

Science Division Meeting Minutes: February 9, 2009 (send comments and corrections to [coahranm{at}grinnell.edu](mailto:coahranm@grinnell.edu))

Election: Faculty Personnel Committee Representative

Clark notified science division faculty via email (on February 5) that this election would take place. The notice included a list of faculty eligible for the position.

A vote was taken prior to the election to interpret the requirement stated in the faculty handbook that "Written notices of the election meeting shall be put in faculty boxes at least three days before the election" to include notification via email.

A few modifications were made to the eligibility list, adding library faculty and removing faculty moving to SFS status next year, and a two-stage paper ballot election was held. Jackie Brown was elected as our Science Division Representative to the Faculty Personnel Committee.

Announcements:

There will be a new REU at Washington University this summer in Cognitive, Computational and Systems Neuroscience. Applications are invited from rising 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students from member institutions of the Midstates Consortium for Math and Science. The deadline for applications is March 5, 2009. More information can be found here: http://www.nslc.wustl.edu/research/09CSURE_ann.pdf

The Career Development Office will be manning a table and distributing information outside the Kistle Science Library approximately once per month, starting today.

Ellen Mease reminds us that the submission deadline for the Phi Beta Kappa Scholars Award is March 9. Please encourage accomplished students to apply for this award.

Stephanie Peterson received a request from a student group to announce all science department seminars via email, rather than posting flyers around the building. The intent of the request is to conserve both our budget and our environment. Several objections to the proposal were raised, including the fact that people who are not on departmental mailing lists (eg, students in 100-level courses) nevertheless see posted flyers, and that paper will remain necessary while people continue to use proprietary document formats. However, it was agreed that flyers should no longer be distributed to individual faculty mailboxes, and that they should be posted in fewer, more centralized, locations – such as near the building entrances and within the departments hosting the seminars.

Art in Falconer Gallery and the Science Building (Lesley Wright)

Lesley announced upcoming exhibitions over the next year, and invited faculty participation in them. In particular, Molecules that Matter will open September 25, the 10th anniversary of the Falconer Gallery. This exhibition was curated at Skidmore College in partnership with the Chemical Heritage Foundation of Philadelphia. It presents molecular models, artifacts, and works of art related to 10 molecules that changed the 20th century. The Falconer staff

look forward to helping faculty engage with this exhibit in the form of class visits, tutorials, or other academic activities.

The Faulconer is also planning a major exhibition for Fall 2010, regarding the Midwest and the environment. An Advisory Committee will be formed later this term, and a faculty workshop has been proposed for this summer to work on planning the exhibition. The exhibition will pursue cross-disciplinary themes, and involve the Prairie Studies Center. Individuals interested in participating should contact Lesley Wright.

Regarding the installation of synthetic frogs in the northeast corner of Noyce, Lesley apologized for not asking for input from everyone in the building. She noted that she did ask the departments near the installation site, and that she is open to input regarding when the piece should come down. The original intent was to leave it in place until this summer, and there is a cross-disciplinary (art and science) class from the University of Iowa that is planning to visit and view it in April.

Lesley is currently searching for a permanent home for the piece that is temporarily housed in the Department of Math and Statistics space. She would welcome suggestions.

New Course – LIB150 (Richard Fyffe)

This new course proposal has been withdrawn for the time being. It was intended to regularize a special topics course, “Ways of Knowing: How Disciplines Construct Knowledge” that was offered jointly by Judy Hunter and Catherine Rod. The course is a writing-intensive follow-on to freshman tutorial, which is currently being offered for the second time with an enrollment of 11 students (a good number for a writing course). However, the library is in the midst of a self-study, and Dean Smith has suggested that the self-study be completed before making a decision about regularizing the course.

New Course - ENV/GDS 195 (Larry Aspler)

This course, Natural Hazards and Disasters with Lab, is currently being offered for the second time as a special topics course. It is an interdisciplinary course that meets MWF for 2-hour sessions, and it includes both lecture and lab. The enrollments for the two offerings have been 22 and 28, with fewer science students enrolled than students from other divisions. Larry is pleased with this turnout and the fact that the course is drawing students from other divisions into Noyce. The course includes science content, but since it carries an interdisciplinary course number it does not count for science credit. Regularization of this course was approved with a slight modification to its name, which will now be: Natural Hazards and Disasters (with Lab).

Writing Portfolio Project (Judy Hunter)

Judy visited to present the findings from the portfolio-based writing assessment project at Grinnell College. This project attempts to determine how well students are learning writing skills, and what strategies can help students learn writing skills, at Grinnell. The project has included 12 students per year, from a stratified random sample that selects students from each of three categories: high, medium, and low initial writing ability. The collected data

include assignment handouts, early and revised drafts of student work, responses from faculty and peers to this work, and the students' own reflections on their work. Students are paid for their participation in this assessment study, so their compliance has been good. A summary of the assessment findings were attached to this meeting's agenda. Judy describes them as not earth-shattering, but nevertheless a useful achievement since they arise from our own local data.

The Writing Lab is also planning to hold another faculty development workshop this summer in the area of teaching and assessing writing skills. Look for the announcement soon. Chris French shared that he attended the workshop last summer and found it extremely helpful, particularly because it involved studying real student papers and student's reflections on them. He encourages others to attend this workshop.

Data Consulting Center (Shonda Kuiper)

Shonda and Ben Jones have recently launched a new Data Consulting Center. The purpose is two-fold: to give statistics students an opportunity to experience data-related consulting, and to provide assistance to faculty and students with quantitative material in their courses or research projects. Ben is a Grinnell graduate, who will be here for the year teaching statistics and offering consulting services through the Center. Three students with statistics experience have also been hired by the Center. Please let them know how they can help you! For example, they can visit classes and help students design experiments, provide assistance with data management in various software packages (spss, minitab, etc), or offer suggestions related to data visualization. Walk-in hours at the Center are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 2:15 pm - 4:00 pm in SH2248. More information can be found at: <http://www.grinnell.edu/its/dcc/>

Other business

Bob Cadmus raised a concern about the computers in the physics lounge. A student recently reported that while s/he was using one of these computers a message was displayed on the screen identifying the student by name. The student believed that the computer's webcam had been used under remote control to identify him or her.

HHMI is progressing nicely, but so far there have been essentially no requests for outside speakers. The budget allows for 6 per year.

In response to a question regarding Executive Council, Clark said that chances are low that EKI positions will be funded this year. Proposals may still be submitted and will be given due consideration, but they will probably be considered with an eye toward hiring in the year after next, not next year. Similarly, proposals which are currently on the table, such as the proposal for a Linguistics position, will not be abandoned, but they will probably be considered for hire in the year after next.

Mark Schneider visited the meeting, completing his round of visits to all division meetings. After introducing himself for the benefit of new faculty members, he offered his impressions on and fielded questions about the current state of unrest between faculty and administration. A suggestion was made that the faculty Committee on Student Life could be rejuvenated; Mark's expects that Student Affairs would be receptive to this idea.