

FINAL

Minutes of the SAS Faculty Meeting on Infosilem/CourseAtlas 8 November 2019

1. Peter March, Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences

Dean Peter March called the meeting to order at 2:15 P.M. He offered welcome remarks and introductions. Dean March then asked speakers to limit themselves to two minutes, and described the procedure for voting on any proposed motions: He invited SAS faculty to vote on motions proposed at the meeting by raising a yellow index card. He wanted to ensure the allotted two full hours of discussion, so announced that the meeting would run until 4:15 P.M.

2. Proposed Resolution on CourseAtlas/Infosilem by Andrew Goldstone, Associate Professor, SAS, English

Prof. Goldstone circulated to faculty copies of and then read the following “Proposed Resolution on CourseAtlas/Infosilem”:

“Whereas the central administration of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, intends to implement a new university-wide scheduling system, “CourseAtlas” (formerly “Infosilem”), and

Whereas CourseAtlas generates schedules without regard for student interest or for faculty service, research, and family commitments, and

Whereas the expertise of faculty and staff within each program is needed to resolve conflicts among the above in each program course schedule, and

Whereas no agreement between the University and Rutgers AAUP-AFT on the use of Course Atlas in scheduling has yet been reached;

Be it resolved, that the implementation of CourseAtlas in the School of Arts and Sciences will be delayed until the faculty of the School are guaranteed, by contract agreement or university policy, protections for service, research, and family commitments, and faculty authority to resolve scheduling conflicts.”

The proposal was multiply seconded by SAS faculty in attendance.

On behalf of the proposed resolution Prof Goldstone then stated that CourseAtlas/Infosilem had not been implemented in a way that adequately addresses faculty concerns. He said that the implementation betrays little understanding of or respect for the needs and service of the faculty. The resolution calls for further faculty oversight over CourseAtlas prior to implementation. Prof. Goldstone remarked that simulations of CourseAtlas/Infosilem have not demonstrated the effectiveness of the system. Simulations have proven that courses may be undermined by being shifted by the system to certain weekdays or times (e.g. to Fridays). Moreover, Prof Goldstone commented that student experience depends on faculty being able to conduct their research, perform service, etc., faculty commitments which are potentially disrupted by the new system. There are a number of shortcomings with the scheduling system and it offers no peer review by

faculty. Family commitments are not considered legitimate blockoffs. That CourseAtlas will not take into consideration research needs, service to the profession beyond the university, faculty obligations, commuting times will diminish flexibility of faculty as researchers and impact student experiences. Prof. Goldstone stated that CourseAtlas knows nothing about disciplinary disciplines between various fields and subjects. He remarked that the system is unproven at Big Ten schools and large research universities. The only peer university to employ the software is Penn State, which uses it for exam scheduling only.

2. David Hughes, Professor, SAS, Anthropology, AAUP-AFT Executive Council Member

Professor Hughes stated that the current impasse over CourseAtlas/Infosilem results from a failure in the bargaining process between administration and labor at Rutgers. He said that the union has attempted to negotiate over CourseAtlas/Infosilem, and administration has replied that the new system should not be a subject of bargaining. The administration has argued that CourseAtlas/Infosilem is not scheduling per se but rather the manner of scheduling. According to Hughes, administration has defined scheduling in such a way that represents faculty as having always been available to teach at any time, 40 hours per week. Prof. Hughes commented that faculty hours are not like checkerboard pieces that can be shifted without significantly impacting faculty abilities to perform the various aspects of their work. Prof. Hughes said that CourseAtlas/Infosilem will damage the curriculum, since it prohibits certain courses from being precisely scheduled at certain times. Prof. Hughes recounted how in previous bargaining sessions, the faculty union thought they were close to an agreement on CourseAtlas/Infosilem, but the administration would not commit in writing in any actionable way to small improvements suggested on the evidence of four simulations. The response of the administration to union proposals was that they would not sign on to negotiated agreements. Prof. Hughes noted that as of today (Nov 8) the union has filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge with the New Jersey Public Employment Relations Commission, since scheduling is a mandatory subject of negotiation between faculty and administration.

3. Nikol Alexander-Floyd, Associate Professor, SAS, Women's and Gender Studies, AAUP-AFT Executive Council Representative (New Brunswick):

Prof. Alexander-Floyd suggested that there has been a broad range of latitude in terms of how Infosilem/CourseAtlas has been and is being executed in each department. For example, in one department training in the software has been received by the chair and UGD, but in another department no training has been received. This is concerning in terms of ensuring faculty have a role in terms of being able to secure particular accommodations under the new system. Prof. Alexander-Floyd recommended that minimally chairs should be required to receive training on any scheduling system. Prof. Alexander-Floyd also noted that there must be confidentiality in seeking accommodations under any scheduling system.

4. Bryan Sacks, Part-time Lecturer, Philosophy (Camden), PTLFC-AAUP-AFT Executive Board member

Professor Sacks stated his concerns about the repercussions Infosilem/CourseAtlas may have on Part-time Lecturers. He said that all faculty should have the last word in scheduling, and PTLs especially depend on scheduling clarity for their livelihood. Prof. Sacks noted that PTLs may no longer be able to teach if they have to determine their availability for Infosilem/CourseAtlas a

year prior. He said that CourseAtlas/Infosilem may disadvantage PTLs by placing their courses in conflict with FT faculty courses.

5. Robert Scott, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Director, SAS, Anthropology

Professor Scott said that for years he has worked extensively on course scheduling courses in his department, but he has never received complaints from deans or students about scheduling. He stated that scheduling was not a real problem at Rutgers. Real problems include making Rutgers buildings accessible. He said that instead of addressing such real problems, the administration is creating more work for faculty by disrupting faculty schedules, making it harder for faculty to conduct research, handle childcare responsibilities, and engage in service to the university and profession. Prof. Scott said that Infosilem/CourseAtlas has created many problems but solved none.

6. Ann Coiro, Professor and Undergraduate Director, SAS, English

Prof. Coiro said that an undergraduate director invests a lot of time creating an intricate schedule that does not cancel itself out. The crucial art of scheduling requires intimate knowledge of a department, its students and faculty. Faculty can identify and act on issues that software cannot. Prof. Coiro asked the administration what would be the minimum number of students that would trigger cancellation under Infosilem/CourseAtlas, and what would happen to faculty whose courses were automatically cancelled.

7. Ethan Schoolman, Associate Professor, SEBS, Human Ecology

Prof. Schoolman said that SAS is taking first faculty vote on this resolution and other schools, units, departments are closely watching and interested, taking note of the way SAS faculty vote.

8. Ana Pairet, Associate Professor, SAS, French

Prof. Pairet stated that it is not clear how Infosilem/CourseAtlas will benefit students. This cannot be determined by simulations, since simulations did not fully account for all possible conflicts and accommodations. It is not clear how the system will improve the ability for students to choose classes or graduate more quickly. Prof. Pairet said that Infosilem/CourseAtlas is demonstrably not good for the faculty member. She said that the administration appears to be more concerned about optimization of facilities than the optimization of faculty. Infosilem/CourseAtlas will make it more difficult for students to complete requirements, and may lead to fewer second majors and minors, potentially having serious consequences for smaller or service-oriented departments.

9. Norman Markowitz, Associate Professor, SAS, History

Professor Markowitz stated that all faculty are against the implementation of Infosilem/CourseAtlas across the political spectrum.

10. Rudy Bell, Distinguished Professor, SAS, History

Prof. Bell commented that evidence suggests Infosilem/CourseAtlas cannot work and is structurally incapable of managing scheduling. He requested the administration to release the costs involved in backing out of the agreement with the software provider. He said that four simulations have resulted in more scheduling problems than solutions.

11. Richard Ebright, Board of Governors Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology, SAS, Chemical and Chemical Biology

Prof. Ebright noted that over the course of the past year two other software packages (RAPPS and eCert) have been implemented at Rutgers that were designed by the developers of Infosilem/CourseAtlas. These implementations have had disastrous consequences. Each unit that has employed these packages has encountered extensive problems with their design and effectiveness. Such units have been forced to hire additional staff to manage the software. Prof. Ebright characterized the company behind Infosilem/CourseAtlas as a “failed software vendor.”

12. Todd Wolfson, Associate Professor, SCI, Media Studies, Rutgers AAUP-AFT President

Prof. Wolfson reiterated that scheduling is a subject of negotiation between administration and faculty and that Rutgers administration should bargain with the faculty union prior to implementation.

13. Joanna Kempner, Associate Professor, SAS, Sociology

Prof. Kempner suggested the move to call to question to vote on the proposed resolution.

Multiply seconded.

14. Peter March, Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences

Dean March noted the resolution that has been moved and seconded.

15. James McGlew, Professor, SAS, Classics

Acting Parliamentarian Prof. McGlew ordered a vote on the call to question. The vote passed by a two-thirds majority.

Prof. McGlew called a vote on the resolution.

The “Proposed Resolution on CourseAtlas/Infosilem” was passed by an affirmative vote of 96 out of 97 members present (one ballot was uncast).

Dean Peter March adjourned the meeting at 3:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

D. Christian Lammerts
Associate Professor, SAS, Religion
Acting Secretary of SAS