

Minutes of Biology Academic Advisory Committee (BAAC) meeting, Friday, February 27

In attendance at the 2/27/04 Clayton State meeting were:

Kenneth Relyea - Armstrong Atlantic State University
Emil Urban - Augusta State University
Greg Hampikian - Clayton College & State University - current chair
Eugene Keferl - Coastal Georgia Community College
William S. Birkhead - Columbus State University
Steve Schenk - Darton College
Donna Daugherty - Floyd College
Dorothy Zinsmeister - Georgia Board of Regents [LIAISON]
Bill Wall - Georgia College & State University
Caywood Chapman - Gainesville College
Stephen Vives - Georgia Southern University
Bob Herrington - Georgia Southwestern State University
Sarah Pallas - Georgia State University
Jung Choi - Georgia Tech
Ron Matson - Kennesaw State University
Eric L. Sun & David Davis (guest) - Macon State College
John Pasto - Middle Georgia College
Gene Mesco - Savannah State University
Timothy Rhoads - South Georgia College
Bill Burnett - Southern Polytechnic State University
David L. Bechler - Valdosta State University

Meeting agenda:

1. Report from Ron Matson, Sarah Pallas, and Dave Bechler on the curriculum.
2. What will we do for the schools now? Professors in classrooms, and mentoring teachers
3. Science Consortium: Dorothy Zinsmeister
4. National Public Radio spots: Dave Bechler
5. Other

1. Draft of statement concerning GA stds:

On 2/12/04, Sarah Pallas and Jung Choi attended a meeting of Stephen Pruitt's science curriculum teacher team. While at the meeting, Sarah and Jung participated in rewriting the science curriculum for grades 6-8 and the life sciences curriculum for high school. Re-inclusion of the word "evolution" was not announced at this meeting, but had been previously announced via a Feb. 5 press release from Kathy Cox' office. Inclusion of the benchmark concepts underlying the word evolution, as well as "Big Bang" and plate tectonics occurred at the 2/12 meeting.

Sarah Pallas stated that Cox intended to re-include the word evolution, but not to include certain key components such as the concept of macroevolution. The core group has since been working on re-writes of a statement representing the Biology Academic Advisory committee's (BAAC) stand on this issue. Their intention is to influence the content of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) to include all evolutionary concepts to the satisfaction of the BAAC prior to passage of the final draft.

Pallas stated that procedures for implementation of the GPS to curricula are unclear, therefore inclusion of evolution in lesson plans will be the next battle.

Greg Hampikian displayed proposed changes to the Biology curriculum from the Superintendents office at the following website: <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/doe/media/04/021204b.asp>. He also suggested that we view related information at <http://www.spacedaily.com/news/life-02zy.html>.

Jung Choi stated that the GADOE group agreed at this meeting to re-include into the curriculum benchmarks previously proposed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Ron Matson said that unless we, the BAAC, include our statement on the GADOE website, the latter group would likely not pay attention to our suggestions, which could result in a curriculum not inclusive of all necessary Biology content.

Greg Hampikian asked if the BAAC should comment on current drafts of the Superintendent's office statement "for our endorsement" before it is released to the public as a completed document. A motion was passed, and a sub-committee of the BAAC, with authority to endorse on our behalf, was established for this purpose including the 4 individuals in the core group. Hampikian will draft a letter to this effect to the Superintendents office. He stated that, for the purpose of "connectivity between the BOR and GADOE", the BAAC will include Dan Papp's office on all our correspondence on this issue

Gene Mescos asked if this effort could be addressed through the P-16 councils. Hampikian said that he does not think this would be feasible. There was no further discussion on this point.

Hampikian asked if the current document is something that the BAAC would endorse. Matson and Pallas responded that the current document is still a rough draft requiring revision before the BAAC could endorse. They stated further that we need opportunity to examine later drafts before final approval, and that an extension of this opportunity would be an ongoing partnership for teamwork on such issues in the future.

Hampikian reported that a deadline of March 5 exists for our response to Dorothy Zinsmeister's office. Dave Bechler stated that he would quickly compile our information and forward it to Dr. Zinsmeister's office to meet the deadline.

2. What will we do for the schools now? Professors in classrooms, and mentoring teachers

Greg Hampikian

Greg asked each person in the group to consider how we could pledge a portion of our time and effort to the betterment of Georgia K-12 education. He made the point that any complaints we might have with the K-12 system and the competency of our incoming college students will not be taken seriously unless we are personally willing to contribute to the cause. He stated that a small effort on our part could go a long way in demonstrating our willingness to reach out and help with the situation.

A few in the group mentioned current and on-going efforts such as Science Olympiad, Science Fair, and others discussed below.

Dave Bechler spoke briefly about the Science Consortium, and that it includes courses for in-service science teachers. He stated that these courses benefit the participating teachers not only as a learning tool, but they also supply opportunities for Staff Development Units (SDU) and academic credit. The hosting USG institution receives great press, and the hosting faculty member can include this as Community Service on annual reviews.

Greg suggested volunteer substitute teaching as another service. He recommended that 2 days of substitute teaching annually per faculty would be sufficient, and said that we could each speak to the Dean of our school regarding any compensation that we might receive for this service.

Eric Sun reported that faculty members at Macon State do something similar for groups of home-school teachers or groups of home-school children. For instance, the faculty member may run wet labs for a group of home-school kids. The participating kids pay for this service through the continuing education office.

Funding agencies/opportunities mentioned for these projects included the Teacher Quality Improvement program, and those through the National Science Foundation. (Note from Dorothy—DOE receives \$ from the federal government for professional development. These \$ are tied to NCLB and must be applied for through DOE through an RFP process. Guidelines require a partnership between a school or school district(s) and higher ed.)

3. Science Consortium: Dorothy Zinsmeister

Dorothy reported that a group of 60 USG faculty members were gathered, some from each USG campus, for the purpose of working on a P5 science endorsement for in-service teachers. She said that many ideas were garnered from the group, but with little coherence or usefulness. The group learned that many elementary school math teachers have completed only 1 college math course due to previous state requirements, which have since been updated with increased rigor. A group from 6 USG PRISM institutions is currently involved in drafting a science endorsement for P5 teachers, and previous science consortium members have also been invited to participate.

Greg asked which USG institutions would be participating in this, and what incentives would be offered for institutions not included in the PRISM grant. Dorothy said the only funds for consortium members outside of the PRISM institutions would be funds available for travel and meetings.

Issues discussed that were not on the meeting agenda:

1) The issue of common course numbers and descriptions was revisited. After some discussion, the group learned that Biology course numbers are indeed consistent among the USG institutions, with the exceptions of GA Tech and VSU. Dorothy explained that the problem occurs with students holding a 2yr. degree transferring to another USG institution, where they are required to take an additional course. The USG "core curriculum" was established to prevent such an occurrence.

We learned that the VSU Biology sequence differs significantly from the other institutions, including a course comparable to BIOL 1107, with 2 additional courses (Botany and Zoology) rather than a course comparable to BIOL 1108. It was suggested that this discrepancy be cleared up.

Bill Birkhead reported that Columbus State offers a one semester Principles course (BIOL 1215). They also offer a Contemporary Issues in Biology course, both lab (BIOL 1225) and non-lab (BIOL 1125) options, in which two or three current topics in biology are examined. None of these courses require a pre-requisite, all are open to both majors and non-majors, and students can use these in lieu of

the core courses. Because math and science majors must take two lab science courses in area D, few elect to take BIOL 1125.

Sarah Pallas said that Georgia State currently uses the 1107/1108 sequence for non-majors with no Chemistry prerequisite, and 2107/2108 for majors with Chemistry prerequisite. She added that they intend to change this ASAP to be consistent with other USG schools.

Jung Choi from GA Tech reported that although their course numbers may not be consistent, their admissions office is aware of corresponding course numbers from all USG institutions, and allows transfer credit appropriately.

The group said that the rationale for numbering of 1107-8 vs 2107-8 is that the 21 series requires a chemistry pre-requisite, whereas the 11 series does not. There is only 1 school now (Georgia Southwestern) that uses 11 as non-majors and 21 as major. Dorothy said GSW should change this.

Dorothy asked if we wrote Biology course descriptions. Again, after some discussion, the group decided that we merely talked about writing course descriptions a few years ago, but never actually wrote them. She said that we have been asked to write course descriptions. John Pasto from Middle Georgia College volunteered to write them.

2) The problem of low graduate student stipends and low part-time instructor pay in the state of Georgia relative to the national standard was discussed. A point of concern is the inability to compete nationally for quality candidates in these positions. Dorothy pointed out our assumption that higher pay would rectify the problem with competition, and suggested that other factors may be involved, such as local availability of qualified applicants.

The following motions were drafted and passed to address this situation.

MOTION: Part time instructor pay at USG institutions is unreasonably low and varies greatly from institution to institution; as a result we are not presently able to attract and retain qualified candidates. We recommend that the issue of part time salaries be studied at the system level with the report communicated back to the advisory committees.

MOTION: Graduate student stipends at USG institutions are unreasonably low and vary greatly from institution to institution; as a result we are not presently able to attract and retain the most qualified students. We recommend that graduate assistantships be funded at rates consistent with National Institutes of Health (and other federal granting agency) guidelines.

Dorothy said that we can send these motions to the BOR, but they will likely respond that this is an institutional prerogative.

3) Greg asked that each person in the room comment on what is going on at their school. The consensus was that we are all very busy.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30PM.