

**Dean of Studies Restructuring Review**  
**October 6, 2008**

This report is jointly submitted by the Dean of Studies Restructuring Review subcommittee and the Committee on Education Policies and Planning. The subcommittee's work has shed new light on the complex

The subcommittee was constituted in the Spring of 2007 and began its work in the Fall of 2007, following an organizational meeting in June. The committee consisted of:

Dan Curley, Associate Professor, Classics, FEC

Deb Hall, Associate Professor, Art, CEPP

Ann Henderson, Registrar

Tillman Nectman, Assistant Professor, History, CAS

Kyle Nichols, Assistant Professor, Geosciences, CEPP, Chair

## **II. Process.**

In an effort to be inclusive, the DOS Restructuring Review Committee met with eight members

Retention and Graduation Rates

Term GPA Exploration (Fall '02 to Fall '07)

Regarding Reconfiguration of DOS- SAS commencing Fall '05

CEPP Archives

Dean of Studies reports from the early 1990s

### **III. Background.**

changes should take place in two years. Hence, in 2007 the DOS Restructuring Review Committee was formed as a subcommittee of CEPP.

#### **IV. Findings.**

Having established some background and historical context, this report will focus on the contemporary relationship between the DOS and SAS offices and their functions as outlined by the three questions in the charge. Below we address each question.

##### **A. What does the restructuring consist of?**

In June of 2005 the Dean of Studies Office was moved to Academic Affairs. At the same time, a new position, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, was established to provide primary academic support to students. Prior to this shift, the Dean of Studies served as an Associate Dean of Student Affairs and reported to both the DOSA and to the DOF. The initial charge was for these two restructured offices to work collaboratively in developing an improved system for supporting students. The following year Dean Oles and Dean Poston formalized the

## **B. Is the restructuring working?**

Yes, on many levels the restructuring is working.

Accountability for monitoring students' academic progress and for the faculty's role as mentors ultimately lies within Academic Affairs. The DOS office (in conjunction with the CAS) upholds college policy and the importance of academic excellence, challenge, and rigor. CAS works effectively as the final arbiter on issues of academic standing. SAS provides the support needed to have students successfully meet academic challenges. We find this division of labor effective; each office contributes a different component, working collaboratively and with transparency. DOS and SAS have been actively involved with creating day-to-day operations that work effectively. However, as these offices continue to establish their individual roles, further clarification of responsibilities and clear communication with the faculty is needed.

A positive change in the DOS office that has assisted in student advising and support has been the change to an electronic note system (E-note) from a paper file arrangement. Such a system is necessary for both DOS and SAS to have easy access to student information, considering that the two offices are not geographically adjacent. This system also allows the office to track important data such as the point of entry and progress of each student as well as grades.

In addition to the E-note system, DOS and SAS have developed other forms of collaboration to maintain relevant information exchange. DOS and SAS hold several joint meetings throughout the year, and a weekly Academic Support meeting keeps both offices

members. In general, needs may be quite different and specialized for a variety of incoming students. It should be noted that once a student enrolls in a Scribner Seminar (SS), the faculty member who teaches the SS becomes the regular academic advisor.

There is empirical evidence that the joint efforts of the DOS and SAS offices have improved academic performance for the SAS target populations. There is a marked decline in Unsatisfactory Work Notices (UWN) for SAS target populations, from 46% of all UWN in Fall 2006 to 28% in Spring 2007. Additional data show targeted SAS populations shows a potential increase in GPA. However, it must be noted that there are many factors that affect GPA in addition to the services from SAS, and it would be inappropriate to assume a direct and single causal relationship.

### **C. Are changes needed to make the restructuring more effective?**

Following the restructuring, the DOS and SAS offices have enjoyed significant improvements in individual and cooperative operations over the last two years. It is clear that both offices have focused on the most pressing issues to smooth the rough transition that contributed to a higher than usual turnover of staff. While most aspects of the transition are working well, there are a few areas where additional attention might improve the functioning of both offices.

Although communication between DOS and SAS seems to be effective, communication with the broader college community, specifically the faculty, could be enhanced. We understand that a major problem with the rapid pace of the restructuring was the Faculty's lack of understanding about the changes that were implemented and the roles of each office. Such lack

2. Do different messages come from each office?

Some have concerns that students and parents may get different messages from the DOS and SAS which in turn may encourage “shopping around” for the desired answer. We

## **V. Specific recommendations.**

CEPP has several recommendations for the appropriate offices and administrators that should allow the DOS and SAS offices to function more effectively in the future. Our recommendations fall within the broad categories below:

### **A. Office of the Dean of Studies**

- The subcommittee's investigation revealed the complex role of the DOS as it relates to both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Because of this complexity, we recommend that the DOS appointment rotate on four- or five-year cycles where the position is filled by a faculty member with classroom experience. We recognize that such a cycle has resource implications. But it is clear that there is just too much to learn to be effective in only two years. Furthermore, an extended appointment will give more stability to the collaborative structure.
- The DOS has an important role in the First-Year Experience. Currently, the DOS relays relevant information to the DFYE. This important connection occurs organically at the present, aided by the geographic proximity of the two offices and their structural position under the DOF. To ensure that such a relationship is maintained in the future, we recommend that the terms for the DOS and DFYE be staggered. Otherwise, without a clear policy or mandate, this important relationship may be lost for a period of time.
- Several times during its investigation, the subcommittee heard that there needed to be more intentional advising for sophomores. We realize that the implementation of the Teagle Grant will help address this issue, and we urge the development of programs that direct attention to second-year students.



## **B. Student Academic Services**

- SAS should consult and work with the DOS in developing and analyzing the data from the student support survey recommended above. SAS should also be a partner in the conversation about and the communication of the survey's results.
- SAS should continue to offer services to the entire of student population, and should consider increasing the services it offers to our highest performing students. Scholarly inquiry requires support and collaboration, and that perceptions of academic support have

#### **D. The Faculty**

- The Faculty should take a more active role in learning about the DOS and SAS offices. One way of doing this is to respond to the survey issued to by the DOS and SAS on student support. These offices support our work and our input will only make them more effective.
- An important role of DOS and SAS is the ability to help students with Unsatisfactory Work Notices (UWNs). SAS would appreciate more deliberate and expeditious use of UWNs in order to offer support to students in a timely fashion. In particular, referrals made at the very end of the term are not helpful to the student and leave few options for resolving problems.

#### **E. Other recommendations and observations**

- The success of the DOS and SAS offices requires ongoing communication between the DOSA and the DOF.
- We encourage DOS and SAS, in consultation with the DFYE, to clarify the roles and

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