

March 3, 2014

Mr. John Wells, Chair
Fort Lewis University Board of Trustees
Fort Lewis University
1000 Rim Drive
Durango, CO 81301

Dear Mr. Wells,

The Colorado Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) condemns the recent decision of the Fort Lewis College Board of Trustees to shift the entire curriculum to a three-credit course model in the absence of faculty review or approval. The Board's decision violates Fort Lewis College written policies on curricular change and fails to honor the cardinal AAUP principle of shared governance in matters of curriculum. A clear majority of faculty, in two recent surveys, have indicated their apprehension and discontent with the apparent disregard for shared governance at the College. The Colorado AAUP shares this concern.

The AAUP strongly supports the principle of shared governance in which primary authority over the curriculum rests in the hands of the faculty owing to their expertise. The AAUP, together with the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), endorse the following statement on decisions regarding the curriculum:

The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.

The official written policy of Fort Lewis College is in line with this recommendation. According the Fort Lewis College Faculty Handbook, Article II,

The Faculty Senate serves as the primary governing, advisory and review body of the Faculty. The Faculty Senate has responsibility and authority, within the limits delegated by the Board, regarding the conduct of academic matters, including issues of academic freedom, *curricular design*, academic standards, requirements for conferring academic degrees and certificates and other matters under the normal purview of the academic profession. (Italics added)

Like most colleges, the Faculty Senate assigned the primary work of curricular review to the faculty Curriculum Committee. The official charge of the Curriculum Committee is as follows,

The Curriculum Committee is perhaps the most important of the standing faculty committees. The Committee assists and supports the faculty in development and oversight of the curriculum at Fort Lewis College. It initiates, receives, reviews and recommends actions on proposed curricula and curricular changes including the creation, elimination or alteration of programs and specific courses.


The recent Fort Lewis College Board of Trustees decision to switch Fort Lewis to a predominantly three-credit model was clearly a significant decision about the curriculum. This decision substantially impacts both the content of courses and the content and structure of majors. At Fort Lewis College, 73% of the current courses are four credits. Reducing the contact hours involved in these courses by 25% will significantly impact the content that will be taught in each course. Further, in reducing the size of courses, most programs will be forced to restructure their majors in significant ways. This decision to substantially change the curriculum as proposed by upper administration was approved by the Board of Trustees without review or approval by relevant faculty bodies, the Faculty Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Senate, or the consent of the chairs of the departments whose programs were impacted. In short, meaningful involvement of the faculty was never attempted, nor was faculty approval sought for the three-credit proposal.

Although the administration never sought faculty review or approval for this change, many faculty expressed their opposition to it. Prior to the unveiling of the administration's proposal, the Faculty Senate of its own accord formed a task force to examine the question of whether the college would benefit from a three-credit model. The December 2013 findings of a Faculty Senate task force were in direct opposition to the administration's recommendation, advising that the college retain the current mix of three- and four-credit courses. The Faculty Senate voted 12-3 in favor of the document. A later faculty survey confirmed that the majority of faculty supported keeping a mix of three- and four-credit courses. In short, the administration's proposal was not only passed without faculty approval, it was passed in opposition to faculty recommendations.

While the justifications offered for the administration's actions varied across different documents, the most commonly stated justification for the decision to move to a three-credit model was to more easily meet accreditation documentation requirements and to simplify the process of transferring credits between Colorado state institutions. The merit of both of these justifications was questioned by faculty members. However, the more significant issue here is that addressing accreditation and transfer challenges could have been done in a way that involved the faculty, rather than by going around the faculty. No constraints prevented the administration from seeking faculty input to solve these issues. In reaching these decisions without faculty input or approval, the administration clearly violated the college's own procedures for making curricular change. More significantly, the Board's decision violates the well-established principle of share governance.

We urge the Board of Trustees to reconsider its decision to override faculty control of the curriculum.

Signing for the AAUP Colorado Conference,



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