the areas of shared governance, promotion, and tenure since their consolidations. And Kathryn McClymond, Mark Banas, and Larry Peck discussed why Georgia Perimeter College had been consolidated recently into Georgia State University.