Executive Summary

The charge of the College of Letters and Science FEC is defined in Part III, Appendix II, D1.93A of the Santa Barbara Division’s Bylaws and Regulations as a committee of the Academic Senate through which the Faculty of the College can coordinate the academic affairs of the College. At UCSB, the College of Letters and Science comprises more than 90% of the undergraduate population on campus, nearly 80% of its faculty, 80% of its departments, and 90% of the degree programs. Because the College of Letters and Science hosts nearly 80 undergraduate majors with another 40 emphases and well over 40 minors, the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) focuses significant attention on undergraduate issues.

The FEC, comprised of two elected faculty members from each division, met 15 times during the academic year, typically five meetings per quarter, for two hours each. The committee also includes, as non-voting members, a Graduate Student Association (GSA) member and an Associated Students (A.S.) member, along with the L&S Dean of Undergraduate Education and the Executive Dean of the College of Letters and Science.

Policy/Regulation/Guideline Review

With a variety of other committees, the FEC is offered the opportunity to review and provide perspective on system-wide and campus policy revisions. The committee frequently engages these opportunities to comment, as the policies and regulations nearly always impact the FEC area of focus, namely the well-being of departments, faculty, and students in L&S. Among the system-wide policy proposals and reports the FEC reviewed in 2018-19 were: presidential policy on sexual violence and harassment; second round review of open access policy for theses and dissertations; BOARS proposal for implementation of UC-Community College transfer guarantee; Regulation 636.E (UC Entry Level Writing Requirement); and the UC Sacramento Report. The FEC also considered the following campus policy revisions and initiatives: large-scale open access to scholarly publications; Office of International Students and Scholars proposal regarding compliance with federal immigration reporting requirements; student conduct degree clearance procedures; and a proposed unit name change from Office of Judicial Affairs to the Office of Student Conduct.

Academic Review Reports

Maintaining excellence in College departments, undergraduate programs, and graduate education is essential for the continued excellence of the University. As such, the FEC takes its role in Academic Program Reviews very seriously. This year the committee provided extensive comment during the reviews of the Writing Program, the Media Arts and Technology Program, the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology, and the Department of Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology.
Curriculum Adjustments

Due to volume and significance, curriculum adjustments occupy a considerable amount of the FEC’s attention every year. Departments and programs are encouraged to actively monitor their academic programs, and disciplinary trends are balanced against program learning assessment data, enrollment pressures, faculty expertise, and available resources. From the FEC’s perspective, curriculum adjustments and proposals for new programs must have an academic rationale that places it within the broader context of the College. This perspective allows the committee’s review to safeguard against changes that negatively impact other departments or impose undue barriers to enrollment. The FEC has review authority over the modification of all undergraduate programs (majors and minors) in the College. Due to the sheer volume of changes that occur on an annual basis, modifications are divided into two categories—technical (typos, course title adjustments, etc.) and more substantive. Technical revisions are reviewed by divisional subcommittees (three) made up of the FEC faculty members representing a certain division (MLPS, HFA, SS), divisional Dean (or designee) and College advisor. Substantive changes and those identified by the three subcommittees undergo full review by the entire FEC. The FEC review is then forwarded to the Undergraduate Council for final approval to ensure equitable application of policies across the three colleges offering UG degrees (CCS, Engineering, and L&S). During 2018-19, the L&S FEC reviewed 26 substantive curriculum changes (to major and minor programs), including one new Pre-Major, and one new Emphasis. FEC subcommittees endorsed technical adjustments to 74 major and minor sheets, bearing in mind that the same adjustment could appear on multiple major or minor sheets, including emphases.

The FEC also reviews proposals for online courses. Unlike face-to-face courses, online courses go through significant scrutiny of the syllabus, format, assignments, and security procedures. Some of this additional scrutiny is required due to the unique manner in which student evaluation is performed and to consider student-instructor engagement. During 2018-19, the FEC reviewed and ultimately endorsed three online courses and one hybrid (face-to-face and online) course.

The FEC also considered several other curriculum adjustments in 2018-19. These changes included reviewing twelve requests to revalue course units. Six proposals were endorsed and forwarded to CCGE and those remaining were returned to the appropriate departments. The committee also addressed requests from two separate departments to allow students to pursue a major and minor, or a double major, within the unit. The FEC endorsed three proposals for individual majors within L&S. Finally, the committee endorsed an interdisciplinary PhD emphasis in Climate Science and a revised proposal to establish a Master’s Degree in Environmental Data Science, housed in the Bren School (the FEC understands that this program is linked to a broader campus Data Science initiative which has not been officially rolled out yet).

Other Academic Issues Addressed

Having identified that there exists no stated policy requiring UCSB courses to have a syllabus, the FEC sent to the UG Council a proposal on how the campus could address this
critical issue. FEC urges that this matter be addressed expeditiously. Regarding transfer admissions, the FEC considered and endorsed a Mathematics Department proposal to CAERS (and a CAERS counterproposal) designed to strengthen admissions criteria for transfer students intending to major in Mathematics. The FEC also reviewed procedural recommendations for UCSB super-courses. Concerned about the anticipated impact on many L&S departments, the FEC engaged in discussions with the Senate Chair, the University Librarian, and the Executive Vice-Chancellor with respect to the proposed and emerging UCSB Library reorganization.

The FEC was also involved with the following adjustments to local academic policies and procedures, some of which carried over from the previous academic year: Revision of Divisional Senate Regulation SR 125.H.3 (calculating major GPA); changes to SB Regulation 235 (Dean’s Honors); and changes to Divisional Regulation 25 (grade appeal process).

Other Activities

The FEC oversees selection of the Harold J. Plous Memorial Award. The 2019-20 Plous recipient is Alenda Chang, Assistant Professor in the Department of Film and Media Studies. The committee also oversees several other awards within the College.

2018-19 FEC Committee Members
Ralph Armbruster Sandoval, Chicana and Chicano Studies (Chair)
Mahdi Abu-Omar, Chemistry and Biochemistry
Amit Ahuja, Political Science
Dorota Dutsch, Classics
Laurie Monahan, History of Art and Architecture
James Roney, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Ex officio members

Jeff Stopple, AVC and Dean of Undergraduate Education
Pierre Wiltzius, Executive Dean of the College of Letters and Science

Student Representatives

Matthew Fritzler, GSA (Sociology)
Alli Adam (Fall), Xochitl Briseño (Winter and Spring), A.S.

Selection of New FEC Members

Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval completed his three-year term on the FEC. Dorota Dutsch was appointed chair of the Classics Department and therefore needed to step down from the FEC. In Spring 2019, a call for nominations was sent to all L&S faculty and the following new members were elected to serve on the FEC for three-year terms: Walid Afifi (Communication) and Sabine Fruhstuck (East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies).
The FEC has requested that the Committee on Committees appoint one representative from the Social Sciences and one from Mathematical, Life, and Physical Sciences for one-year terms to fill additional vacancies until the next FEC election cycle.

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