

Academic Quality Committee (AQC) Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 3:45pm,

Location: Medical Center HSC, 1102

Present: Tracy Jenkins, Miranda Peterson, Missy Travelstead, Sarah Herbert, Sarah McCaslen, Sam Kurtz (SGA President, Student Regent)

Guests: Shane Spiller, Mac McKerral

Absent: Martha Day, Patricia Todd, William Strunk, Jennifer Hammonds

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Tracy Jenkins, who welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the meeting objectives, focusing on academic quality concerns, faculty workload, resource allocation, and faculty well-being.

2. Review of Academic Quality Concerns

Committee members discussed the growing concerns about increasing class sizes and their impact on student learning and faculty workload. Moral dilemma in admitting students to large programs who are unlikely to succeed. Faculty expressed that academic quality is at risk due to the following factors:

- Larger class sizes make it difficult to provide personalized support to students.
- The expectation for faculty to maintain student engagement and quality with fewer resources and less faculty/staff.
- Larger class sizes lead to graduating students who are less prepared for professional certification exams and professional careers, as evidenced by decreasing pass rates and feedback from community stakeholders.
- Concerns about whether the university is fulfilling its mission under current conditions.

A student representative shared insights on how smaller class sizes during COVID fostered better faculty connections, while recent increases in class sizes have made it difficult for students to engage with professors and receive timely feedback. Group projects and in class activities are affected by large class sizes. There are sometimes long wait times to get help from professors after class or during office hours, even causing students to make appointments with professors on the weekends.

3. Faculty Workload and Hiring Trends

The committee reviewed data trends related to faculty workload and hiring practices, including:

- A reported increase in course enrollments without a corresponding rise in faculty numbers.
- The impact of reliance on adjunct faculty and faculty teaching overload courses.
- The role of full-time staff teaching courses and its effect on faculty availability for research and student support.
- Faculty concerns regarding online course expansion without additional faculty support.

A proposal was made to conduct a faculty survey (possibly via Qualtrics) to obtain more accurate data on course sizes and workload distribution across departments.

4. Faculty Academic Support & Resources

Committee members examined trends in funding for faculty support, including:

- The reduction of student workers, grading assistants, and professional development funds.
- Budget constraints under the RAMP model and their effect on faculty effectiveness. The Ramp Model gives Deans control over budgets. Colleges have exploded in growth as the university has decentralized.
- The allocation of financial resources to new initiatives while existing programs struggle with limited support.
- A college-by-college examination is needed because situations vary by Dean

Concerns were raised about the university's approach to program expansion without proportional investment in faculty resources. Dean's incentives are tied to student recruitment and retention, not faculty satisfaction or morale. Disgruntled faculty can negatively impact student retention. Program expansion can impact academic quality.

5. Curriculum Expansion vs. Faculty Capacity

A discussion was held on balancing curriculum expansion with faculty staffing levels.

Key points included:

- The sustainability of increasing program enrollments without additional faculty.
- Faculty concerns about being expected to deliver quality instruction with limited resources.
- The potential risks of admitting students into programs without sufficient faculty support, impacting student success rates.
- R2 concerns: potential impact on faculty workload, class sizes, and who will be teaching the classes. What will the financial implications be?

Members emphasized the need for faculty to have a voice in new program approvals to ensure academic quality is not compromised.

6. Faculty Well-Being and Retention

The committee addressed faculty morale, workload sustainability, and retention concerns:

- Reports of faculty working excessive hours, including weekends, to meet student needs.
- The risk of faculty burnout and attrition due to increased demands.
- The need for a structured approach to advocate for faculty needs beyond salary concerns, including workload balance and professional development support.

A motion was made to refer this discussion to the Faculty Welfare Committee for further action or perhaps hold a joint meeting.

7. Action Items & Next Steps

The committee identified key areas for further review and action:

- **Data Collection:** AQC will gather data on course enrollments, faculty workload, and resource distribution.
- **Survey Development:** A faculty survey will be considered to obtain more insights on workload challenges.
- **Recommendations for Leadership:** A report will be drafted to present concerns to university leadership and/or the Board, focusing on workload sustainability and academic quality.
- **Ensuring Faculty Voice:** Strategies will be developed to enhance faculty representation in university decision-making processes.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm. The next scheduled meeting is April 15, 2025, at 3:45 PM. **However, everyone agreed we need to meet sooner for further discussion. Will be sending a doodle poll to the committee.**

Minutes submitted by: Miranda Peterson
Academic Quality Committee Secretary