The Academic Planning Committee had a particularly busy agenda this year. In addition to reviewing some proposals regarding academic programs, we investigated the structure of the Academic Calendar, discussed the Strategic Plan, and helped develop some recommendations for the administration of exams during the COVID-19 pandemic. The details are provided below.

**Academic Calendar**

Shortly after Hurricane Dorian hit the Charleston area in the fall of 2019, Interim Provost Fran Welch charged the committee with investigating some ways to make up time lost to storms (see below for the details of the charge). The Committee contacted various people across campus, including Financial Aid, Student Affairs, and the Provost’s Office, and solicited input from the Faculty Senate, the Shared Governance email list, and other individuals across the College.

In the fall semester, the Committee took on one portion of the charge—developing a recommendation about our graduation ceremonies. We were asked to investigate two issues: (1) Should the College retain the mandate that spring graduation be held on the weekend of Mother’s Day? (2) Should the College retain the December graduation ceremony? After discussing these questions, we conducted a brief survey of faculty. Based on the results, we submitted a report to Interim Provost Fran Welch in which we recommended eliminating the Mother’s Day mandate but took no stand on December commencement.

Further work on this issue was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. While I personally regret that we did not make additional progress, I do believe that the response to the pandemic has altered the situation substantially. Many more faculty now have experience teaching online, and the need to adjust to the pandemic has forced us to be much more flexible than we were in the past. I strongly encourage future committees to take up this issue again.

**Proposal Review**

*New Proposals:* The Committee approved a certificate in cultural sustainability.
Deactivations: The Committee approved the deactivation of a certificate in special education as well as the Information Systems certificate.

Procedural Issues: The Committee spent some time discussing its role in the curriculum-review process. In previous years, the Committee received proposals at the very end of the process (and at the end of the academic year); this procedure places a lot of pressure on the committee, and makes it difficult to give the sort of feedback that a “planning” committee would be expected to provide. Therefore, in consultation with Associate Provost Mark Del Mastro and the Registrar’s Office, the Academic Planning Committee was moved earlier in the review process.

Jurisdictional Issues: The Committee also discussed which proposals should fall under its purview. Certainly new majors, new programs, and new degrees should; currently, new minors and (most) new concentrations do not, but new certificates do (in part because of faculty concerns about this new credential). New concentrations in the BPS do go through Academic Planning because their concentrations are much more on the order of a new major. We had several discussions and reviewed the relevant academic policies, noting that courses could not be double-counted between certificates, although they could be double-counted between a certificate and a minor. While we did not come to a decision about these questions, we encourage the committee to take them up in future years.

Exams during COVID-19

In March of 2020, Faculty Speaker Simon Lewis and Interim Provost Fran Welch charged me (in my capacity as committee chair) with convening a taskforce to develop some guidelines for the administration of exams during the COVID-19 pandemic. After consulting with my colleagues on the committee, fellow chairs, instructors with varying online teaching experience, and IT staff, I developed a set of guidelines that strongly encouraged asynchronous exams while discouraging synchronous exams that were proctored by a third party. These guidelines were presented to the Senate at its online April meeting. From what I understand, very few synchronous proctored exams were given during this semester.

Other Matters

In accordance with the charge in the F-AM, as chair I attended the meetings of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees; I plan to continue attending these meetings in the summer. I believe that my presence at these meetings allows me to learn more about the mindset of the Board, and thus better serve the Committee, the Senate, and the College as a whole.
Charge to the Committee from Interim Provost Fran Welch

I invite the Academic Planning Committee to take up the issues regarding development of the College’s Academic Calendar in general and more specifically as these ideas might apply to the Fall Semester 2021 in the form of specific recommendations. Calendars prior to Fall 2021 have already been developed. Although I am not a member of the shared governance listserv, I understand from some of my colleagues that the listserv has enjoyed an active discussion of a number of ideas, challenges, and potential changes. I welcome your input on those issues as well as a number of additional questions including, but not limited to:

- What academic and institutional goals and values are promulgated through the Academic Calendar? In what ways is the academic calendar promoting or inhibiting our goals and values?
- How might the academic calendar(s) for the entire year be adjusted to better facilitate course delivery and student learning? Fall and Spring semesters are 14 weeks of classes (M-F) and a final exam period. Summer has 5 parts of term including Maymester, Extended Summer, Summer I, Summer II, and full summer.
- The calendar is subject to a number of constraints including those imposed by Title IV (federal financial aid) that will need to be considered. I recommend working with Robert Kersey, interim director of FA.
- The College typically hosts two commencements—one in December and three in May. President McConnell decided that December Commencement would continue and that May Commencement would be held on Mother’s Day weekend. Do those decisions need to be revisited in light of our academic goals and values?
- Given that Fall semester hurricanes and January ice storms are the rule rather than the exception, how can we be proactive in planning for the inevitable disruptions to instruction? What are some options for continuing learning even if we are forced to close campus? What is the best method for making up lost face-to-face class time (particularly relevant to GE natural science labs, studio art, physical activity classes)? What are reasonable expectations for students and faculty to continue learning/instruction during periods when the College is closed?

In convening your review of the issues surrounding the academic calendar, I recommend you speak with Lynne Ford, Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience; Mark Del Mastro, Associate Provost for Curriculum and Academic Administration; Mary Bergstrom, Registrar; Alicia Caudill, Executive Vice President for Student Affairs; Melantha Ardrey from Residence Life. I would welcome a report and any recommendations from the Academic Committee this academic year. If you develop any specific recommendations for the Fall 2021 calendar, I will need those no later than November 15, 2019.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need assistance from my office.