MINUTES OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2013

Present
Philip C. Aka (presiding and recording)
Phillip Beverly
Agber Dimah
Carol Leach

The meeting took place in SCI 315 in the inner office occupied by the coordinator of philosophy and political science. It was scheduled to begin at 12.30 p.m., but members spent a bit of time reviewing the schedule of teaching loads (year-long) the coordinator prepared for their signatures. As a result, the meeting was called to order at 12.52 p.m. The agenda of the meeting followed the content and order in the notice of meeting (see topics below) emailed to faculty members ahead of the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 1.38 p.m. following conclusion of the issues that formed the agenda of the meeting as listed below.

1. General Education Assessment

The political science program offers two courses subject to general education assessment: POL 1000, Critical Thinking in Politics and Law, taught in one section by Dr. Dimah; and POL 1010, American National Government, taught by every faculty member, both full-time and adjunct. Dr. Dimah coordinates the assessment of the critical thinking course, while Dr. Aka coordinates the assessments of the various sections of the American national government course. The program combines, rather than separates, the assessment of the two courses.

Leading to the meeting, faculty members, over emails, shared insights relating to student performance on the exams and ways and means to improve the assessment system. Positive results emerging from these discussions include re-design by Dr. Aka of the assessment instrument for American national government, and putting the new instrument into immediate
use, beginning this spring semester of 2013. A highlight of the changes was the elimination of the Illinois politics portion of the test consisting of a total of six questions. The elimination is justified by the discontinuation of American national government to satisfy the Illinois constitution requirement, an occurrence which reduces the incentives for course instructors to emphasize Illinois government in their American national government instructions.

The decisions reached at the meeting are as follows. With respect to the critical thinking course, faculty members should look over the testing instrument, with a keen eye on what changes that need to be made to increase student learning in the course. Dr. Dimah, who teaches the only section of the course that the program offers, should lead the process. Concerning American national government, the agreement was to suspend any action till the end of this semester when we determine what effects, if any, the redesigned assessment instrument has on student performance. Depending on the results, issues needing revisiting would include tweaking of the new instrument to remove esoteric matters of non-general knowledge (such as the voting behaviors of Supreme Court members and non-domestic affairs cases), and the adoption of a common text or, failing, at least common themes, regarding the teaching of the course.

2. **Recruitment and Retention of Political Science Majors and Minors**

Like with general education assessment, our discussion on this topic was vibrant, and covered a wide range of issues, including: activation and rejuvenation of the political science and pre-law clubs; following through on an existing articulation agreement with Kennedy King College that, through the imprimatur of the university leadership, has now been expanded to encompass all the city colleges in Chicago; listing political science courses in criminal justice schedule; having criminal justice instructors and personnel advise their students, particularly
those who plan to pursue careers in law or public administration, to consider political science as major (double majors) or minor; expanded internships, including the institution of a 3-credit internship as graduation requirement; and encouraging students in the general education classes, who show aptitude for political science, including those planning a career in law or public administration, to consider picking political science as a major or minor. To get the ball immediately rolling, it was agreed that we convene without delay a meeting of majors that non-majors are also welcome to attend.

The discussion on recruitment and retention was enriched by a handout from Dr. Leach, which juxtaposed the requirements for a baccalaureate degree in political science at Chicago State University with the requirements of six other public and private institutions in Illinois: Northeastern Illinois, DePaul, Roosevelt, UIC, Loyola, EIU, and WIU. In addition to the general issue of recruitment and retention, Dr. Leach’s study raises the key issue of how we can revamp our curriculum to bring it into conformity with comparable programs in Illinois. To give this matter the closer scrutiny and attention that it deserves, it was agreed that each faculty member should bring along a sample curriculum for review when we meet next time.

3. **Meet-and-Greet for Political Science Majors and Minors**

The meeting agreed that this was an activity, with important ramification for retention, that should take place at the beginning of every semester. This year’s event was fixed for Thursday, February 14, 2013. Invitations should be sent without delay to the affected students and preparations begun, including a request to the chairperson for refreshment.
4. **Participation in Black History and Women’s History Months**

The month set aside for Black History is February, while the commemoration of Women’s History takes place in March. This is a matter for the department as a whole on which we political scientists also believe we could do something on our own. The things we decided to do on our own include Movie Days, akin in format to the viewing of the Presidential and Vice Presidential Debates last season, involving the showing to the campus community of a fitting documentary that is then followed by conversations moderated by a faculty member. *For Black History, Dr. Dimah will show the movie and moderate it, while for Women’s History, Dr. Leach will show a movie that she or another faculty member will moderate.*

5. **Brown Bags**

This is another of the collective matters that the program believes it could do on its own to reinforce any departmental initiative, including preexisting arrangements (like the College of Arts and Sciences Forum). The agreement was that this should be an informal event, to be conducted when the occasion calls for it, say about two times every semester, where faculty members could bring their students along.

6. **Senior Thesis**

The members agreed that this is a matter, tied to governance and with contractual ramifications, now before the Senate, that is therefore not ripe for deliberation at the meeting.

7. **Matters Arising**

The first relates to the decision of the interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. David Kanis, made known to the coordinator on January 16, 2013, to close down SCI 315, which we use as office, and turn the space into an advising center. Following a meeting six days later between him and political science faculty members, all of whom, with the philosophers
opposed the move, the dean modified his decision in favor of an arrangement which leaves the office open but shared with professional advisors. During the meeting, the dean promised to provide our two programs the stationery and other supply tools (printers not included) we need to do our work if we send our requisitions to him. Dr. Aka informed the meeting that, working with the departmental secretary, he has submitted the requisition to Dr. Kanis. Other program accomplishments Dr. Aka reported to the meeting, in addition to the year-long, include update of the website of the political science program (along with that of philosophy) and the posting of the general assessment report (narrative and trends) to that website. A matter arising from the Dean Council meeting that day, just prior to our own program meeting, was the new web-time entry format (for personnel leaves) which Dr. Aka advised Dr. Leach, who just came back from sick leave, to ensure that she complied with.

Respectfully submitted:

Philip C. Aka