

To: Academic Council

From: Emily Bernhardt, Academic Programs Committee Chair, 2016-17

Re: APC Activities, 2016-17

Date: April 10, 2017

Cc: Provost Sally Kornbluth; Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs Jennifer Francis; Incoming APC Chair Steffen Bass; Senior Program Coordinator Susan Booth

This overview begins with a brief overview of APC's **purposes, organizational structure, and mode of operation**. Since every academic unit in the university eventually interacts with APC regarding some issue or process, it seems useful to give interested Academic Council members an overview of the committee's charge and basic approach to its work. The document closes with brief reflections on APC's activities in 2016-17.

PURPOSES

The Academic Programs Committee (APC) has three basic functions, each of which involves the provision of advice to the Provost on pivotal matters relating to Duke's core academic mission:

- 1) Consideration of **external reviews of: units** (departments and university institutes), **newly adopted degree programs** (all such new degree programs now face a required probationary review, typically after the first three years of operation), and **joint doctoral programs** between units. (APC does not review certificate programs, nor the accreditation processes for professional schools).
- 2) Consideration of **proposals for new degree programs or the creation/contraction/termination/merger of major units** (such as departments or university-wide institutes).
- 3) Consideration of **major academic policy questions with salience for the entire campus** (in 2016-2017 such discussions included topics such as: revisions to faculty handbook guidelines for tenure and promotion; standardization and improvements in advancement criteria for regular rank non-tenure track faculty; early view and critique of the University strategic plan; the role of admissions, advising and career counseling services in facilitating the new curriculum; needs for the recruitment and retention of critical scholar administrators; required elements for new graduate program proposals; the structure and future of the Bass scholars program; training and support needs for departmental leadership).

ORGANIZATION

To ensure that APC's deliberations incorporate faculty perspectives from across the university, the Provost and the Executive Committee of Academic Council (ECAC) collaborate in the

selection of members from each of the professional schools, as well as a range of departments in each division of Arts & Sciences. The Graduate-Professional Student Council also has non-voting representation on APC. There are several *ex officio*, non-voting members from Duke's senior academic leadership.

Since 2014-15 APC has been structured as **two 13 member subcommittees within the full 26 member committee**. Each subcommittee is structured to achieve the widest possible representation of schools and divisions, and each has one appointed grad student representative. Each subcommittee meets once per month, and has the authority to act on behalf of APC as a whole. The full committee also meets once a month. By this mechanism, APC convenes three times a month during most months of the academic year (though faculty members, aside from the Chair and Vice-Chair, still only have two meetings per month). The APC Chair has the responsibility of ensuring comparable standards of evaluation across the two subcommittees.

The Provost typically appoints faculty members of APC to serve for three-year terms, with the Chair coming from the third-year cohort. When selecting an APC chair, the Provost again works with ECAC, and typically rotates the choice from among the broad divisions of intellectual inquiry in the university. Professor Steffen Bass of the Physics Department was selected to serve as the APC Chair for 2017-2018, and has been acting as Vice Chair since January of 2017.

MODE OF OPERATION

Typically, the two APC subcommittees handle external reviews or new degree/unit proposals, while the full committee discusses broader policy questions. On occasion, however, scheduling difficulties have resulted in a subcommittee discussing a policy issue. The Provost also retains the discretion to ask the full committee to consider an external review or proposal for a new degree program or unit.

When undertaking the first two of its functions, APC receives the full documentary record concerning either the external review or the new proposal. These materials include the prior evaluation by the Executive Council of the Graduate Faculty (in the case of departments or joint doctoral programs), or by the Masters' Advisory Council (in the case of professional degree programs.) The APC chair then appoints a "lead discussant." This faculty member reviews the materials especially closely and, in consultation with the APC chair, frames discussion questions for the head of the unit/program under review, or for the lead faculty members on a new program proposal. These queries furnish a starting point for the brief presentation by unit/program heads at APC, and subsequent interaction between the presenters and the committee.

During an APC meeting considering an external review or new proposal, the lead discussant is responsible for taking especially close notes. They then write a draft resolution to the Provost, in consultation with the APC Chair, which encapsulates the views of the committee. Committee members can comment on the draft. After any further revisions, the committee votes on the final version of the resolution. These votes frequently take place electronically, though if several subcommittee members ask for an additional face-to-face discussion, the Chair will delay the vote until the next meeting of the subcommittee.

In the case of an external review, APC's resolution is provided to the unit/program concerned, and helps to inform any Memorandum of Understanding drafted by the Provost. In the case of a proposal for a new degree program or unit, the APC resolution, with the assent of the Provost, goes forward to the ECAC, for consideration by that body and then the full Academic Council, before final consideration by the Board of Trustees.

Before moving to generate a resolution, APC may ask for additional information from unit heads/lead proposers. In the case of new proposals, APC may also ask for minor revisions to the formal proposal, or send the proposal back for more substantive reconsideration and reframing.

APC also receives visitors to frame its policy meetings of the full committee. The Provost, Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs, and the APC Chair work together to set the broad agenda for these discussions. The Chair then works with the invited members of the university community to identify appropriate background reading materials and structure brief presentations to set up discussion. Typically, the chair takes notes on these meetings, and where appropriate, solicits additional feedback from committee members. After the meeting, the chair often submits a memorandum to the Provost and the heads of relevant university units/programs, summarizing the views expressed/suggestions furnished by APC members and offering additional commentary, where appropriate.

APC'S ACTIVITIES DURING 2016-17

In the current academic year, APC has considered the following external reviews:

- Master of Science in Global Health
- Department of African and African American Studies
- Department of Chemistry
- Computational Biology and Bioinformatics
- Department of Music
- Molecular Genetics and Microbiology
- Department of Political Science
- *Upcoming* - Electrical and Computer Engineering (April 19)
- *Upcoming* - Department of English (April 26)

APC also considered the following new proposals:

- Joint PhD program between the Sanford School of Public Policy and Allied Disciplines (Departments of Psychology and Neuroscience and Sociology)
- Exit master's degree for the University Program in Environmental Policy
- Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Data Science
- Conversion of the Population Health Sciences Center to Department status
- Accelerated Masters in Global Health
- Proposal to convert the Innovation & Entrepreneurship proposal to Institute status
- *Upcoming*, University Program in Materials Science and Engineering (April 19)

- We also resolved that conferral of a tuition-free master's degree, when pursued en route to a PhD in another field, should be contingent upon completion of the PhD

Policy discussions included:

- Policy discussion of graduate education
- Creation of an APC resolution for required components for new program proposals and for external review responses
- Criteria for evaluation, promotion and support of non-tenure track PhDs
Discussion of the alignment between current tenure review standards and practice and Duke's expressed core mission
- Recruitment, advising, and placement of students
- Strategic plan
- Bass Connections and building research collaboratories
- *Upcoming*, Chair and Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) leadership and communication training (April 12)