DATE: December 12, 2016

TO: President Steve Dorman

Provost Costas Spirou

Presiding Officer Chavonda Mills

FROM: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Committee

Re: Rationale for Vote – Deactivation of Bachelor of Science in Outdoor Education

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Committee met on October 7 and December 2 to consider the proposal for deactivation of the B.S. in Outdoor Education. A vote was taken at each meeting as to whether the proposal would be sent to University Senate for consideration and a vote. On both occasions the committee voted by secret ballot. The outcomes of these were “no” votes. In response, CAPC was asked to provide a rationale for the committee decision. In order to comply, committee members made the decision to complete an anonymous survey through Qualtrics. The following prompt was provided in the survey.

**Please list and explain the criteria and/or circumstances that led you to vote yes or no on the motion to send the proposal for deactivation of the Bachelor of Science Degree in Outdoor Education to Senate for deliberation and a vote. Kindly have your responses recorded by December 9th at 12 noon.**

The results of the survey are below. Common responses have been combined to avoid repetitiveness.

**Reasons given for not supporting the motion:**

* Originally, when the motion came up to deactivate, our concern was that it was not a faculty decision although it was presented as such. What was clear in the meeting was that there was ample disagreement. The faculty representing the program and students came out to support the program and not deactivate. There was no vote, but the decision was made administratively. After the motion was not approved by CAPC, Dr. Griffin called for a vote at the next meeting. No discussion was allowed. That does not seem like shared governance. If we treat smaller programs like this, not many will survive.
* There was concern related to how the program was represented at the CAPC meeting from a numbers standpoint. For the past years, the program has hovered at 40. Dr. Griffin presented this as "stagnant" numbers, while the faculty from the program pointed to it as "stable". Since one faculty has retired and another has been moved out of the School of Health and Human Performance, there remain only 2 faculty. Dr. Turner said this has "right-sized" the program. The faculty members in the department asserted that they could support the major with the faculty lines they have. There is the opinion that the program should be given more time with this new ratio to see how it plays out.
* The program is currently meeting the BOR threshold of graduating at least 10 majors a year. There were 11 graduates reported for the last 2 three year periods. It is not on the most recent list generated by the Board of Regents as being a low-producing program. However, there are programs on this list that we are not currently trying to deactivate. It was also noted that it seems unfair that the BOR threshold is the same for institutions enrolling 35,000 students as it is for institutions as small as GC.
* The data presented in support of the deactivation were clearly flawed. The intent was to "prove" that this program is not financially viable. However, it was pointed out and confirmed during the two CAPC meetings that the data was based on 4 full time faculty members and a certain number of students (which is not below the state threshold). There are in fact only 2 full time faculty members left in the program. (A third, the committee was told is paid through outside sources.)
* There is no evidence that there will be cost savings achieved by deactivation. The courses will need to be offered to maintain the minor which we are told will be maintained. Equipment will need to be purchased and maintained as well.
* This program was, until a few years ago, one of our "Pillars of Distinction" at Georgia College. We held this program up as something that makes us unique. In addition, the program has been an award-winning, nationally recognized program. It is considered in the top of all OE programs in the country. It seems strange that within a short period of time it would become expendable. With a program of such distinction, there is hesitancy from a curricular standpoint to deactivate too soon. The program, while low producing, is not on the Board of Regents list of low-producing programs for Georgia College. There is the belief that more should be done to support the program while it is still possible. There is the view that it is a flaw of the School of Health and Human Performance not to have supported such a program in the years preceding this move to deactivate.
* The reasons for discontinuing the program seem at odds with what many faculty and staff believe about the program -- that is it very valuable to a liberal arts university in Georgia. There is concern for setting a trend where administrators can decide to deactivate a program while the main faculty experts in that area, and many other faculty and students across campus, see great value in it. A liberal arts university should be a place where such programs are supported.
* There is no reason to think that getting rid of the major will help the program attract more majors.
* There is the belief that this program fits well with our mission at Georgia College. Good liberal arts colleges offer a variety of educational opportunities. This program helps our students connect with the natural environment, and that is certainly a valuable experience in a time when our earth is under unprecedented danger.
* Current students and graduates of the program discussed how the program helped to develop critical thinking skills and ultimately resulted in viable employment. Instead of deactivating the major we should be trying to sustain and strengthen it because in doing so, we strengthen our presence in the University System of Georgia.
* While the numbers of students and student to teacher ratio is lower than other programs in the College of Health Sciences, the ratio indicated (12:1) is within the accrediting agencies' class limits, which are set because of safety reasons.
* There is the opinion that while the program should not be deactivated, the program could benefit from a new home. Perhaps the College of Education or the College of Arts and Science (particularly environmental science or psychology) would be a more productive environment to help the program thrive.
* During the second meeting that the deactivation was considered, the question was asked if there was a solution that would make everyone happy. No reply was given.
* There is the desire for Georgia College to answer the bigger question of what value a program like OE has to the curriculum as we pursue preeminence as a liberal arts institution.
* There is the belief that it is CAPC's charge to evaluate major decisions regarding programs, not just to check whether procedures were followed. The existence of CAPC seems meant to serve as a check and balance of shared governance. There is the belief that CAPC considered this program in good conscience and voted fairly.

**Reasons given for support of the motion:**

* The School of Health and Human Performance and the College of Health Sciences worked on this proposal for three years. They researched their options and made a recommendation that they believe is the best way for them to continue to offer coursework in this area, build up interest in the program through an existing minor and fairly distribute their financial resources across the college.
* The Outdoor Education faculty were given the opportunity to participate in all of these discussions and offer suggestions for change and/or compromise. CAPC, in a matter of hours, should not discount years of research and decision-making at the department and college level.
* Just as CAPC does not have the authority to force a discipline to offer a specific mission or make certain changes to their department-specific curricula, it should not presume to have the authority to force a college or department to continue offering a program that the college or department does not feel is in its best interest. CAPC would not demand that the College of Health Science create a specific major; it should not prevent it from closing one once the committee has confirmed that the college has involved faculty in the decision and followed their procedures for doing so.
* From a practical perspective, this program has a low number of students and a high cost per student. The rationale for discontinuing the major was sound. Faculty were given multiple occasions for input. It is inevitable that there is disappointment from the faculty who are seeing a program end that they have invested significant time and effort in building. However, in the current economic and political climate, desire to offer a program does not mean that it is feasible to do so.
* Discontinuing a major simply puts it on pause. No new students are admitted. If circumstances change. For instance, if the department sees demand from students pursuing the minor to have a major option in greater quantities than exist now, the department and college can recommend a different course of action at that point.
* The outdoor education program didn't make changes to turn its situation around for a year. It still didn't make any changes after the discussion on the first deactivation proposal. The program has not taken much effort to save it.
* The Association for Experiential Learning (AEE) is not an academic accreditation agency and is not recognized by the US Department of Education (such as NCATE or CCNE are).  Therefore, their ‘standards’ such as faculty to student ratio as cited by the OE faculty are suggestions and cannot and do not govern class size in university programs.
* The faculty continuously cite their program as ‘stable,’ but stable is not growing, especially when increasing numbers has been a priority for years now.  Hovering on the brink of low-producing should not be a goal of any program, and any program that is sitting right on that threshold should recognize the need to increase numbers rather than remaining stable.  A goal of increasing enrollment in the program that was set years ago is not being met, and there doesn’t seem to be any forward movement in this direction.  A low producing program (or one within 1 student of low producing for 3 years in a row) cannot remain that size and still be viable. That would apply to any program at the university.
* The OE graduate program was discontinued due to a lack of interest of the OE faculty to move some of the program offerings online.  It seems to be a pattern that the faculty are very resistant to change, regardless of the implications to their programs.  There is a strong evidence base that the program faculty have been asked time and time again to make changes to the undergraduate program in order to make it more viable, cost effective, and larger; yet no changes have been made, despite the growing tensions over discontinuing the program.