

Minutes of the Academic Affairs Committee Meeting
1045-1215 hours
12 September 2023
Smith Hall Board Room

Present:

Board Members	Staff	VMI Foundation
Mr. Adams	BG Moreschi	Mr. King
Mr. Fain	COL McDonald	
Mr. Garcia	CAPT Sebastino	
COL Inman	COL Young	
Ms. Lord	LTC Eskam	
	LTC Hagy	
	Mrs. Fowler	

Ms. Lord called the meeting to order at 1050.

The minutes of the 28 April 2023 meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee were unanimously approved (Attachment 1).

1. Approval of Graduates

The Academic Affairs Committee considered the Graduation List dated 28 August 2023 for September 2023 graduates (Attachment 2). The Committee approved this preliminary list of graduates and granted to the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty the authority to delete the names of cadets who do not meet the requirements for graduation and to add the names of graduates who may fulfill the requirements for graduation. The Committee further recommended that that the final lists of graduates in May 2023 be filed with the minutes of this meeting (Attachment 3).

2. Changes in the Faculty

The Academic Affairs Committee considered the Changes in the Faculty dated 28 August 2023 (Attachment 4). The Committee approved those Changes in the Faculty.

3. Approval of Curricular Changes

BG Moreschi briefed the Committee on Curricular Changes dated 28 August 2023 (Attachment 5) that have been approved by the Academic Board. These changes included the following:

- Programmatic Changes:
 - History Course Grade Requirements for International Studies and Political Science Majors
 - Curriculum Revision – Leadership Studies Minor

- New Courses¹:
 - BU 434 – Healthcare Management (3-0-3)
 - EC 400 – Housing Economics and Public Policy (3-0-3)
 - EC 450W – The Economics of Human Capability and Civic Engagement (3-0-3)
 - IS 451 – Law of Armed Conflict (3-0-3)
 - MA 404 – Introduction to Statistical Learning (2-1-3)

The Committee unanimously approved the proposed curricular changes.

5. State of the Academic Program

Admissions

LTC Hagy reviewed the rubric used by Admissions to review candidates (Attachment 6). The rubric awards up to 46 points for different aspects of an application. Sixty-five percent of the available points are directly related to the candidate’s academic performance, which makes our admissions decisions more heavily weighted towards academic performance than most schools. He noted that race/ethnicity information is collected in the admissions application; however, it is not visible to Admissions until after an applicant has been accepted making the admissions process “blind” to these factors. This information is only gathered to have demographic data on each class. He also noted that essays are an optional part of the application, which is typical for most schools, and points for an essay would be awarded under the “staff considerations” section of the rubric. Essays are only taken into consideration if they help a candidate’s case for admissions. Essays are required for candidates applying for merit scholarships.

The current SAT/ACT test optional policy was discussed, and it was noted that this policy was first implemented as a temporary policy during the COVID-19 pandemic and remains so. BG Moreschi reported that an ad hoc committee during the 23-24 AY will evaluate whether or not to continue this practice going forward and make a recommendation to the Academic Board and the BOV. LTC Hagy noted that most colleges and universities are currently test optional. In addition, he reported that, since becoming test optional, the average SAT/ACT scores of our cadets who have reported scores remains essentially the same as the average scores when the tests were required. SAT/ACT scores are required for applications to the Honors Program and for 3/4-year ROTC scholarships.

While cadets are not required to take the SAT/ACT, all cadets are required to take the VMI Math Placement Test after admission to VMI, which determines whether or not cadets can enroll in the calculus course sequence, or if they must first pass pre-calculus. The Math Placement Test has shown to be a better indicator of success in calculus/STEM

¹ The numbers following the course designations (i.e. 3-0-3) indicate the number of lecture hours, lab hours, and total credit hours associated with the course. So, a 3-0-3 designation means the course requires three hours of lecture each week, zero lab hours, and the course is worth three credit hours.

majors than the math SAT/ACT scores. Consideration is being given to having cadets complete the Math Placement Test prior to matriculation and declaring a major.

The issue of how legacy applicants are considered was discussed, and LTC Hagy reported that legacies receive 1-2 points on the admissions rubric. Legacies must meet all other admissions requirements in order to be accepted for enrollment. It is not known if there is any correlation to success/retention at VMI and legacy status. In closing, LTC Hagy reported that Admissions Open House attendance has returned to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Academic Program Highlights

BG Moreschi reviewed some academic program highlights from the 22-23 AY, which included one of our faculty receiving the SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Award; cadets receiving Fulbright and Boren scholarships; numerous, successful study abroad programs; and many cadets completing quality, paid internships.

BG Moreschi then provided an overview of the four-year grant the Institute received from SCHEV to promote increased enrollment of Pell-eligible cadets. The grant will provide approximately \$900K in funding per year in support, which includes new positions in admissions and academic support, emergency cadet support, scholarships to support attendance at STP, and other areas/initiatives. He noted that STP scholarship support for Pell-eligible cadets is significant, because Institutional Research has shown that attending STP is especially beneficial to low-income (i.e., Pell-eligible) cadets, but without financial support, most cannot afford to attend STP. While the SCHEV grant is designed to support low-income cadets, the positions/programs it supports will benefit all cadets. In addition, it will support the identification and recruitment of Pell-eligible students who demonstrate the potential to succeed academically. Regardless of a cadet's economic status, the initiatives funded by the grant will enable us to identify cadets who are at-risk academically early in their cadetships and provide them with the academic support services needed to succeed.

BG Moreschi also provided a look-ahead towards upcoming activities and initiative within the academic program. Most notable of which is the plan to review the Core Curriculum in the 23-24 AY to determine how best to support the new Institute Strategic Plan and incorporate a new, Core course teaching U.S. Constitutional History. In addition, SACSCOC reaccreditation is coming up in the next couple of years, so we will begin in 2025 the process of preparing our report for submission in 2027.

BG Moreschi reported that the Academic Planning and Review Committee of the Academic Board will review our academic standards in the 23-24 AY, which are more rigorous than those at the federal service academies and the other Senior Military Colleges. Readmission standards will also be reviewed which – due to our 2.0 major GPA requirement and our requirement that core major courses must be taken in residence – can make it virtually impossible for cadets to meet readmission requirements. He also noted that we modified our academic orientation process at the start of this academic

year. We will conduct an after-action review to evaluate these changes in order to make further improvements going forward.

BG Moreschi reported on a Jackson-Hope grant funding the establishment of a Director of Innovation Programing, which will support the development of a Summer Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Program starting in summer 2024. This program is also funded by Jackson-Hope. In addition, the position will support the pursuit of interdisciplinary, institutional research grants.

He reported that, in response to the independent audit's recommendation to establish a faculty senate, a new, Faculty Advisory Council was established that will provide faculty with an additional means of providing input on faculty governance. The Council is comprised of two elected members of the faculty from each of the five academic divisions for a total of ten members. The Council can request meetings with the Dean as needed to discuss the agenda they develop. In addition, the Council will have a representative attend each Academic Board meeting where they will have an opportunity to report to the Board.

In closing, BG Moreschi provided an update on the significant progress made on faculty compensation noting that, in addition to the five percent, across-the-board salary increase authorized by the state in FY24, additional salary adjustments were made using private funds from the new Gottwald '81 Academic Excellence Chair and from the Herndon Foundation grant, which supports salary supplements to faculty in the STEM departments and in Economics and Business. As a result of these salary increases, our average faculty salary is now estimated as the sixth highest amongst Virginia public colleges/universities. Over the past seven years, the average faculty salary has increased 53 percent from \$67K to \$102.5K/year. All assistant and associate professors are within 91 percent of their target salaries and all professors are within 84 percent of their targets. On average, private funds provide 22 percent of every faculty member's compensation.

Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 1216 hours.