

ARFAC Minutes, September 30, 1998

Members Present: Bob Entenmann, Bill Green, Judy Kutulas, Mike Leming, Tim Mahr, Kathy Ruby, Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, Elizabeth Malzahn, Barb Lundberg

Members Absent: Dick Senese

Guests: Sally Gonzalez - Registrar's Office; Sara Kyle - Admissions Office; Charles Wilson - Registrar's Office

1. The minutes of the September 16th meeting were approved with corrections.
2. The Task Force on Advising requested that a member of ARFAC be appointed to serve on the Task Force. Charles Wilson outlined possible responsibilities and time commitments that serving on the task force would require. As there were no volunteers from those in attendance, Mike Leming agreed to ask Dick Senese if he would be willing to serve as the ARFAC representative. If Dick is not willing to serve, the Committee will appoint someone at its next meeting.
3. Charles Wilson provided the Committee with background information on the current status of awarding credits for students who have earned Advanced Placement credit, International Baccalaureate Credit or credit through PSEO. He provided a detailed analysis of the Class of 1998 in terms of credit earned at St. Olaf vs. credit earned in other ways. The concern is that the line between work completed in high school and college is becoming totally obliterated. A secondary but equal concern is the quality of the course work being granted St. Olaf credit. The example was given of a seventh grade teacher teaching a course which is listed on a transcript from St. Thomas (a college in the schools course). Charles raised 3 specific concerns
 - We don't know what we are doing
 - What is our attitude about double dipping
 - Can we afford financially to "give away" these credits?

Kathy Ruby raised concerns about students graduating early. Is this why they are seeking advanced credit or are they using this credit to create flexibility within their curriculum. Charles addressed the concern of g.p.a. "padding". The bottom line was that the change is now accelerating and St.Olaf must become proactive in responding to these changes.

4. AP and IB Credits: Currently, individual departments control the general policy. The question is who should control AP credit? AP credit is disciplinary, while our curriculum is interdisciplinary.
 - Should our internal scoring become more standardized.
 - Should we just focus on scores of 4 or 5?
 - How should we respond to students who take a large number of AP tests and wish to receive credit for more than 5 (the current policy as stated in the catalogue).
 - Should sophomore status be granted to students presenting sufficient AP credits?

In 1997-98, ARFAC approved a one-year reshaping of the AP policy that allowed students to be admitted with more than 5 credits. Should this policy be continued?

5. Another major area of concern for the Registrar's office is the extent to which we allow a huge amount of transfer credit to be applied to a St. Olaf degree (18 credits are currently allowed). We also allow off-campus credit earned to be transferred in. This raised the issue of Post-matriculation credit. Once you are a student here, we allow 4 credits to transfer in. Charlie said that this was a high number for a selective institution. "Good" schools will generally allow one or two. When we add the four-course rule to other opportunities to be granted credit - is what we are finally awarding truly a degree that reflects a St. Olaf education?

6. The committee discussed the importance of evaluating what our competitors are doing, the need to determine and articulate our educational philosophy (is education character forming as well as knowledge building). There was discussion in regard to how one might determine quality.

7. Post-Secondary Education Options: The awarding of credits for PSEO work appears to be the most difficult question to resolve. Should there be a comprehensive limit on the number of courses for which we grant credit? The current policy sets a limit of no more than five courses. The concerns arise over a need to be consistent. We should not privilege AP students (who often come from wealthier suburbs and wealthier homes) against students who come from schools and communities where AP is not a realistic option. There was concern about how we might be viewed as "elitist" if we were to grant PSEO credit for work completed at other four year private colleges while not accepting credit for work done at two year community colleges.

- Do we need to see placement / proficiency courses as a result?
- Do we allow pre-college work to count in areas such as math and foreign language (which is sequential) and not for other areas?
- Should we put limits on the total number of credits that may be earned via AP/IB and PSEO?
- Should PSEO be allowed to meet major requirements? This led to a discussion of whether or not PSEO was an option of enriching your high school years or really a shortening of your college experience. A question was raised as to how our policy might be related to the new graduation requirements / graduation standards being implemented in Minnesota. The question of PSEO students entering as transfer students was also raised. There is concern both on the part of admissions and the dean of student's office that PSEO students often lack the social and emotional maturity of their peers.

8. Mike Leming addressed the overall issue by stating that we don't want to turn kids off to St. Olaf because of a policy that may appear to be too restrictive. He suggested that we establish policies similar to transfer articulation agreements currently in existence at some institutions. Charles raised the need to find out what is happening at other institutions and wondered if there should be a campus-wide discussion of these topics.

9. It was agreed that at future meetings we would discuss such related issues as the number of students who are now electing to complete St. Olaf in less than four years. Charles agreed to provide some background data to the committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.