

**Academic Council Minutes
January 18, 2019**

Kristen Abernathy	Arts & Sciences
Bettie Parsons Barger	Education
DeAnn Brame	Library
Alice Burmeister	Visual & Performing Arts
Kelly Costner	Education
Jennifer Disney	Arts and Sciences
Marguerite Doman	Business Administration
Chlotia Garrison	Business Administration
Laura Glasscock*	Arts and Sciences
Adam Glover	Arts and Sciences
Matt Hayes	Arts and Sciences
Shawna Helf*	Education
Jo Koster	Arts and Sciences
Alice McLaine	Education
Jason Tselentis*	Visual & Performing Arts
Michael Whitney	Business Administration
Kristen Wonderlich	Visual & Performing Arts
Ximena Perez-Valzco*	CSL Student Representative
Gina Jones, Secretary	Registrar

Guests: Adrienne McCormick, Gloria Jones, Tim Druke, Michael Lipscomb, Debra Boyd

*absent

I. Chair's Remarks—Jo Koster

Dr. Koster brought the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. She welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming to this extra meeting.

II. Presentation on Student Retention and Ability to Retain LIFE Scholarships—Dr. Gloria Jones

Dr. Koster introduced three Questions to Consider:

- Most students enrolling in college got A's and B's in high school. That makes them average (thus C) students starting college. How do we help them succeed and excel as they make the transition to college-level work, especially when they are trying to meet a legislatively-mandated level of achievement for financial aid?

- What academic factors (including but not limited to grading, advising, sequencing of courses, and prerequisites) affect their ability to 'step up'?
- What do we (as Academic Council) do about this?

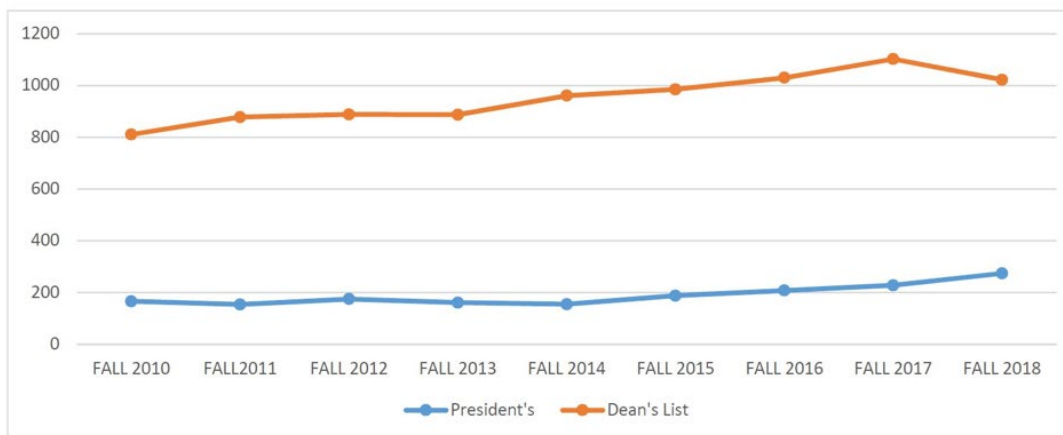
Dr. Koster shared information that had been gathered about student achievement, beginning with GPA over time

Cumulative GPA, Fall 2006-2018

Semester	Female	Male	All
Fall 2006	3.018	2.834	2.961
Fall 2007	3.021	2.813	2.959
Fall 2008	3.01	2.84	2.957
Fall 2009	2.996	2.822	2.943
Fall 2010	3.003	2.785	2.934
Fall 2011	3.029	2.825	2.961
Fall 2012	3.052	2.872	2.994
Fall 2013	3.073	2.888	3.013
Fall 2014	3.087	2.868	3.015
Fall 2015	3.107	2.912	3.044
Fall 2016	3.118	2.957	3.069
Fall 2017	3.145	2.987	3.099
Fall 2018	3.181	3.011	3.131

President's and dean's list

President's and Dean's Lists, Fall 2010-2018



President's List is a 4.0 average for the semester based on a minimum of 12 hrs.

Dean's List is a 3.5 average for the semester based on a minimum of 12 hrs.

High achieving student performance

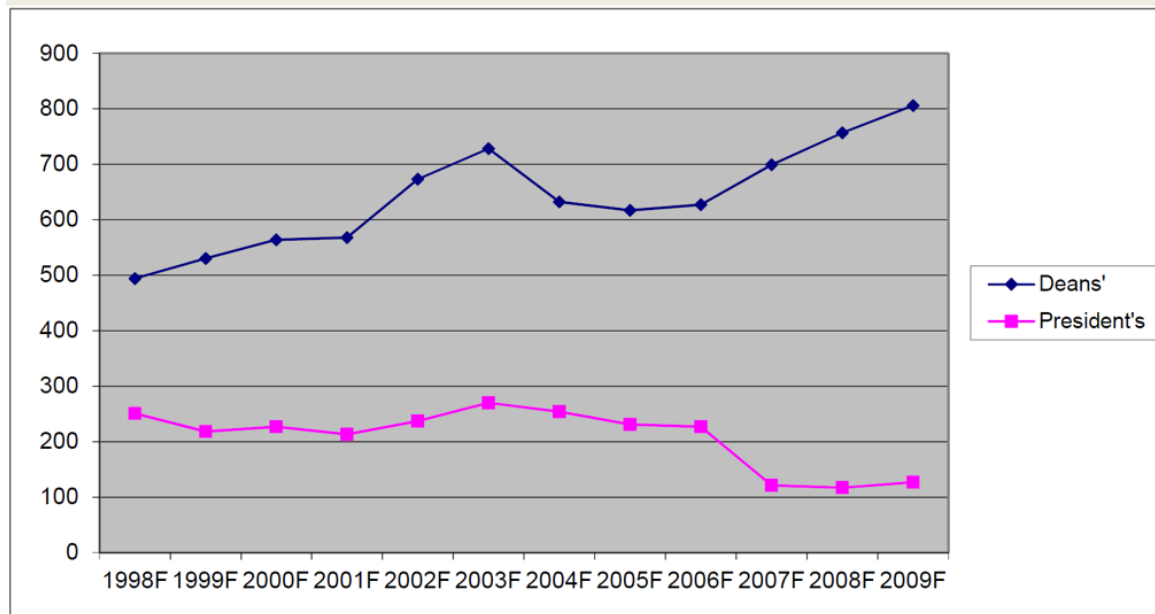
High-Achieving Student Performance

Year	President's	Deans'	Combined
2010F	3.8	18.6	22.4
2011F	3.7	21.3	25.1
2012F	4.1	20.9	25.0
2013F	3.8	21.0	24.8
2014F	3.7	22.6	26.3
2015F	4.3	22.5	26.8
2016F	4.7	23.4	28.1
2017F	5.2	25.2	30.4
2018F	6.5	24.4	31.0

Dr. Koster and Dr. Jones said we must be doing something right.

President's and Dean's list fall 1998-2009

President's & Deans' Lists Fall 1998-2009



The blip in 2007 is when plus minus was introduced.

Percentage of High Achieving students 1998-2007

Percentage of High-Achieving Students

Term	President's	Deans'	Combined
98F	6.9	13.5	20.5
99f	5.6	13.6	19.1
00F	5.7	14.0	19.7
01F	5.1	13.6	18.7
02F	5.3	15.2	20.5
03F	5.9	15.9	21.8
04F	5.6	14.0	19.6
05F	5.1	13.7	18.8
06F	5.2	14.4	19.6
07F	2.8	16.4	19.2

Undergraduate eligibility issues—percentage not in good Academic Standing

Undergraduate Eligibility Issues

Term	% Not in Good AS
14F	6.6
15S	5.9
15F	6.9
16S	5.7
16F	6.1
17S	5.4
17F	6.0
18S	4.3
18F	6.3

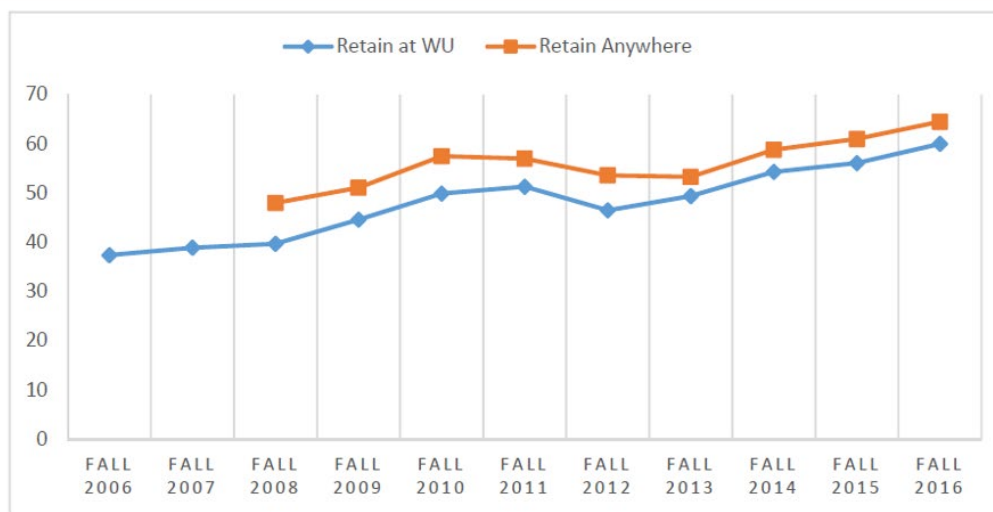
Note: 12 hours required for DL and PS; Probation/Suspension is not based on number of hours enrolled.

Dr. Doman asked about the level of student being admitted. Winthrop has not increased the minimum requirement per Mr. Drueke.

CHE LIFE retention

CHE LIFE Scholarship Retention Statistics

Entering Term	Retain at WU	Retain Anywhere
Fall 2006	37.4	
Fall 2007	38.9	
Fall 2008	39.7	48
Fall 2009	44.6	51.1
Fall 2010	49.9	57.5
Fall 2011	51.3	57
Fall 2012	46.5	53.6
Fall 2013	49.4	53.3
Fall 2014	54.3	58.8
Fall 2015	56.1	61
Fall 2016	60	64.5



Dr. Jones indicated that Winthrop has come a long way. More students are retaining the LIFE Scholarship.

Dr. McLain said that in ACAD there has been more discussion about midterm grades. Dr. Jones said that interim grades have been in place for about five years.

Dr. Jones has been working on this (Improving FR retention/retaining life scholarships) for quite a while. She was convinced a few months ago that plus/minus was the reason students weren't retaining their scholarships. She no longer believes this. It may be a factor, but not a big one.

Dr. Jones then began her formal presentation. Points to consider...

- **First-semester GPA is considered the *strongest predictor* of student success, a factor that contributes significantly to persistence.**
- Approximately 40% of our students are Pell eligible. \$5,000 LIFE Scholarship is very important to them.
- Middle income group also rely very heavily on LIFE Scholarship because they do not receive federal funds.

FY Life recipients...

First-Year LIFE Scholarship Recipients

More than 50% of our first-year students are awarded the LIFE Scholarship

Year	Retention Rate
Fall 2013 to 2014	52% (279) lost LIFE
Fall 2014 to 2015	46.4% (241) lost LIFE
Fall 2015 to 2016	44.4% (258) lost LIFE
Fall 2016 to 2017	35% (191) lost LIFE

*We do know that 58 students did not re-enroll at Winthrop or anywhere else the following fall. That number represents approximately \$1,000,000 in lost revenue.

Question at issue: Why are FY students losing scholarships?

Dr. Jones initially thought it was plus/minus, and there are some issues.

- The plus/minus scale is used **inconsistently** across the University – either in whether or not it is used or in what numerical scale equals the +/-
- On one hand, we count a C- as an acceptable grade to earn an S (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory); as a letter-grade, a C- is a 1.67 GPA. However, a C- average (a 1.67) is not good enough to remain in good **academic standing**
- Our students would keep LIFE Scholarships at many **other universities** in SC

Inconsistent use is primarily an issue for courses which have multiple sections.

Grading scales at peer institutions

Grading Scales at Peer Institutions

Both plus and minus	No plus/minus at all	Plus Only
College of Charleston	Clemson	USC
Furman	UNC Charlotte	USC Upstate
Wofford	Wingate University	Coastal Carolina
	The Citadel	Francis Marion
	Lander	

*Georgia system does not use +/- in calculating eligibility for state scholarships.

If plus/minus is not the issue, then what is?

Further considerations

- **GPAs at all levels**
- Most frequently awarded grade at Winthrop = A
- Where is the problem?

Gen Ed 100 level courses frequently taken

Gen Ed (100-level) Courses

Frequently taken by First-Year Students

Course	Average GPA	Course	Average GPA
BIOL 150	2.6	MATH 100 level	2.2
CHEM 101	3.0	PLSC 201	2.3
CHEM 104	2.4	PSYC 101	2.5
CHEM 105	2.2	SOCL 101	3.0
CSCI 101	2.6	SOCL 201	2.7
HIST 211/212	2.7/2.8	SPAN 101	3.0
HIST 111/112/113	2.7/2.8	SPAN 102	2.9
HMXP 102	2.7	WRIT 101	2.5

Spring 2014 to Fall 2018

In the course of her investigation, Dr. Jones talked with faculty and staff, student affairs, disciplinary office, residential learning coordinators, health and counseling, and the directors of ACAD and HMXP. Students are different from students in the past. They don't know how to handle things. There is more anxiety and depression.

What can we do to assist these students?

III. Discussion and Brainstorming Plans for Action by Academic Council

Assist First-Years...They have fewer study skills and less self-discipline.

Possible action steps

- Do Nothing
- Abolish +/-
- Align with many of our SC Peers (use + only)
- Award only A, B, and C as grades – no credit or grade for D/F
- Increase number of S/U options to 6; allow first-year students to use 2 each semester
- Pay ACAD Instructors an additional \$250 for spring follow-up and interim grade intervention
- Other possibilities?

Dr. Jones talked with Frank Pullano about LEAP students. In Fall 2008, nine students were on probation at the end of their first semester. In 2018, it was 41. (There was no formal LEAP program but students were tracked.) Intentional advising seems to be the single most important thing in retention.

Students seem to be uninformed about the S/U. Dr. Pullano allowed students an extra S/U.

Why wouldn't we allow First-Year (FY) students an extra S/U?

Dr. Jones thinks students need an opportunity to learn how to be a student.

She talked about the Academic Success Center. They are tutoring for most Gen Eds. Michelle Wolf has said that over 400 students have signed up for tutoring by the 2nd week of class.

Dr. Jones believes what Dr. Pullano has done with LEAP is a model for the rest of us. Students get a good start and they understand what they need to do to be successful.

Dr. Koster asked about GPAs related to major versus gen ed.

Dr. Garrison asked if Dr. Jones knew whether those gen ed courses above were graded on the +/- . Dr. Jones did not have that information.

Dr. Jones mentioned that she took out ACAD and PESH courses as far as the most awarded grade.

Dr. Koster read two messages from faculty who wished to remain anonymous. The first noted that currently s/he may give a "courtesy bump" to a student who has a 79 average from a C+ to a B-, but that s/he wouldn't feel able to give that student a B for C+ work, nor an A for B+ work if the minus grade were eliminated. The second faculty member asked whether elimination of the plus/minus grade was intended to give a different (usually higher) grade result for a student who had the same level of

achievement, or to help students reach higher levels of achievement so that they could earn higher grades. The faculty member opposed the first idea but enthusiastically supported the second idea.

Dr. Koster commented about student learning being different. Students expect make-up work and extra credit because of their experience in K-12, where these options are always available.

Dr. Wonderlich indicated that we could do a better job at career counseling. The music department had to remove a student from the music program because he couldn't pass a class after the third time. She said as an advisor, we should be handling interim grades.

Dr. Jones talked about unevenness in advising. Some faculty have too many advisees. The smartest thing we could do is open a professional advising center for Freshmen and Sophomores which would allow one-on-one attention on a regular basis.

Dr. Koster said there are institutions which imbed tutors within certain classes so that struggling students have someone in the class they can go to.

Dr. Jones indicated that some universities have peer advisors—students who have been through it.

Dr. McLain stated that Athletic Training does this informally. There are two advisors and 80 majors.

Dr. Whitney mentioned that there are some schools which have group advising in which seniors are in on the junior session, juniors in on the sophomore session, etc.

Dr. Disney said they have trouble enrolling students in classes with extra instruction.

Dr. Barger indicated that the Gen Ed data above would be helpful for advisors who are advising FY students. She suggested that maybe we could change the way we advise.

Dr. Hayes said he suspects that some students turn off.

Dr. Garrison asked if we are asking to take students with average grades and turning them into above average students.

Dr. Jones replied that they haven't learned to be college students. We have students whose life situations would horrify us. (Homeless, food insecurity...)

Dr. Disney talked about the Fs of students who check out. We can let freshmen know there are different ways to fulfill their requirements in four years.

Dr. Koster said that was true for some majors, but not all. Winthrop has several lock-step programs. How many of our models are based on assumptions from 10-15 years ago?

Dr. McLain revealed that some students look at S/U as a cop-out. It's also to think about how disciplinary learning is supported in our GNED. She stated that in HMXP, the writing is geared toward social sciences, which is problematic for students in the natural sciences.

Dr. Wonderlich indicated that she would like to see an ACAD section for music majors.

Dr. Hayes stated that it sounds like challenges are social, emotional, etc. It seems there needs to be more follow-up with students. Students don't know how learning happens. They think their high school experience has prepared them.

Dr. Lipscomb said we should be having these conversations at the departmental level--ask what strategies are working?

Dr. McCormick disclosed that faculty have indicated they do need support and are also asking how we can be more student ready. The College of Arts and Sciences is going to focus on retreat-type activities to talk about student success and look at tweaking practices to gear toward today's students.

Dr. Garrison asked, "How do we help students improve learning skills?" She said that faculty need support for this.

Dr. Hayes stated that problems can't be solved in a weekend. It's hard to convince students that they need to do something different in the classroom.

Dr. Disney said expanding S/U options may be one targeted solution, to throw a lifeline to FYs.

Dr. Abernathy asked if would be five.

Dr. Jones indicated that one solution is to allow two in one semester. We need to advise students that S/U is not a stigma. Dr. Pullano required that some LEAP students take two.

Dr. Costner asked, "Would we just raise to five in the FY, and then they lose it after that?"

Dr. Abernathy expressed concerned with two U's in a semester and having to make up in another semester.

Dr. McLain stated that advising is critical; however, with some faculty, that is not their strength. We have departmental resources on advising. We're seeing improvement. Sharing information is valuable.

Dr. Koster said that what she is hearing is that within our mission is a recommendation on the S/U. But we could report to Faculty Conference our consensus that there are some things that need to be addressed. She asked, "Is it a good idea to allow two S/Us in one semester for FY only? Should we increase it to five or six?"

Ms. Jones cautioned about the S/U and Dean's and President's lists. (Students have to have 12 graded hours to qualify.). There are some degree programs that have little room for S/U because of Gen Ed in the major and majors not allowing S/U. She encouraged investigation of what, if any, programs are affected before making a decision.

Dr. Abernathy stated that she encourages students to use S/U and students are reluctant. They think it's admitting defeat.

Dr. Koster, Dr. Glover, and Dr. Abernathy will look into the programs that might be affected by S/U increases.

Dr. Boyd said that many years ago we had a discussion about advising, talking about how essential that faculty advise about coursework as well as being a mentor. Faculty seem to be more comfortable about the mentorship part. She'd be interested in hearing more about the professional advisors. Lots of schools are doing lots of different things. Some create schedules for freshmen. She asked how folks would feel about having people outside the discipline handling advising. The academic part is good, but we need to wed that with student affairs.

Dr. Disney stated that department chairs have talked about professional advising. Does this mean that the best advisors in the department are the major advisors? Or does this mean someone outside the college? She is curious if anyone has any experience with other models.

Dr. Koster asked how these professional advisors will know that you don't take particular classes in the same semester.

Dr. Jones indicated that a Georgia college hired 40 professional advisors. In one year, they recouped \$2 million they had lost the previous year.

Dr. Boyd said that any model you look at, there would have to be a hybrid that would fit Winthrop, and it would involve extensive training. It is about helping students to be successful.

Dr. Hayes asked if a professional advisor was going to help students get through Winthrop or help them afterwards. His concern was that with a professional advisor, students know where they will end up.

Dr. Boyd stated that we have to be clear about expectations.

Dr. Koster said she will summarize and present at the next meeting so that members can edit. Then she can present at Faculty Conference. It's good that we're not just complaining, that we're chewing on it.

Dr. Jones spoke to the 58 students who did not return and lost LIFE. Those students have \$8,000-10,000 in debt with nothing to show for it.

Dr. Costner asked if we could try multiple options at once.

Dr. Boyd said, "Yes. Before we move into budget planning, are there grant possibilities? Next fall, we'll be deciding what our next QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) is [for SACS reaccreditation]. If we have data to make some decisions, it makes a difference to say we did this on our own and be able to take this forward." She said if we see some things that are coming up over and over, we could do a pilot, and it would better position us to move forward. It needs to have an impact across the whole institution. We need a core set of assessment if we go to multiple options.

Dr. Disney said we should ask deans to make time at college level meetings for these conversations.

Dr. Lipscomb mentioned on behalf of Ms. Perez-Valzco that the Council of Student Leaders supports getting rid of plus/minus.

Dr. Koster adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gina Jones, Secretary