

Academic Programs Committee annual report 2017-18

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Introduction

The Academic Programs Committee (APC) advises the Provost on university-wide academic issues. The agenda is developed jointly by the Chair and members of the Committee and the Provost. Most of the work by the APC falls into one of three categories:

- 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 or the accreditation processes for professional schools).
- 2) Consideration of **proposals for new degree programs or the creation, contraction, termination or 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 2017-2018 such discussions included topics such as: the status of doctoral training, faculty advancement & leadership training, academic freedom at DKU and many others.

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 graduate 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 Elizabeth Oltmans Ananat of the Sanford School of Public Policy was selected to serve as the APC Chair for 2018-2019, and has been acting as Vice Chair since September 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 Committee 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 provide 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 keeping track of the discussion and taking the "pulse" of the committee's sentiment. The lead discussant then drafts the committee resolution. The resolution is a document that summarizes the discussion that APC had on the topic and provides concrete recommendations to the Provost on how to proceed regarding the proposal or review at hand. The resolution is drafted in consultation with the APC Chair and encapsulates the views of the committee. Committee members can comment on the draft. After a revision and feedback process, 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 respective unit/program, 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 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 activities during the 2017-18 academic year

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

- Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies
- Social Science Research Institute
- Franklin Humanities Institute
- PhD program in Public Policy

APC also considered the following proposals (new degrees/change existing degrees):

- Materials Science and Engineering Multidisciplinary Graduate Degree Program (Pratt School of Engineering and Trinity College of Arts & Sciences)
- Master of Fine Arts in Dance: Embodied Interdisciplinary Praxis
- Sanford School of Public Policy degree name change for the Trinity major and Graduate School PhD from Public Policy Studies (PPS) to Public Policy (PubPol)
- Critical Asian Humanities Master of Arts degree
- School of Medicine non-regular frank faculty titles
- School of Nursing Appointment, Promotion and Tenure criteria changes
- International Master of Engineering Program in Electrical and Computer Engineering (Duke Kunshan University)
- Population Health Sciences Master of Science and Doctoral Degree programs

Policy discussions included:

- Duke Kunshan University planning update
- Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement introduction and discussion
- Tenure standards (rethinking tenure criteria)
- Discussion of issues concerning academic freedom and DKU
- Doctoral Education Committee update
- Faculty professionalism presentation by the School of Medicine and discussion
- University Institutes and Centers review process

Broader issues identified in APC deliberations

Over the course of its deliberations and discussions, APC often identifies broader issues and concerns that transcend individual proposals and routinely brings these to the attention of the Provost.

Impact of Master's programs outside of their hosting unit: many newly created Masters programs rely on classes taught outside of their hosting unit that can put a significant burden on these academic units. For example, the Departments of Statistical and Computer Science teach courses that are in high demand by multiple new Master's programs (or even part of their mandatory curriculum). Generally, a solution needs to be found for any class not in the degree hosting unit that may face an increase in enrollment that cannot be handled with the current resources allocated to that class.

- In order to deal with these types of burden, APC favors a collaborative approach between the units, either in form of profit sharing per student and "external course" enrolled, or in terms of joint hires and reimbursement of cost for additional TA lines required for the additional course load.
- APC does not favor the creation of substitute courses within a unit that significantly overlap with the curriculum and expertise of the unit that houses the academic discipline (e.g. offering courses covering a CS or STA curriculum component as dedicated ECE courses taught by ECE faculty). Such a trend, even though it could address resource allocation shortages and conflicts in the short term, is counter to Duke's overall commitment and strength in cross- and interdisciplinary research and teaching.
- APC recognizes the tension between the ideal of a Liberal Arts education that enables students to expand their intellectual horizons by taking classes outside of the prescribed curriculum of their program and the interests of their host department to control these enrollments, if the host department were to be billed per student for these classes. However, a clear distinction should be made between the intellectual endeavors of individual students (that do not significantly affect resource allocation on a departmental, school or university level) and degree requirements (or electives) that significantly affect the enrollment of a given class offered by a unit different from the one owning the degree.
- Resource burden on central units is an additional concern that requires attention and a funding model. Library, counseling and visa services are prominent examples in this category.

Cost of Master's programs: The relatively high costs of attendance for MA and MFA programs in general, and the long-term financial burden that this often places on students in such programs, raises larger questions about the cost of education and the morality of offering such degrees. E.g. do the long-term outcomes of these degrees (professional advancement, personal growth) merit the high debt burden on the graduates? These are issues that warrant further discussion.

Leadership training for departmental officers: lack of leadership training for departmental officers remains a problem across all units on campus and has negatively impacted a number of programs that have undergone external review over the past few years. APC is optimistic that this topic will be addressed by the newly hired Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement.

Sustainability of small departmental units: small departmental units suffer from a generic challenge in terms of sustained leadership and succession planning. Particular care has to be taken at the school level to ensure continuity of staffing (at the faculty and leadership level). It may be worthwhile to consider what the smallest sustainable size of a program/unit should be and whether small units should share an administrative backend.

Financial model for the funding of institutes and initiatives: The financial model for institute funding that has the indirect cost return go to the schools and not the institutes and its detrimental effects to the institutes' motivation for pursuing grant opportunities should be reviewed in general for all university institutes.

University centers: The definition, function and life-cycle of centers housed at the university or school level requires clarification and streamlining. There currently exists a staggering variety of centers on campus with a very diverse set of missions, funding and scope. This leads to considerable confusion as to the function a "center" has in the context of the university or school, how to fund, administer and review them and how to decide when to sunset them after they've outlived their purpose.