

Academic Affairs Committee Report 2015-2016

Kyra Cooper, Chair

Brett Combs

Sarah Holtmeyer

Remy McClain

Department Chair Interviews

At the beginning of the year, each member of the Academic Affairs Committee sat down with a Department Chair in order to discuss a predetermined list of topics. This year we discussed the evolving state of the Liberal Studies Program, attendance policy, and any grievance the Chair had that Academic Affairs could potentially address. This was an excellent way to begin the year in order to cultivate a relationship between the committee and the department chairs, as well as understanding the problems of the university.

Online Math

The Academic Affairs Committee also looked into the online math problem. Any alternative to the cogent math system has been priced at being too expensive for the university to afford. The Committee encourages that the next Committee not waste time and resources on this project at the university's current state.

Sodexo

Towards the end of the first semester the Academic Affairs Committee looked towards addressing the possibility of having Sodexo meals donated every week. The committee reached out to Laura Cunningham, the Director of Sodexo, about the possibility and the process that we could go through. She expressed the concern of students not eating enough because they would donate to many of their meals. After further conversation she said that she would be willing to work with us, but with putting a limit to how many meals a student can donate a week. Cunningham asked us to put together a report outlining exactly what the contact with Sodexo should say regarding this topic. The Committee decided that there was not enough time to put together a report before February which is when Cunningham wanted us to prove the report to her. Because of the lack of time to put together a proper report, the project was suspended in the hope that at the beginning of next year, the next Academic Affairs Committee will finish the process that was started.

Registration Times

Academic Affairs Committee addressed a common student concern in regards to class registration times. We conducted a university-wide survey in order to poll interest in changing the time from 7 A.M., providing multiple alternative times. The survey reported 557 responses, and the concluded consensus was to keep the registration time at 7 A.M. In terms of creating, filing, and sending the survey, Maggie Herron of the Registrar's office was critical to the process, as well as providing information on registration.

Library Hours and Fans

The Academic Affairs committee worked closely first semester with the administration of Pickler Memorial Library to evaluate the success of the library's current hours, as well as the status of air flow in the library. The Committee spoke with the administrators about extending the hours

of the library, but after looking over statistics of traffic in the library, along with the costs of keeping the library open longer, it was decided that it was not feasible to extend the hours, and that the current hours serve the greatest majority of students' needs. At the same meeting, the Academic Affairs Committee pursued the idea of putting fans in the study rooms to increase the air flow, however, the library administration informed us that the issue of circulation was already being addressed as it was a much bigger and internal problem. For future reference, both Dean Coughlin and Janet Romine were extremely helpful with this process.

Educator and Research Mentor

The committee began the Educator and Research Mentor of the Year process on February 1st. We opened nominations via a Google form that linked directly to the Chair's Gmail account, so the responses were easily accessible throughout the process. The nominations closed on February 15th, with a total of 97 nominations received. From there, the committee deliberated and selected 30 semi-finalists for Educator of the Year and 10 semi-finalists for Research Mentor of the Year. The committee emailed these professors and asked them to respond to the following prompts:

Educator of the Year: How would you define your personal mission statement as an educator, and how do you strive to convey that to your students, inside and outside of the classroom?

Research Mentor of the Year: What is your personal mission statement, and how do you use it to inspire students in their research endeavors?

From these essay responses, we selected seven finalists for Educator of the Year and six finalists for Research Mentor of the Year. We selected a representative from the McNair program and Pershing Society to work on the selection committee. From there, we did classroom observations for each of the Educators, with the exception of LTC Anderson, who had left the University for military duty. We interviewed each Research Mentor with questions prepared by the committee. After this process, we found a time to deliberate, and selected one Educator of the Year and one Research Mentor.

On the logistical side, Laura Bates was helpful in reserving rooms for the banquet. We ordered food from Sodexo approximately two months before the planned date for the banquet, specifically in contact with William Wilburn (william.wilburn@sodexo.com). This was the menu, as described by Sodexo:

Carved Roast Beef

Chicken CHAMPAGNE

Manicotti (Cheese w/ Marinara Sauce)

Wild Rice

OVEN ROAST Potatoes

PEAS/W/MUSHROOM

Sautéed Veggies

House Salad w/ Ranch, Italian, & French Dressings

CRUNCHY BROCC,FRESH FRUIT TORTELLIIN ,GREEK SALAD ,CHOCOLATE PUDDING

Rolls & Butter

APPLE & CHERRY COBBLER

Iced Tea

Water

We reached out to Troy Paino in January to speak at the banquet, and approximately two weeks before the banquet he canceled his appearance. Sue Thomas stepped in as the keynote speaker.

We invited all finalists, semi-finalists, past winners, administration, and deans to the banquet. We made certificates for every finalist and the winners of both awards by going through the publications department (Contact: Katie Best).

Also, in deliberations, right down what the committee liked about each candidate, as this is traditionally incorporated into the speech (3-4 sentences about each professor)

Advice for Future Chair: Start the process early, and keep all google documents related to the process on separate tabs of one document for ease of use. Keep strict lists of semi-finalists and finalists, as many faculty members reach out and ask for these lists for awards within their departments.

Ray Miller Elementary

Second semester, the Academic Affairs Committee took on a new project which formed a partnership between the committee and Ray Miller Elementary School. We worked closely with the principal, Dr. Jennifer Botello to create a tutoring program which pairs Truman students with students in grades 2-5 who need extra help in areas of literacy and mathematics based upon the already created OASIS model of tutoring. We had a training session at the end of March to begin the process, but as the semester began to conclude, the project could not be officially completed. However, we wrote a resolution to promote communication between the committee and elementary school in order to continue this program into the next semester.

Office Clean-up

On one occasion, the Academic Affairs committee cleaned and vacuumed the Student Senate office. The most valuable contribution we made in this process was removing the trash can from the office, so lackadaisical senators were more inclined to take their trash to the correct location outside of the office.

Administrative Representation

This year Committee Chair Kyra Cooper was the Representative to Faculty Senate and Committee Member Remy McClain was the Representative the Undergraduate Council. They both worked with faculty as needed. Cooper also met with Provost Sue Thomas though out the year. Contact Kathleen Powell to set up these meetings.

Laugh Report

This year proved to be a pivotal point the lives of not only all those involved with Academic Affairs, but most specifically within the committee itself. Chair Kyra Cooper led the committee to find important aspects of their lives in the form of her very own laugh. Kyra's laugh is like smooth butter. It spreads. The laugh is a perfect culmination of everything the Academic Affairs Committee stands for: fun, panic, and confidence all in the face of imminent danger and stress-filled situations. Throughout the year, the laugh did its thing and spread evenly among the committee until the committee can now say with full confidence that it has adapted itself to fit this laughter mold. We are one.