

To: Faculty Assembly

From: Academic Review Committee (ARC) \*

Date: March 17, 2004

Subject: ARC Report #13 to the Faculty Assembly

### **ARC Structure**

On March 8, 2004, the Faculty Assembly voted, by mail ballot, (98 Yes; 15 No; and 4 Abstentions) to charter the Academic Review Committee (ARC) as the standing committee of the Faculty Assembly, replacing the former four Faculty Assembly standing committees: Academic, Curriculum, General Education, and Senior Seminar, effective immediately. The members of the ARC thank the faculty for its vote of confidence and pledge to continue to serve and respond to faculty needs. The ARC also thanks the Faculty Assembly President, Faculty Advisory Council, Provost, Deans, Office of Academic Affairs, administration, staff, and students for their cooperation and support.

### **New and Revised Course Requests**

Since its last report to the Faculty Assembly, the ARC has approved eight (8) new course requests, three (3) new first-time pilot course requests, and five (5) course revision requests. The ARC will continue reviewing proposals for new or revised courses and programs. However, the time is fast approaching when we may have to declare a moratorium on new course requests as the schools begin the conversion to the Courseload Adjustment (CLA) Unit model.

### **Student Evaluations**

The ARC believes it is useful to restate its position regarding the subject of Student Evaluations. The ARC has recommended that the current *Student Evaluation of Instructor and Course Form* be revised and that it include a limited number of both qualitative and quantitative questions. The ARC has also stated that the policy, process, and the evaluation data that are disseminated by the units must adhere to the rules as stated in the *Ramapo College Faculty Handbook*.

The ARC disagrees with the committee's Resolution #1 that the current form be renamed "Student Satisfaction with Instruction" and recommend, in accordance with the *Ramapo College Faculty Handbook*, that the form be entitled *Student Opinion of Effective Teaching*.

The ARC disagrees with the committee's Resolution #2 that this new form be qualitative in nature, and recommends instead that it include a limited number of both qualitative and quantitative questions.

Therefore, the ARC does **not** support the resolution as put forth by the Ad-hoc Committee on Student Evaluations.

For your information, we have excerpted the pertinent section from the *Faculty Handbook*:

"3. The College seeks to identify and encourage the professional growth of faculty members through its annual reappointment policy and attendant processes. The tenure process at Ramapo College builds upon these annual recommendations for reappointment. It is recognized that even good teachers do not achieve success in all classes. Appropriate consideration shall be given to the types of courses taught.

In evaluating effective teaching for annual reappointment the Effective Teaching criterion must be met. Effective Teaching will be judged on the basis of an overall trend as prescribed by the procedures for evaluation listed herein. It is understood that in the determination of teaching effectiveness, a trend must be substantiated by the results of more than one method of review.

4. The College's policy regarding reappointment with tenure and its attendant procedures has as one of its primary goals the recognition of those members of the faculty who have demonstrated effective and competent teaching skills throughout their respective probationary periods. Effective teaching must be evaluated within a context of consistent overall performance. Appropriate consideration shall be given to the types of courses taught. This judgment must be substantiated by the results of more than one method of review.

5. The Ramapo College policy regarding promotion and its attendant procedures has as its primary goal the recognition and reward of those members of its teaching faculty who have been identified as outstanding teachers consistent with the academic rank being sought and who have demonstrated a continuous record of outstanding effective teaching. Effective teaching must be evaluated

within a context of consistent overall performance. Appropriate consideration shall be given to the types of courses taught. This judgment must be substantiated by the results of more than one method of review.

6. To achieve both completeness and objectivity in reviewing effective teaching, the criterion of effective teaching shall be assessed in a variety of ways, and in particular five (5) separate perspectives shall be sought, viz, student, colleague, dean, self, and historic record, as discussed in greater length in #7 below:

a. An instrument(s) suitable for registering student response shall be used, particularly at the end of a course but not excluding such activity during a course if it seems suitable and desirable.

b. A suitable instrument for registering "colleague" response shall also be used. For our purposes, we define "colleague" in several different, though occasionally overlapping, categories, i.e.,

--colleagues in the particular unit of the College,  
--colleagues in the same professional field, e.g., convening group,

--colleagues from the institution across unit or professional lines, i.e., this may take the form of a "representative committee or team" for evaluation purposes (e.g., All-College Promotions Committee, etc.).

c. the Dean of the unit or other responsible administrative officer,

d. Self evaluation

e. A file shall be used which offers a documentary record of teaching activities, including, but not limited to course syllabi, papers, or project assignments, quizzes, and examinations used, etc.

7. The instruments to be used in evaluating effective teaching include :

a. Student Opinion of Effective Teaching

The Ramapo College community believes that (1) Effective Teaching is an integral part of the College's mission (2) that teaching effectiveness should be regularly reviewed, (3) that students should participate in this review, (4) that this review shall be accomplished in a reliable and valid manner, (5) that the review be designed and utilized so as to foster the growth of the individual faculty member, and (6) that the results of this review should be shared with faculty members, academic administrators, and students. The following policies and procedures for student review of effective teaching shall be effected:

(1). The teaching of each full-time and part-time faculty member shall be regularly reviewed by the students in his/her classes.

(2). This review shall take place as close as practicable to the end of the semester.

(3). This review shall take place in each of the instructor's classes.

(4). The school or division of the instructor shall be acknowledged as the primary decision-making body responsible for analyzing and interpreting the data made available on teaching effectiveness.

(5). There shall be an All-College printed instrument, which includes provision for sections specific to school and instructor.

(6). Within a given class, the administration of the student opinion instrument shall be by a student elected by the members of that class, who will distribute, collect, count, package and immediately hand deliver the completed set of forms to the Dean/unit secretary.

(7). The instructor shall not be present in the classroom during the completion of the student review forms.

(8). The instructor may write a personal statement about the course being reviewed which is to be placed in a sealed envelope and given either to the student monitor or the Dean's secretary. The instructor should clearly indicate the course title and reference number.

(9). The completed forms shall be held by the Dean of the unit until grades have been given to the registrar. Thereafter the forms, any analyses, and summaries shall be made available to the instructor.

(10). The review shall be summarized by the Dean or the appropriate unit committee.

(11). Copies of the summary report shall be forwarded from the Dean to the instructor, the Provost, and the instructor's official personnel file with appended comments including the instructor's personal statement, if any. Raw data shall be maintained in the instructor's unit, and shall be made available to the All-College Promotions Committee if requested.

(12). Copies of the summary reports shall be maintained in the instructor's unit. They shall be made available to students upon written request to the Dean.

(13). The summary reports shall be available in and a required part of any consideration of all personnel decisions at the unit and College-wide review levels.

i. Administration of Student Opinion Forms

(1) The class elects a student monitor who will distribute, collect, count, package, and immediately hand-deliver the completed student opinion forms to the Dean/unit secretary.

(2) The instructor leaves the room while the student opinion forms are being completed.

(3) The instructor may not see the completed student opinion forms until he/she has submitted the grades for that course being reviewed.

(4) The instructor may see the opinion forms at any time after he/she has submitted his/her grades for that course. This request should be made of the Dean/unit secretary."

## Senior Seminars

As requested by members of the Faculty Assembly, we are listing the 400-level disciplinary capstone courses that have been approved by the respective deans as substitutes for Senior Seminars through August 2005:

BBAD 495 Strategic Management  
 AHST 410 History Seminar  
 APOL 405 Political Science Seminar  
 ALIT 414 Literature Seminar  
 M/SPSY 430 Advanced Topics in Psych  
 MSWK 420 Contemporary Social Policy  
 SCHM 450 Special Topics  
 SENV 414 Environmental Assessment Lec/Lab

### **Policy and Procedures for Modifications to the Degree Requirements for Students with Documented Disabilities**

The Office of Specialized Services (OSS) delivered to the ARC, as an informational item, a minor revision to the current *Policy and Procedures for Modifications to the Degree Requirements for Students with Documented Disabilities*. For the most part, the original policy and procedure remain intact. The revised policy, which is posted on the OSS website, recognizes the change in the academic structure (i.e., the dissolution of the Division of Basic Studies) and the change of titles (i.e., "Associate Dean" to "Dean" and "VPAA" to "Provost/VPAA"), and which includes reference to additional 2002 NJ State legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Jean Balutanski or Ramona Kopacz in OSS. The ARC thanks OSS and the Policy Revision Committee, which drafted the changes, for their good work.

### **Courseload Adjustment (CLA) II Report – General Education Model**

The ARC would like to emphasize that in order to implement the CLA 3-3 course load model for September 2005, the schools and convening groups need to review and revise general education, school core, and major curriculums now. The deadline for submission by each dean to the CLA Committee chair, E. Saiff, is no later than April 28, 2004. The ARC plans to meet with the CLA Committee in the near future to discuss the proposed General Education model.

### **Revised Academic Integrity Policy**

The ARC has reviewed a *Revised Ramapo College Academic Integrity Policy*. The statement defines the four broad forms of academic dishonesty (Cheating, Plagiarism, Academic Misconduct, and Fabrication) and describes the adjudication process. The major revisions include 1) an alternative process for the resolution of a charge of academic dishonesty and 2) the introduction of a form for first time offenses to be filed in the Vice Provost's office. The complete text of the *Revised Ramapo College Academic Integrity Policy* is available at <http://phobos.ramapo.edu/facassem/acadintegritypolicyrev.html>. If you have any questions, please contact Martha Ecker in Academic Affairs. The ARC supports the revisions in the policy and thanks her for her excellent work.

### **ARC Resolution #1**

**The ARC recommends the adoption of the *Revised Draft of the Ramapo College Academic Integrity Policy*.**

### **Provost Task Force on Grading**

The ARC has reviewed the *Provost Task Force on Grading Report*. We commend the task force for an excellent report, which was broadly researched (faculty, students, COPLAC schools, and NJ State Colleges) and objectively reported. The ARC supports the recommendations in the report.

The following is excerpted from the *Provost Task Force on Grading Report*.

"Recommendation #1: The College should change the language in its statement of "Grading and Evaluation Policy" in several ways [see Appendix 6]. First, the language for the "intermediate step" grades ("Excellent" for A-, "Very Good" for B+, "Well Above Average" for B-, "Above Average" for C+, "Below Average" for C-, and "Well Below Average" for D+) should be eliminated. Second, the language for the A grade should be changed from "Outstanding" to "Excellent," and the language for the C grade should be changed from "Average" to "Satisfactory." Also, the language for the H+ grade should be changed from "Outstanding in the Honors Programs" to "Excellent in the Honors Programs," and the language for the H grade should be changed from "Excellent in the Honors Programs" to "Honors Programs."

Reasoning: We believe the language for the "intermediate step" grades is unnecessary and suggests more uniformity and refinement in grading principles and practices than is supported by the evidence we have gathered. We also believe that there is little if any distinction

between a student who does "outstanding" work and a student who does "excellent work," and that the term "excellent" is the preferable term for those students who warrant the highest grade for a course. Finally, given the current grading practices at the College, the term "Average" for the C grade has the potential to be confusing, while the term "Satisfactory" is unambiguous and seems to be more in keeping with the judgment behind the grade.

Recommendation #2: The policy for the W grade should be changed in two ways. First, the deadline by which students must withdraw from a course should be shortened from 10 weeks into the semester to 8 weeks into the semester. Second, the language for the W grade in the "Grading and Evaluation Policy" should be changed from "Given in exceptional circumstances, with permission of the instructor, for withdrawal from a course" to "Given with permission of the instructor, for withdrawal from a course."

Reasoning: Our belief is that shortening the deadline by which students must request a W grade might encourage them to fully commit to a course earlier in the semester. The proposed 8-week period is in keeping with the policies of comparable colleges and universities, and it would still give students sufficient time to receive feedback in the course. In addition, changing the language on the "Grading Evaluation and Policy Statement" would have the policy conform to the practice at the College. In the faculty survey, most faculty members who responded to the question about the W grade reported that they never denied a student's request for such a grade."

The complete *Provost Task Force on Grading Report* is available at

<http://phobos.ramapo.edu/facassem/TFgrading.html>. If you have any questions, please contact Stephen Rice, Chair.

### **ARC Resolution #2**

**The ARC recommends the adoption of the Provost Task on Grading Recommendation #1.**

### **ARC Resolution #3**

**The ARC recommends the adoption of the Provost Task on Grading Recommendation #2.**

### **Academic and Curricular Guidelines Manual.**

The *Academic & Curricular Guidelines Manual*, approved at the February 18, 2004 Faculty Assembly, is available in paper form and in electronic form on the Ramapo College Intranet Faculty Assembly homepage website: <http://phobos.ramapo.edu/facassem/>. Click on [ARC](#) to view the Academic Review Committee (ARC) home page. Click on [ARC Manual/Forms](#) to view the *ARC Academic & Curricular Guidelines Manual* and Forms.

Thank you.

\* ARC Membership: Stephen Klein (SAB), Chair; Shalom Gorewitz (CA); Robert Mentore (TAS); Elaine Risch (LIB); Frances Shapiro-Skrobe (SSHS); Ira Spar (AIS); Martha Ecker (Office of the Provost, ex-officio member).