

Senate Bytes

Minimum Qualifications & Equivalency Update

Richard Manley

Through the summer months there have been some questions and concerns about the minimum qualifications and equivalency validation process and why it is different than it has been in the past. In order to explain the change in process, a short history is required.

While working on updating the board policies and administrative procedures last fall I discovered a procedure from the model policies and procedures developed by the Community College League of California that was required of all California community colleges. I was quite surprised, since we have never had such a procedure, and realized that it should have been developed by 1990 along with other mandates resulting from AB 1725 legislation. This procedure called for the establishment of an Equivalency Committee and a process to ensure that all faculty seeking full or part-time employment met minimum qualifications or equivalency. This oversight function is required by law and designed to help assure that everything possible has been done to guarantee that all community college faculty are qualified to teach in a discipline as defined by the Statewide Academic Senate. We have always had a process for establishing minimum qualifications and equivalencies, but we have not had an Equivalency Committee to provide oversight to the process or criteria to determine eminence.

Most senators, and I hope most faculty, are aware that minimum qualifications and equivalencies have been developed by disciplines on a regular basis since 2000. After development, they have been approved by the Academic Senate and then forwarded to Human Resources. As I understand it, Human Resources then screened applicants for completeness of files and deferred to the hiring committee to determine minimum qualifications or equivalency. It's this practice that must be changed in order to be in full compliance with Title 5 mandates. According to the requirements of Title 5, it is appropriate for the discipline faculty to review the qualifications of an applicant and decide if they meet minimum qualifications or equivalency. However, they must use objective criteria so that any faculty, inside or outside the discipline, from any community college in the state can apply the criteria and come to the same conclusion. As an additional safeguard, the Equivalency Committee must review the decisions of the discipline faculty and concur with their decision or consult with discipline faculty and attempt to reach agreement. If agreement cannot be reached, the applicant is not qualified to interview for hire.
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2006-2007 Major Academic Senate Issues



Last year the Academic Senate was busy getting us started on Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), Distance Education, Faculty Internship Program, Accreditation Progress Report, Equivalency, Program Review, and some initial conversations on Faculty Development Programs.

This year will be no different. Several workshops on SLOs were offered by Bonnie Sudermann, Assessment Coordinator, Bakersfield College to guide us through what SLOs are at the course and program level. Her workshops also prompted us to develop an SLO Taskforce, which then became a permanent standing committee of the Senate. Scott Lee, chair, and the committee will take us to the next stage of SLO development, and you can anticipate division visits and announcements for training.

Distance Education, as a major presence on our campus, has been a long time coming. Originally a taskforce and now a standing committee of the Senate, the committee, cochaired by Ed Beyer and Sharon Lowry, brought a recommendation to have Blackboard as our platform for online classes. More and more faculty are moving toward the AP&P process to allow their courses to be taught online. CONTINUED ON PAGE 3...

Academic Senate meets the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. in room SSV 151.

After discovering our oversight last spring, the Academic Senate developed a procedure to comply with this mandate and an Equivalency Committee was approved at the April 20, 2006 Senate Meeting. However, when a call for membership on this committee went out to faculty at the end of April, there wasn't sufficient faculty response to form the Equivalency Committee due to the early completion of our spring semester. Because the Senate Executive Committee acts on behalf of the Academic Senate during the summer months, Senate Executive was directed by the Academic Senate to perform the duties of the Equivalency Committee along with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, until faculty came forward to form the committee in the fall semester. During the summer, most determinations were easy to make, but equivalency, which includes equivalency through eminence, proved to be much more difficult. Several concerns were raised by some discipline faculty and by the Equivalency Committee members about the role of the newly established Equivalency Committee and the process. Consequently, the senate president asked the statewide Academic Senate President, Ian Walton, to provide a training workshop for our senate and faculty. Ian recommended Greg Gilbert to do the training, the Statewide Academic Senate Secretary. Greg Gilbert conducted that training for the Academic Senate on Thursday, September 21, 2006 and all faculty were invited. The presentation was videotaped and will soon be available on DVD and online, thanks to Ed Beyer.



Greg Gilbert, Secretary of the Statewide Senate, September 21, 2006

Mr. Gilbert mentioned several things that are key to insuring that all faculty meet minimum qualifications or equivalencies. First, discipline faculty must write equivalencies with enough specificity that any faculty in the state can apply them and come to the same conclusion. Second, discipline faculty who are not on the hiring committee need to review applications to determine minimum qualifications, equivalency or equivalency through eminence. Third, the Equivalency Committee must then review the decisions of the discipline faculty to ensure that minimum qualification or equivalency has been met and that the process is consistently applied across all disciplines. Greg mentioned that Title 5 provides no guidelines for establishing an equivalency through eminence and advised that some process or criteria would be well advised. In fact, he suggested that we eliminate eminence completely as some community colleges have done because it is virtually impossible to determine objectively and is seldom ever used. (Although there are a few community colleges that have a process and criteria for establishing eminence, which will be reviewed as a possibility for our own campus.)

Fourth, faculty hired in error in the past who actually do not meet minimum qualifications or equivalency must be "relieved of duty" or the college puts students at risk...students can lose their credit for coursework taught by those faculty. Although messy, Greg recommended that these situations be addressed swiftly to avoid liability. If faculty are hired that do not meet minimum qualifications or equivalency, the college is at risk of losing accreditation, students are at risk of losing course credit and the college may lose state funds.

After the training workshop, I asked Greg about applicants with foreign credentials and how they should be handled. I shared with him that we used the recommendations from foreign transcript evaluation services in determining equivalency of degrees and coursework. He said that was an appropriate objective process and that all applicants with foreign degrees and transcripts must follow the same process. I asked if discipline faculty have the right to override the conclusions of the foreign transcript evaluation service and he said they do not. He explained that overriding the foreign transcript evaluation service would be treating some applicants differently than others.

I urge you to review the training workshop on DVD or on the AVC website so you have a better understanding of the issues related to minimum qualifications, equivalency and eminence. If you want to familiarize yourself with the duties and responsibilities of the Equivalency Committee or the administrative procedure approved by the Academic Senate, it can be found on MyAVC under Groups, Board Policies, Files, AP7211.

At the September 7, 2006 Senate meeting faculty appointments to the Equivalency Committee were approved and will soon be trained by the Senate Executive and the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Vice President of Academic Affairs will remain as a member of the Equivalency Committee along with the three newly appointed faculty members.

Reviewing the experiences of the Equivalency Committee through the summer and the comments from Greg Gilbert at the training workshop, it appears that there are three areas that need to be added to our current process. We need language that indicates how discipline faculty will review applicant materials to make an initial determination of meeting minimum qualifications, equivalency or eminence, because hiring committee members may be accused of bias if they make those determinations. We also need to write equivalencies with enough specificity that the same conclusion about meeting equivalency is reached by faculty members in any discipline. And we need to develop objective criteria for determining eminence, or eliminate eminence, as a means of meeting the qualifications for a discipline.

I hope I have clarified some of the issues and provided some remedies to consider. Please feel free to email your ideas or concerns to me or any member of the Senate Executive Committee.

DISTANCE EDUCATION REPORT

Ed Beyer

As the Distance Education Committee Co-chair, I am thrilled to report that distance education at AVC is growing fast. Just to give you an idea of how fast, the Fall 2006 online presence increased 35% over Fall 2005, and Spring 2007 is anticipated to be a 28% increase over Spring 2006. We indeed are growing our online program and that is exciting! Two of the main contributors to the growth, besides the excitement of a few faculty, is the acquisition of Blackboard and the establishment of the Distance Education Committee (DEC).

AVC has contracted with Blackboard Inc. to host our online classes. For those of you who are wondering, Blackboard is a course management system that will allow AVC to provide students with improved online support for classes, both online and on campus, and a consistent look and feel to the online environment.

Training sessions for Blackboard appear to have been well received, and attended! More training workshops are being scheduled, so keep your eye out for emails announcing the time and place. If you are interested in which courses are currently being offered online, visit <http://avconline.avc.edu> and click on the Spring 2007 link.

If you are thinking about entering the online world, or are just curious, feel free to stop by the DEC meetings which are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays at 4 p.m. in room SSV 151. We would love to hear from you. If you cannot make the meeting, send me an email at ebeyer@avc.edu. Now, more than ever, I am beginning to *imagine the possibilities* here at AVC.



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The Senate was asked to review our current Faculty Internship Program and to do a major overhaul. The Senate reviewed several other colleges and felt that San Diego's award-winning program had the components that would work well here at AVC. After many revisions and a campus-wide review, the Senate approved a program that we feel will have a strong and positive impact for our future faculty force. Since Senate approval, we have passed it along to the Faculty Union to negotiate the various pieces, such as the Faculty Coordinator's reassigned time, Faculty Mentor's stipend, and Faculty Intern stipend. As soon as the Union completes this phase, we will be able to move forward in using this new program here on campus. In the meantime, the original program and process in our Faculty Hiring Policy must continue to be followed.

Here at AVC we have two programs that are intended primarily for faculty development: FLEX and Faculty Academy. At the beginning of this academic year, the FLEX Committee was informed that the System's Office is requiring an audit to assess whether or not we are staying within the guidelines/regulations for a Flex Program. The FLEX Committee will be sending out a survey for your input on the programs as well as additional pieces to comply with the System's request. The Faculty Academy Program was not offered last year and needs a review of faculty needs as well. This year, the Faculty Union Executive and Senate Executive met and agreed that it has been too long since we have seriously reviewed and evaluated the purpose of these programs. We agreed to put a call out to faculty (two from the Senate and two from the union) to ask that a thorough review of these two programs be conducted with some recommendations of what our programs should be like.

The Accreditation Progress Report was completed by the end of the academic year and the final editing was completed during the summer months. We have just received formal notification that the two-team visiting members will be on campus November 6, 2006. Dr. Joyce and Mr. Lawson will inform us if there are any specific individuals or committees that they would like to talk with. Once we are given list of names, we will set up those appointments, so for now keep your calendar open as much as possible.

This year already feels very busy with the continued work that began toward the end of the 05-06 academic year and continued throughout the summer. Already we have had a workshop by Greg Gilbert, the Statewide Academic Senate Secretary and chair of several statewide committees on minimum qualifications. The Academic Senate established an Equivalency Committee, and approved three faculty members and the VP of Academic Affairs, who is the 4th member on the committee. Our feature article for this topic is offered by Richard Manley and speaks to our history with the formal development of equivalencies and where we go from here.

The Senate held a faculty leadership retreat in September for the Executive Committee and each of the chairs/coordinators for the following committees: Academic Policies & procedures, FLEX, Program Review, Tenure and Evaluation, SLOs, and Distance Education. The chairs/coordinators discussed their roles with the Senate Executive and outlined what major issues their committee (or they themselves) would be facing this year. They also identified and discussed major Senate issues for the year. This was the second Senate retreat, and everyone found both of them helpful.

Faculty Chairs seems to be in our future. Last year a major review of our campus structure for areas under Academic Affairs and Student Services was conducted. Based on wide campus dialogue, a recommendation for the establishment of faculty chairs was made. At the joint Faculty Union Executive and Senate Executive, a discussion on the role of chairs and the work they would do occurred. We agreed to read the Academic Senate Statewide position paper on establishing faculty chairs and to review the initial agreement regarding process made at the end of last academic year. We hope that once clarification is made, we can bring forward a recommendation.

Faculty Service Areas, Faculty Hiring Policy and Procedure, and Tenure Review and Evaluation Procedure are other areas that will be discussed and revised during this academic year. Your Senate Representatives will be asking for feedback on all of these issues, so please take a role in guiding the Senate's work.

Tenure Review

This is a big year for tenure review. There are currently 65 tenure review committees, with 18 probationary faculty members in their first year, 30 in their second year, 16 in their third year, and 1 in her fourth year. We also have three faculty members who are in full-time non-tenure track positions who are going through evaluation. Committees are currently working hard on worksite observations and will soon be collecting student and peer evaluations.

In order for the tenure review process to be effective, the entire faculty must be involved. Of the 80 faculty members who are serving on tenure committees, 24 are on two committees, 10 are on three committees, and one dedicated individual is on four committees. In many cases, those pulling double, triple, or quadruple duty are chairing more than one committee.

For those of you who are wondering how you can support (or give even more support to) the tenure review process, you can be sure to fill out peer review forms that come your way regarding our probationary faculty. Also, don't forget to submit your name to the Academic Senate to serve as a senate representative on the new tenure review committees that will undoubtedly be forming for new hires in 2007!

SLOCOMM

Student Learning Outcomes provide a method for educators and educational institutions to measure the success and effectiveness of their teaching by establishing a measurable outcome that their students will learn and the assessment used to determine if students have achieved that outcome. SLO's, properly applied, allow you to better measure the effectiveness of your instruction and to make adjustments to the process.

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) requires "evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes" (Standard IB) for accreditation. In the last AVC accreditation cycle (2004), recommendation #3 directs the campus to "develop and implement student learning outcomes for all of its courses, programs, services, and for the institution as a whole while linking the outcomes to planning and the budgeting process." The AVC Strategic Planning and Budgeting Council said in its 2005-2006 annual review that "[a]ll institutional plans will support the college's Student Learning Outcomes and Operational Outcomes." Future budget decisions will be connected to SLO's.

The Student Learning Outcomes Committee is a standing committee of the Academic Senate. It will determine a campus-wide process for the uniform implementation and assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at the course, program, and department level. This year, the committee has begun working with the AP&P Committee to connect SLO's with Course Outlines of Record for current and newly developed courses. The committee will train faculty and staff to develop SLO's and assessments for their courses, disciplines and departments, and will collect information on SLO's that have already been developed to create a central library of AVC Student Learning Outcomes.

The current committee membership is:

Beverly Beyer, AP&P Rep; Maria Clinton, Academic Affairs Rep; Kim Fite, Classified Rep; Irit Gat, Academic Affairs Rep; Claude Gratton, Academic Affairs Rep; Lee Grishman, Student Services Rep; Rosa Hall, Student Services Vice President; Bob Harris, Student Services Rep; Debbie Ledoux, Classified Rep; Scott Lee, Faculty Chair; Sharon Lowry, Academic Affairs Vice President; Ted Younglove, Director of Institutional Research & Planning

Please feel free to contact Scott Lee (6546, slee@avc.edu) with any questions you have about SLO's or the work of the committee. The SLO committee meets on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 1PM in room A141.

2006-2007 Academic Senate Representatives

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