

Department of Public Relations

Faculty Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2016

Members Present: Linda Hon, Deanna Pelfrey, Mickey Nall, Mary Ann Ferguson, Spiro Kiousis, Moon Lee, Ann Christiano, Rita Men, Kay Tappan, Debbie Treise, Kathleen Kelly, and student assistant Edward Ballester.

Mary Ann Ferguson motioned to pass the minutes from the last meeting, Pelfrey seconded. The only change was to correct the spelling of a name. The minutes were approved.

Agenda Items

1. Professional Master's Program - Associate Dean Treise provided information on the difference between the Pro-Master's and public relations master's degrees. Critical differences are that the Pro-Master's can be completed in one year and is project as opposed to thesis based and offers a series of new courses. The new program is not intended for students who wish to pursue a doctoral degree.

In addition, the program requires no course titled "research methods." There is a course in "data generalization and visualization" instead, along with a combined theory course and mass communications and society. Admission standards are not relaxed. However, all master's degrees in the College are still MAMC degrees (except Advertising).

Concern was expressed that we are awarding master's degrees in public relations when there is no public relations sequence of courses, and that this could mislead employers. Linda Hon suggested that many of the students have professional experience and the project option is less valuable to them. But all members agreed projects were effective for other students. In addition, concern was expressed that there was no faculty discussion of the Pro-Master's during the 2015-2016 academic year.

Associate Dean Kiousis mentioned that a basic problem is there is not currently high demand for our previous program, the public relations master's, which is why the Pro-Master's was developed.

2. Graduate Enrollment in Public Relations - Wright suggested various options for the faculty to discuss, including adding a project option to the existing MAMC program, or, developing our own pro-master's program. Wright also suggested that the faculty should decide if they want to participate in the combined MMC6421 research class. Christiano asked if we can develop pro-master's public relations specialization without going through the board? Wright answered affirmatively.

Kiousis suggested that we could make the Pro-Master's an online program, and have the the on-campus courses continue focus on public relations academics and preparation for the doctoral degree.

A discussion ensued about the quality and rigor of the Pro-Master's program. Ferguson offered that our master's program has been an important feeder program for public relations doctorates. If we shift emphasis to the Pro-Master's, we would lose people in academia. Another option could be a combined MA/PhD program.

Wright asked if the faculty wanted to form a task force to make a proposal. It was decided instead that we would have a meeting of all faculty interested in remaking the program. Wright asked for volunteers. Ferguson suggested that everyone go online and study the existing programs. Kiousis reminded that we also should address our student enrollment issues, adding that about 20 students is a good cohort.

3. UF Campaign - Wright informed the faculty that the College has a new goal to create five new endowed chairs in the College. He suggested that faculty members think about possibilities related to public relations so that the development staff could pursue.

4. Chair Search Update – Linda Hon gave an update on the chair search. She informed members that there were 10 candidates remaining in the pool and that the next meeting would be in later in October to review the applications and decide on those with whom we want to hold telephone interviews.

5. Department Travel – Wright informed the faculty that Lisa Burnett will now handle all travel. He encouraged faculty members who have not met Lisa to stop by and say hello, and added that she has already proven to be an outstanding colleague in the office.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.