School of Science Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
September 7, 2012

Voting Members present: Simon Rhodes (Dean), Snehasis Mukhopadhyay (President), Jiliang Li (Biology), Barry Muhoberac (Chemistry and Chemical Biology), Yao Liang (Computer and Information Science), Gabe Filippelli (Earth Sciences), Vitaly Tarasov (Mathematical Sciences), Ricardo Decca (Physics; proxy for Horia Petrache), Jesse Stewart (Psychology; proxy for Michelle Salyers)

Non-Voting Members present: N. Douglas Lees (Associate Dean), Kathy Marrs (Associate Dean), David Skalnik (Associate Dean), Bethany Neal-Beliveau (Secretary), John Watson (Past President)

1. President Snehasis Mukhopadhyay called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM. First order of business was introductions by all in attendance.

2. President Mukhopadhyay called to approve the agenda. The agenda was adopted unanimously (see page 4).

3. President Mukhopadhyay asked for any amendments to the minutes of the last Steering Committee (SC) meeting on 05/02/2012. No amendments were offered and the minutes were approved unanimously.

4. President Mukhopadhyay initiated a discussion of the role of SC. The role of the department representatives sometimes needs clarifications. The SC is the primary legislative body of the School of Science (SOS), and any item requiring a faculty vote must be initiated by the SC. Each member of the SC represents the faculty of his/her department and one of their main functions is communication of information between the SC and their faculty.

5. Dean Rhodes presented the following updates: He reminded the Committee that he had just presented a recent summary at the fall convocation. There will be a series of career development events for SOS faculty and staff over the next year. There has been a reorganization of SOS staff to help with recruitment of new students and to provide better service to and retention of current students. Current enrollment for the school is up 2.67% (now 3.1%) compared to an overall campus increase of 0.2% (net), and the quality of incoming SOS undergraduate students continues to improve. Hiring of new faculty will occur during this upcoming year and some ads have already gone out. The undergraduate neuroscience major is now on the books, as is the B.A. degree in Applied Computer and Information Science. Construction of the Science and Engineering Laboratory Building 1 (SELB 1) is two weeks ahead of schedule. The Dean is spending a significant amount of time thinking how to best use space in the SOS. This year, significant effort will be put into thinking about the next building – SELB 2, with plans to make it bigger than SELB 1. The SOS will be involved in strategic planning this year, along with the campus. Can we use campus questions as school questions? Jane Williams (Psychology) and Evgeny Mukhin (Mathematical Sciences) will head up the strategic planning group for the school. An all-day retreat will be held for determining the strategic planning timeline for the campus and Williams will attend as the SOS representative. The goal for the SOS is to
have our strategic plan completed by May 2013. Dean Rhodes suggested that the school needs a couple of guiding themes and we should work toward common goals with the campus. In response to a question from President Mukhopadhyay, Dean Rhodes said that the campus strategic plan is not linked to the University’s reaccreditation that will occur this fall. Decca asked how many goals had been met from the previous strategic plan and Dean Rhodes stated that it consisted of incomplete goals, but research productivity and faculty numbers had both increased. In response to a question from Filippelli, the Dean responded that yes, he expected the departments to be part of the strategic planning and to align their plans with the SOS plan. He next mentioned that our faculty “hit rate” for grants is very good and, therefore, our capacity for research success is strong if faculty submit proposals at an increased rate.

6. President Mukhopadhyay asked if the first Friday of every month from 4:00 – 5:30 PM would work for the SC meetings. He will check for teaching and other conflicts. Dean Rhodes has a conflict for the Dec 7th meeting, so it may be rescheduled.

7. President Mukhopadhyay suggested Friday, October 26th from 9:00 – 10:30 AM for the Fall Faculty Assembly meeting.

8. The committee next discussed issues that should be addressed this year. President Mukhopadhyay mentioned SOS Student Satisfaction Surveys (SSS) and the SOS strategic plan. SSS are now mandatory for all SOS courses. The SC will initiate a process for reviewing SSS. A subcommittee will work on a mechanism for presenting the results of Administrative Reviews. The mechanism will be finalized by the end of the fall semester, with surveys sent out in March because reviews must be completed by July 1st. Dean Lees initiated a discussion on the composition of the Technology Committee (TC). He suggested that the composition and charge of the TC need to change because the technology needs of the SOS have changed. These needs include large computer clusters and many servers. The TC needs to include IT representation, as well as department representatives. These changes will require a change of the by-laws and must be initiated by the SC. Past President Watson asked if an ad hoc committee could be formed to address the technology questions for the fall semester until the by-laws can be changed and a new TC constituted. The SC agreed that current committee did not include the right members and an ad hoc committee with IT representation needs to be formed. There was also a discussion about whether computer clusters could be stored in UITS space to free up SOS space. Dean Lees would oversee the ad hoc TC. Dean Rhodes suggested that the current TC would stay intact to hand out graduate technology funding. The SC voted unanimously to form an ad hoc committee on computing facilities. Dean Rhodes will ask the Chairs to suggest the right people for the committee.

9. President Mukhopadhyay suggested that an ad hoc committee be formed to review the current SOS SSS and the survey used by the Mathematical Sciences department. As reported in the minutes from the May meeting, Past President Watson met with Jacqueline Singh from the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) who has assessment expertise and experience in the area of evaluations. Singh thought that it might be difficult to combine multiple goals of measuring student satisfaction and faculty teaching performance for use in the promotion and tenure process. She is willing to meet with the
SC to discuss her opinions. Jane Williams had offered to perform a factor analysis of the data that may help in refining the current SSS. Watson will ask if she has completed the analysis and will ask both Singh and Williams if they can attend the October SC meeting. Muhoberac asked if Ray Chin’s document on course evaluations was shared with Singh and Williams. Watson will also invite Chin to the October meeting. Dean Rhodes wants the SOS to adopt a single instrument. President Mukhopadhyay asked the SC members to send the name of a department representative for the ad hoc committee to him via e-mail. Filippelli asked for the charge to the committee – first, what is to be evaluated by the survey, and second, the construction of a common instrument. Muhoberac asked if the SC should hear a presentation from Singh, Williams, and Chin before forming the ad hoc committee, as the information may refine the charge to the committee. Stewart mentioned that it is difficult to generate a new instrument, and it would be easier if we know exactly what it is we want to measure; he also asked if there are surveys out there already that fit what we need. Decca reiterated that we need to know what the SSS has been used for, and now that it is mandatory, how it will be used in the future? It might be a lot of work to develop a new instrument and not achieve much. Dean Rhodes believes the committee should not go into it thinking we necessarily need a new instrument. Muhoberac stated that we need to make it clear what this instrument is measuring. President Mukhopadhyay replied that the current SSS measures student satisfaction, not student learning outcomes. Stewart responded that it is used for teaching effectiveness, but probably is not measuring it. Decca mentioned that students aren’t good at monitoring their own learning. Muhoberac added that if there is a mismatch between student expectations of course difficulty and actual course difficulty, then this will negatively affect student responses. Dean Rhodes reiterated that we should go into it keeping in mind that we don’t necessarily need a new instrument, but need to review both the SOS and the Math surveys. It’s the extremes we are typically concerned with – celebrate the high numbers and be worried about the low numbers. Filippelli mentioned that the extremes correlate fairly well with what the Chair hears from students. The discussion ended with President Mukhopadhyay saying that we’ll wait until after presentations from Singh, Williams, and Chin at the October meeting to determine our next step.

10. SOS Strategic Planning discussed earlier in the meeting.

11. Last year’s Administrative Reviews have just been completed and there were issues about how the results are reported back to the faculty. The faculty need to agree on the mechanism for reporting the results from these reviews. At this point, the Dean and Associate Deans were asked to leave and the meeting continued with the voting members of the SC, and the President and Secretary constituting the Subcommittee for Administrative Reviews (SAR). The SAR discussed the issue.

12. Motion to adjourn at 5:33 pm was unanimously approved.
1. Introductions
2. Approval of agenda
3. Approval of minutes from May 2, 2012
4. Role of the SC under the SOS Constitution and Bylaws
   “This committee shall serve as the primary legislative body of the School of Science. The members of this committee represent their departments and are responsible for effective communication between the faculty of their departments and this committee.” (SOS bylaws, 2012)
5. Comments by Dean Rhodes
6. Future SC meeting dates
7. Future Faculty Assembly dates
8. Potential SC activity during the 2012 - 13 academic year
9. Review of SOS course evaluation (student satisfaction) surveys
10. SOS Strategic Planning
11. SAR (Subcommittee on Administrative Reviews)