Meeting of the Villanova University
Academic Policy Committee

November 15, 2010
Devon Room 3:00 pm

Present: Susan Mackey-Kallis (chair), Bryan Kerns, Kevin Clark, Robert Styer, Jerry Jones, Louise Russo, Greg Sleasman, Craig Wheeland, Paul Pasles, Letizia Modena, Mike Pagano, Mary Ann Cantrell, Nicholas Tumolo, Demien Germino, Lindsay Waters, Adele Lindenmeyr, Christopher Haas, Lesley Perry, Chiji Akoma, Ed Kresch

The meeting began at 3 pm.

I. The chair asked for any corrections or additions for the minutes from the previous meeting. Revised minutes were approved.

II. The chair has set the regular meeting time for spring semester as Monday afternoons 3:00 – 4:30 pm in Room 300 in the St. Augustine Center on the following dates: Jan. 24, Feb. 1, Mar. 28, and Apr. 11. This time was suitable for the majority of members.

III. CATs analysis: The chair asked for an update from the CATS analysis subcommittee (M. Pagano, C. Akoma, N. Else-Quest, J. Klein, P. Pasles, F. Veverka, C. Weiss). Mike Pagano reviewed the general discussion items from a meeting that was held on November 10, 2010 with Paul Bonfanti, Nurit Friedman, and James Trainer from OPIR who have agreed to take on the project. Mike Pagano shared with the committee the content of a memo prepared by Paul, Nurit, and Jim subsequent to that meeting in which they outlined their working plan to establish evaluative criteria and statistical measures to address some of the questions put forth by the committee pertaining to CATs data assessment (Appendix 1). In general, the group discussed the merit of completing advanced analyses and considering the non-parametric nature of the data, they will likely seek consultation of a statistician (Ph.D. level) with the appropriate background experience to define statistical measures for effective data analyses and production of sound conclusions. If additional data are required, such as actual student grades, the group will seek that information as necessary through the Registrar's office. Considering the wide variation in types of courses including lecture, seminar, stand-alone lab, lecture/lab combined, clinical, recitation, etc., it will be difficult to group all courses collectively so it may be necessary to take a binary level approach. The OPIR analysis group will use relevant published literature on the topic of student evaluations and perceptions of biases as possible confounding factors in assessment data and will seek to adapt methods from such sources to the Villanova data. Once they have agreed upon a methodological approach, they will meet with the CATS sub-committee to review those plans and refine the analysis. The relevant data to be used will be CATS scores from Fall 2004 to Fall 2010, focusing on undergraduate courses during the regular academic year (excluding summer sessions). The timeline for completion of the process is expected to be quick.

The Chair reiterated that the overarching goal of the process is an assessment of the underlying reliability of the CATs specifically because the data for the four standard questions are used as essential evaluative criteria for teaching effectiveness in rank and tenure decisions and therefore the outcome will have broad impact (Appendix 2).

III. Reading Day Discussion: The chair asked Bryan Kerns to update the committee on his efforts to obtain supportive information from the Division of Student Life about their concerns over extending the open time before exams should an additional Reading Day be added to the calendar. Student Life indicated that they would not have an issue with adding a second Reading Day provided there is a moratorium on social events during that interval. With respect to possible approaches to extending study time in the immediate interval prior to final exams, the following discussion threads ensued:

- Shortening of the exam interval (e.g. from 2 ½ to 2 ¼ hours): Bryan Kerns obtained information from other institutions to ascertain their exam schedules in comparison to Villanova (Appendix 2). He reported that in general smaller schools have longer exam lengths but larger schools have shorter time slots to increase schedule capacity. Some schools, such as Notre Dame, hold all evening class exams on one night to open more evening slots on other days for exam scheduling. With respect to the idea of shortening the exam length by 15 minutes in the hope of adding at least one additional exam time slot per day, several committee members added that this would likely provide very little relief in easing the schedule strain if a second Reading Day were added.
- Using Saturday as a Reading Day: the discussion pertaining to the dedication of the first Saturday of the exam schedule as a Reading Day was also met with some concern as the observation was made that this day is used as an open schedule day for hosting one exam interval for multi-section courses and therefore would present additional problems for the Registrar's Office and faculty in arranging such group exams on other days.
- Enforcement of the work load restriction policy for the final week of classes: the committee turned attention to information from the SGA student survey on the Reading Day expansion that clearly showed many students believe proper enactment (and enforcement) of this policy would provide significant workload relief and alleviate some of the desire to add a second Reading Day. There was confusion amongst committee members as to the exact policy language and intent for limiting assigned work in that final week of classes. To clarify the official policy, the content as delineated in the faculty handbook was accessed online and read aloud. Based upon that information, further discussion was centered on improving efforts to inform faculty of these work restriction policies but also the need for clarification on how to manage due dates for particular courses, such as those that meet only once a week as well as what constitutes a major assignment. The chair asked if there was interest in establishing a sub-committee tasked with delineation of the policy and potential exceptions. A formal committee was not established but the topic, in particular the dissemination of the policy to students as well as critical evaluation of the language of the policy and implications therein, will be pursued further as an agenda item for the next meeting in January 2011 (Appendix 3).

IV. The chair solicited new agenda items but none were put forth at that time.

V. The chair informed the committee that the University Senate recently evaluated the work of the Academic Policy Committee which includes a review of the minutes over the past three years. Recommendations put forth in the Senate report will be shared with the committee at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Louise Russo

Members of APC: Susan Mackey-Kallis (chair), Wayne Bremser, Bryan Kerns, Fayette Veverka, Robert Styer, Adele Lindenmeyr, Christopher Haas, Mark Sullivan, Lindsay Waters, Mary Ann Cantrell, Lesley Perry, Louise Fitzpatrick (represented by Lesley Perry), Joyce S. Willens, Mike Pagano, Greg Sleasman, Nicholas Tumolo, Damien Germino, Paul Pasles, Chiji Akoma, Kail Ellis (represented by Craig Wheeland), James Danko (represented by Kevin D. Clark), John Doody (represented by Lowell Gustafson), Gary Gabriele (represented by Gerard Jones), Letizia Modena, Diepiriye Anga, Louise Russo, Farid Zamani, Ed Kresch, Sridhar Santhanam

Appendix 1

To: Dr. Michael Pagano

From: Paul Bonfanti, Nurit Friedman, Dr. James Trainer

Cc: Dr. Nicole Else-Quest, Dr. Paul Pasles,

Date: November 10, 2010

Re: Initial approaches to CATS statistical analysis

It was a pleasure meeting with your committee yesterday. Since then, the three of us, along with Dr. John Kelley, executive director of OPIR, have discussed a potential approach to the CATS project.

First, we want to reiterate that none of us are statisticians; we are practitioners with a strong grounding in statistical methods, particularly as they pertain to higher education. However, in view of some of the advanced analyses you have requested and the non-parametric nature of the CATS data, we do feel this study would be best served by having a statistician assist us in our work. Through our professional organization, the Association of Institutional Research, we are connected to several outstanding statisticians with a grounding in higher education, and should be able to find an appropriate person to consult with us on this project.

As we discussed in our meeting, there has been extensive research on the use of student rating forms in faculty evaluation, particularly around perceptions of biases or distortions. Perhaps the best known example of this research is Dr. Raoul Arreola's "Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System," but there are many other journal articles and books on the subject. We propose using the existing literature as a starting point for our analyses. As Dr. Paul Pasles noted, there are differing opinions at Villanova as to if our experience with CATS differs from that of academia in general, so we would emulate and adapt the analyses from these sources using Villanova data. This would enable us to compare the literature's findings to specific findings at Villanova. In cases where your committee wants to examine variables that are not discussed in the literature, we would develop or adapt analyses as appropriate.

At the meeting, we agreed that this would be an iterative process. In our first "pass" at the data, we suggest not adjusting for many of the problems with the existing CATS data set, in part to measure the potential effect of these issues. Once we have a clearer sense of this effect, we can determine which adjustments will be necessary in order to ensure valid and reliable results. Of course, we will welcome dialogue with you on these issues and are glad to see you have already considered them.

Thank you for coming to us on this project. It is always good to see that there is interest in the CATS instrument and a desire to better understand its use in matters of university policy. We look forward to working with you on these analyses.

Appendix 2

From: Susan Mackey-Kallis
Sent: Wednesday, November 17, 2010 10:51 AM
To: Academic Policy Committee
Subject: CATS link from V.P.A.A. Website

All,

I also found and read the page from the V.P.A.A.'s website related to the administration, use and interpretation of CATS. I have never seen this faculty resource page before (it is listed under "Guide for New Faculty" in the sidebar tab) so I am guessing that some of you were also not aware of it.

In particular, it provides a graph of the factor analysis of what accounts for "good teaching," in other words it offers statistical analysis of variance for item number 28 on the CATS. It also offers resources related to effective teaching and is generally a wonderful guide to how CATS should be used and interpreted. I felt it would benefit both our CATS subcommittee and the entire APC to read if over in anticipation of our continued discussion of our on-going CATS analysis.

http://www.villanova.edu/vpaa/office/facultyservices/guidelines/cats.htm

Susan

Appendix 3

Exam Lengths

Peer institutions (Budget-based)
Lehigh: 3 hours
Boston College: exams start at 9 AM, the next period begins at 12:30 PM, so 3 hours
Holy Cross: 2.5 hours with an hour break between periods
Bucknell: 3 hours with 45 minutes between periods
Richmond: 3 hours with a 2 hour break between periods

Other institutions (Big East)
Georgetown: 2 hours with 90 minutes between periods
Notre Dame: 2 hours with 30 minutes between periods (no more than 3 in a 24 hour period)
Marquette: 2 hours with 30 minutes between periods
UConn: largely 2 hours
Providence: 2 hours with 30 minutes between periods
Rutgers: 3 hours (exams until December 23)
St. John's: 2 hours
Syracuse: 2 hours
West Virginia: 2 hours

Appendix 4

From: Susan Mackey-Kallis
Sent: Wednesday, November 17, 2010 10:40 AM
To: Academic Policy Committee
Subject: FW: Final exam policy in faculty handbook

All,

As promised, below is the link to the page in the faculty handbook policy related to final exams and final assignments. Below the link I've cut and pasted the actual page. As per our discussion at this past Monday's APC meeting, please look over this policy with an eye to ambiguities, possible problems in administration, issues of unfairness for students, issues of clarity etc. and come prepared to our first APC meeting in the spring semester to discuss this policy and to potentially make any recommendations for change to the V.P.A.A.

Susan

http://www.villanova.edu/vpaa/office/facultyservices/guidelines/handbook/policies.htm?p=examinations.htm

Faculty Handbook Policies
Final Examinations

Faculty members recognize their obligation to provide timely interim and final assessments of student performance in their classes. This may be done in a variety of ways, to be determined by each instructor. The assessment methodology should be spelled out clearly in the syllabus, with an explanation of the relative weight each item will contribute to the final grade.

The Registrar schedules a time for a final examination for each course. These times are available on the Registrar's website early in the semester, so students should have adequate time to make travel plans. It is permissible to omit the final examination, provided that other equivalently comprehensive assessment techniques are employed. If final examinations are given, they must be given at the time and place scheduled by the Registrar unless exemption has been authorized by the chair and dean.

The following describes prohibited times for administering examinations or other assessment instruments.

Reading days: No exams or assessment instruments whatsoever may be administered, and no papers or other assignments may be due, on designated reading days.

Final day of class: No exams or student performance assessment instruments whatsoever may be administered, and no papers or other assignments may be due, on the final day of class. Faculty may administer the Course and Teacher Survey.

Other days of the final week of classes: No final examinations may be administered, and no take-home exams may be due, during the final week of classes. Other major examinations and tests may be administered only with the explicit written consent of the dean of the college (quizzes and minor assignments are permitted). No paper or other assignment may be due on other days of the final week of classes unless clearly scheduled for that week in the course syllabus that is distributed at the outset of the course.

Other tests or student learning assessment mechanisms are to be employed periodically. In the interest of fairness,

faculty members should take steps to avoid situations where some students have access to previous examinations while others do not. This can be done in several ways: faculty members may collect examination papers from students so that these cannot be circulated in later semesters, or faculty members may make previous examinations available to students either electronically or by other means. Copies of semester examinations are to be filed with the chair of the department and/or the dean of the college.

Occasionally students will encounter conflicts in the examination schedule such that two of a student's examinations are scheduled at the same time or three examinations are scheduled on the same day. In the event of such a conflict, the student must notify the instructor at least seven days in advance of the scheduled exam. The instructor will make alternative arrangements for the student to complete the examination. In resolving conflicts, multiple section exams should take precedence over exams for a single section, and courses in the major should take precedence over non-major courses. Extraordinary difficulties encountered in effecting such an arrangement will be resolved by the dean of the student's college.

If a student is absent from a final examination for any reason other than a conflict, he or she must contact the instructor within 24 hours of the scheduled beginning of the examination to request permission from the instructor to take a make-up examination. The instructor may, if he or she wishes, arrange a make-up examination at a mutually convenient time. If the faculty member has reservations about the legitimacy of the student's reasons for missing the examination, the faculty member may refer the student to the office of the college dean, who will evaluate the student’s request for a make-up. If the office of the dean approves the request, the faculty member will arrange a make-up examination for the student or assign other work in place of the final examination. If the student does not contact the faculty member within 24 hours, the student must receive permission from both the office of the dean and the faculty member before being allowed to take a make-up examination.

Faculty members should attend the administration of the final examination in order to answer any questions and ensure high standards of academic integrity. When they are unable to do so, department chairs are to see that sufficient proctors are provided for each examination room. Where there is a shortage in any department, assistance should be requested from other departments.

Faculty members must retain in their possession all final exams and other unclaimed exams, papers, and student course projects and materials for a period of twelve months following the end of the semester in which they were used to establish grades.

Please refer to sections on **GRADES AND ASSESSMENT**S and **SYLLABI** in this Faculty Handbook.

6/1/10