

Blinn College

Council of Division Chairs

9 January 2006

1:10 p.m.

Brenham Campus

Those attending the Council of Division Chairs meeting Monday, 9 January 2006 in the student center conference room on the Brenham campus included Linda Flynn (Director of Library Services), Debbi Cook (Brenham Fine Arts ADC), Jane Haggard (Bryan Fine Arts DC), Mark Bernier (Brenham Humanities DC), Cathy Lively (Bryan Social Science ADC), Bill Nix (Bryan Health and Kinesiology DC), Greg Hinze (Brenham Health and Kinesiology DC), Blanche Brick (Bryan Social Science DC), Ron Hammond (Bryan Mathematics and Engineering DC), Mark Wilkening (Brenham Business and Computer Science DC), Judy Baker (Bryan Business and Computer Science DC), Nancy Wright (Bryan Humanities-Parallel Studies DC), Doug Pierce (Brenham Agriculture and Applied Technology DC), Michael Schaefer (Applied Business Information/Technology and Public Services DC), John Schaffer (Bryan Humanities ADC), Thena Parrott (Bryan Allied Health Occupations DC), Mary Barnes (Brenham Social Science DC), Dennis Utley (Bryan Natural Science ADC), Bob Brick (Bryan Natural Science DC), Randy Hoppens (Brenham Mathematics and Engineering DC), Gary Ivy (Brenham Mathematics and Engineering ADC), Martha Kline (Brenham Social Science ADC), Jean Westbrook (Bryan Mathematics and Engineering ADC), Sue Slowey (Bryan Social Science ADC), Larry Campbell (Brenham Fine Arts DC), Beatriz Arnillas (Bryan Fine Arts ADC), and Ken French (Brenham Natural Science DC).

Attendees from Academic Affairs included Dr. Ron Johnston, Vice President Academic Affairs, Dr. Beth Lewis, Dean Academic Affairs (Brenham), and Dr. John Beaver, Dean Academic Affairs (Bryan).

Dr. Johnston had several items to bring before the group. He began by stating that Academic Affairs is not requiring faculty to offer extra credit to students who participate in activities such as HOSTS, etc., that faculty are responsible for determining the grading system appropriate for their courses. This announcement came as a follow-up to the morning general session which had included a presentation regarding HOSTS.

Professional Development—Dr. Johnston reminded the division chairs of the professional development requirements approved by the board of trustees including the professional activity and service activity aspects. He continued that there is supposed to be an automated reporting system that would eventually generate a report for the board. That system still needs refinement, according to Dr. Johnston.

Division Chair Networking—Dr. Johnston encouraged the division chairs to develop contacts with their counterparts at the senior-level institutions that Blinn College students primarily transfer to. He especially suggested that division chairs pursue opportunities for 2 + 2 agreements as the door seems open to such opportunities. He continued that it is important that Blinn College improve its graduation rate and that we need no barriers to completing the associate's degree. Blinn College has at least forty 2 + 2 agreements with Sam Houston State University, and the reverse transfer plan is working well. Poppy Capehart has done much to open Texas A&M to more articulation agreements.

Learning Communities—Dr. Johnston indicated that he has not given up on learning communities and that he frequently sees articles about learning communities. He does not want Blinn College to be on the tail end of this movement. Study groups are akin to the learning community concept. He continued that students do not seem excited about tutorials and study labs. Dr. Johnston had praise for Randy Hoppens and Gary Ivy for the positive results of the Brenham math study groups. Those students who participated in the study groups tended to have a letter grade higher than the course average. Dr. Johnston also reminded the group that Student Learning Outcomes are not going away.

Core Curriculum Assessment—Dr. Johnston reported that he is discouraged by the Coordinating Board's response to Core Curriculum Assessment reports. Five-year assessment reports have been submitted to the CoBoard from across the state, and the CoBoard has not yet responded to the submissions; however, Dr. Johnston indicated that he thinks that Blinn College is ahead of the game.

Appeals Process—Dr. Johnston asked division chairs to remind the faculty of the procedures to be followed during the appeals process. He said students often do not understand the process and make it up as they go and we end up with students by-passing steps and not having the necessary documentation. Documentation must be in writing; verbal documentation is not sufficient. If we don't follow policy, that weakens our stance on how we deal with that student, said Dr. Johnston. He continued that the student complaint process is not necessarily the final grade appeal process. The college's attorney has said that we should make students aware of the process and then start the paper trail. The division chair should keep a copy of the paperwork. Dr. Johnston informed the group that there have been three instances of the college being challenged for not following our on procedures. A student who by-passes steps in the process should be sent back down to the appropriate level and follow the established procedure. Dr. French indicated that student services is listed in publications as being one of the areas where students can take complaints. Dr. Johnston said that Administrative Council is available if the Faculty Council or the Council of Division Chairs has concerns they want to bring forward.

Civility and Grading—Dr. Johnston reminded the division chairs to check faculty Course Information Sheets for adherence to institutional policies regarding civility as well as grading procedures. Dr. Johnston continued that Blinn College has a long-standing understanding of four exams in a course, but that we should be testing enough times to give students a fair opportunity to demonstrate mastery of skills. In response to a

question whether it is necessary for an instructor to put in more information than is included in the college's civility policy, Dr. Johnston said not to do that—to stick with the stated policy instead.

Freshman-year Experience—Dr. Johnston stated that Blinn College could benefit from this type of program, that it brings engagement. He recommended that we check shsu.edu and follow the link to review Sam Houston State's first-year experience program. He also revealed that SHSU has a mandatory semester long freshman orientation and is looking at expanding into a sophomore-year experience. Dr. Johnston recommended that a small group look at this issue and that student services be involved also.

Old Business

Minutes—There was a motion and second to approve the minutes of the 21 October meeting once Mark Bernier's name is added to the list of those present.

There was a motion and second to approve the minutes of the 18 November meeting.

THEA-liable Course List—Mark Bernier and Nancy Wright have talked some about changes needed to the THEA-liable course list. A committee to review the list was appointed at the October meeting. They will get suggestions from division chairs as to which courses in their divisions should be included in the THEA-liable list. Becky Garlick related instances of students being advised into Texas History, etc., which have no THEA restrictions, yet they had not passed the Reading portion of THEA.

Professional Development—Randy Hoppens stated that attending a one-hour session at TCCTA should not be sufficient to count for the two-year credit of professional development. It was also discussed that nothing happens when a faculty member doesn't comply with the professional development requirement. Randy Hoppens, Mary Barnes, Jane Haggard, and Blanche Brick will reexamine the professional development policy and report back to the group any suggestions they have and then determine if there is support to bring the suggestions before Administrative Council.

Attendance—This item was briefly mentioned. The CDC did ask that the CDC representatives on the attendance committee keep the group informed as to any decisions or recommendations made by that committee. Bob Brick made the motion and Ken French seconded it that the CDC wants to be kept informed of attendance committee actions.

New Business

Complaint Procedures—Ken French brought up the procedures for dealing with student complaints. He will craft something for the CDC's consideration and submission to Administrative Council. The burden needs to be on the student to take action within the time limits imposed by the policies. Blanche Brick indicated division chairs should try to

solve the problem by working with the instructor before we just automatically invoke policy since many problems can be resolved at the division chair level. Mark Bernier will sit with Dr. Johnston to seek clarification of the policies. Discussion ensued.

Faculty Handbook—The CDC will ask for a listing of new items in the faculty handbook instead of the "new" label now used.

Study Skills Course—Nancy Wright and Becky Garlick suggest that students not college ready in two or more areas be required to enroll in a study skills course. Study skills can be tailored to specific needs of a specific course. Nancy Wright and Becky Garlick will have something ready for discussion at the next meeting, and they request that everyone share their thoughts with them as they prepare a proposal.

W-date—A committee consisting of Ken French, Bob Brick, Larry Campbell, and Nancy Wright will examine the W-date issue to see if there is benefit to moving the date earlier in the semester, later in the semester, or leaving it where it is. They will report the results of their finding to the CDC for its consideration.

Honors Program—Jeff Scott has stepped down as honors program director. Mark Bernier indicated that his sense is that the program is on the way out. Nancy Wright offered a vote of thanks to Jeff Scott for his efforts the past four and ½ years.

Any Other Business—Jane Haggard announced Beatriz Arnillas as the new ADC for Bryan Fine Arts.

The meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Scott