

AAAC Meeting Minutes for March 22, 2019

Present: Michael Atzmon (SACUA liaison), Enrico Landi, Chris Lu, Seth Quidachay-Swan, Hsiao Hsin Sung Hsieh, Kentaro Toyama (chair and notetaker), Katie van Zanen (Rackham student representative).

Absent: Ketra Armstrong, Gaurav Desai, Michael Hess, Kimberly Kearfott, Kristin Klein, Merissa Maccani (undergraduate student representative), Maribel Okiye (Rackham student representative), Lissa Patterson, Scott Piper, Cathy Sanok.

Minutes for the AAAC meeting on January 29, 2019 were approved.

From 8:30-9:30am, the AAAC met with Provost Martin Philbert and Special Counsel Christine Gerdes, and Vice Provost for Academic Innovation James Hilton. Most of the meeting was about Academic Innovation. Afterward, the AAAC discussed faculty shared governance on its own for about 30 minutes in addition.

Academic Innovation

The AAAC conveyed its appreciation for the work of Academic Innovation (AI). In previous discussions, some AAAC members noted that they had recorded online courses with the AI production team, and found it to be well-run and easy to engage with. \

VP Hilton then presented a set of slides about Academic Innovation:

- Though AI is particularly visible for its online courses and digital innovations, it's main goals are to foster educational innovation, help U-M lead as a great public research university, and to enhance *residential* education by identifying new and more effective forms of instruction. Online efforts are meant to complement and supplement residential education, not to replace it.
- AI sees its efforts falling into three broad categories: (1) curricular innovation (which appears to be mostly about online courses of various kinds); (2) research with educational data; (3) tools for learning, such as [GradeCraft](#). (The latter two categories in particular seem to be about enhancing residential education with digital tools/research.) U-M is arguably unique among R1 universities in attempting to push on all three categories to a significant degree.
- Based on previous AAAC requests, the rest of the presentation (as summarized below) focused on curriculum innovation / online courses. Some facts about online courses at U-M:
 - Begun in 2012 as an early partnership with massive open online course (MOOC) company Coursera. (Coursera now has ~130 university partners.) AI has also worked with edX, the non-profit MOOC entity led by Harvard/MIT. edX, however, has struggled with a viable financial model.
 - Since then, AI has launched a number of different types of online courses and features:
 - MOOCs, which are free online courses with no certificate/degree (AI has produced 131 MOOCs so far);
 - “specializations,” usually several courses bundled together, sometimes with the option of paid certification (14 so far);
 - “badges,” which learners can earn for completing various online modules;
 - “Teach-Outs” which are online short courses modeled on 1960s era teach-ins (22 so far);

- “MicroMasters,” which are course sequences that can lead to residential program credit (School of Social Work integrates this with their residential master’s);
 - “MasterTrack,” courses which are synchronously run MicroMasters – cohorts of online students complete the material together with common milestones/deadlines (3 MicroMasters/Master Track courses so far);
 - Online degrees – School of Public Health and School of Information have announced purely online degrees with Coursera.
 - (Not through AI, but Ross Business School is running an online degree with an external company.)
 - Completion rates for unpaid online courses often appear low (e.g., 5-10%, compared with 97% for completion of residential undergraduate degrees within 6 years), but the numbers reached are still high. Individual online courses hosted by AI can reach thousands, even millions of students. So far, AI’s online offerings have had 7.3 million people enroll from over 200 countries. At least 168 faculty/guest instructors have participated in producing content.
 - Beyond these numbers, tracking of outcomes for learners remains a challenge (as it is for tracking residential program alumni outcomes). In addition, AI hopes there are intangible values for the programs – offering adult education, challenging habits of thought, improving quality of life.
 - All online course intellectual property (IP) is owned by faculty and units. Neither Coursera nor edX own U-M teaching content.
- The big question of online courses is whether/how they can provide a quality learning experience for dramatically more people than traditional residential courses. Online courses are not new, and some universities have had them for decades, having evolved them from residential programming, extension schools, and correspondence courses. They have achieved some scale, but their thinking tends to be constrained and limited by traditional models of pedagogy. The newer wave of online courses (such as AI’s) consider the problem from the other side, starting with MOOCs, which sometimes reach millions of people, and then consider ways to increase interactivity and improve learning. The hope is that thinking of things this way will yield a new class of online courses that achieve significant scale and high quality.

Shared Governance

After the Provost and other members of the administration left, the AAAC discussed the issue of faculty shared governance. A number of recent issues suggest that the current university administration could be better about consulting elected faculty representatives such as SACUA when making decisions that affect faculty. In recent memory, this includes issues such as policies around writing recommendation letters for students, a new SPG on requirements for faculty to report felonies, the SPG on faculty-student relationships (which was rushed without explanation), as well as various ad hoc panels and search committees for administrative positions that seem to be formed without consulting with SACUA. The committee agreed to raise this topic with the Provost in a future meeting.