

## 3/6/15 Academic Choice Advisory Council (ACAC) Meeting

March 6, 2015, 7:30-8:35 AM Berkeley High School Conference Room D

### Minutes

#### In Attendance:

Who	Role	E-mail address
Tim Zolezzi	AC Co-Chair and AC Lead History Teacher	timothyzolezzi@berkeley.net
David Borrelli	AP Coordinator	davidborrelli@berkeley.net
Daniel Nube	AC Vice Principal	danielnube@berkeley.net
Hannalina Kalonji	ACAC Student Representative	hannalinakalonji@students.berkeley.net
Finn Collum	ACAC Student Representative	finncollom@students.berkeley.net
Deborah Thompson	AC Parent	debsnz@aol.com
Rene Kvidahl	AC Parent	
Rakhi Rao	ACAC Treasurer	rakhiprao@gmail.com
Johanna Reneke	ACAC Parent Rep at Large	j.reneke@gmail.com
Donna Storey	ACAC Secretary	donnageorgestorey@gmail.com
Jeremy Thorner	ACAC Student Support Coordinator	jthorner@berkeley.edu

#### Public Comments

There were no public comments at this meeting.

#### General AC Spring General Meeting on April 21, 2015

The AC Spring General Meeting will be held on April 21 at 6:30 in the College Career Center. Donna Storey suggested that the theme of the meeting involve getting feedback from parents on their experiences with the mandatory AP program as well as other aspects of the AC curriculum. This might help build a sense of community and encourage contributions. Jeremy Thorner agreed that we need to build support for AC.

Mr. Borrelli asked about what questions we'd be considering in the meeting because it

is important to provide structure for the discussion. Mr. Thorner suggested the rationale for Academic Choice be explained. Mr. Borrelli pointed out that AC has changed a lot since its inception and that AP is not sacred. You can have a rigorous class without the AP label. Johanna Reneke thought that the “choice” aspect of AC was important and should be preserved.

Deborah Thompson, the parent of an AC freshman, asked what the advantage would be for parents to take the time to come to the General Meeting. Mr. Zolezzi asked if there was anything in particular she wanted to know. Ms. Thompson replied that she was interested in finding out more about the future plans for AP classes and requirements and also wondered if AC was becoming the “big school” without as much guidance and identity as the other learning communities at Berkeley High. Mr. Nube suggested that parents break up into small groups and discuss the questions they had. Mr. Zolezzi suggested each group appoint a note taker who submits the comments to the AC leadership via Google Docs. We decided to dedicate some time during the next meeting on April 10, 2015 to plan the structure of the Spring General Meeting.

### **Update on Mandatory AP Classes**

One issue of particular concern is the mandatory AP requirements for each AC student. Mr. Zolezzi said that there has been some reconsideration of the benefit of AP classes. Rene Kvidahl asked if AC was planning on eliminating AP classes. Mr. Zolezzi said the main issue right now is whether to continue the mandatory AP Government class for all AC seniors. This will continue next year but the future is uncertain.

Hannalina Kalonji reported that most of her friends who were seniors last year did not take the AP Government or AP Economics test because they’d already been accepted to college and the tests didn’t impact them in any positive way, so they decided not to waste the money.

In an email to the ACAC, Mr. Laurel had asked about Mr. Sanoff’s program to make the AP tests available for students in AP Government who needed financial aid for \$5. This program was not administered through the ACAC. Ms. Kvidahl asked if the school should have a responsibility to pay if the class was required. Ms. Kalonji pointed out that other small learning communities do not give extra subsidies for the AP tests for required AP classes. Mr. Zolezzi suggested that further questions on financial-need subsidies be addressed to Angela Price and Skyler Barton at the College Career Center.

### **AC Student Support Coordinator**

It was suggested again, as during the February meeting, that Mr. Borrelli’s title be changed to AC Student Support Coordinator instead of AP Coordinator. The Berkeley International High School has a similar general academic support coordinator, Matt Meyer. This new title would be more accurate since Mr. Borrelli’s duties include supporting students beyond the AP classes.

### **Application for BSEP Grant for Mr. Borrelli’s Position**

Mr. Borrelli has submitted a Berkeley Schools Excellence Program grant for a .2FTE position as AC Student Support Coordinator / AP Coordinator. He said that it would be useful for him to have some ACAC parents accompany him to the BSEP meeting on

Monday, March 23 when proposals would be presented. Mr. Zolezzi added that it might be helpful to invite students who had benefited from the academic support to attend as this strengthens the case. Jeremy Thorner reported that, based on his year of service on the BSEP Committee (2011-2012), such testimonials from students and parents are effective in persuading the committee.

### **Student Report on AC Freshman Picnic**

Ms. Kalonji reported that the AC Student Leadership focused on their plans for a picnic for AC freshman to be held during fourth through sixth periods at some point in April or early May. The picnic will be held in Ohlone Park and the student leadership hopes to have parent volunteers. Groups of 40 freshmen will talk with upperclassmen and there will be games and community-building activities. Food will not be provided and ACAC funds will not be necessary. The AC leadership is waiting for permission from the administration before moving forward. They hope to hold the freshman picnic earlier in the year next year.

The T-shirt contest will be discussed at the April leadership meeting. They've already discussed giving humanities teachers a free T-shirt if they will wear them to graduation and raise the profile of AC. The price of the T-shirt will be increased slightly to cover the free T-shirts.

### **Treasurer's Report and Fundraising Efforts**

ACAC Treasurer Rahki Rao presented a Statement of Activities for Academic Choice as of March 5, 2015. The statement shows an ending balance of \$9,318.93 for the current year. Ms. Rao reported that the Berkeley High School Development Group encouraged us to do another fundraiser to restore our depleted funds. Mr. Rao offered to go to a BIHS parent meeting to get tips on how they get donations.

Ms. Storey said that several parents had told her they would be more willing to donate to a specific teacher's project than a "heartless bureaucracy." Mr. Zolezzi mentioned Donor's Choice, a program that allowed teachers to request donations for specific needs. He thought we might have a link on the AC website and also that we could use this as a way to cover smaller AC expenses.

Ms. Storey said another paper mailing would be expensive and time-consuming. Ms. Thompson asked why we couldn't take advantage of technology, send out an email and invite parents to donate online. We could also update parents and tell them how the money is being used. Since AC makes up the majority of Berkeley High, we should promote ourselves.

We discussed whether we could use the e-tree to make an appeal. VP Nube said he believed their answer would be no. He added that he's stopped reading the e-tree as the amount of information is overwhelming. He proposed that a more effective method would be to ask teachers to distribute a handout to students to give to their parents. Mr. Thorner offered to be responsible for creating the handout. (Update on March 13: Mr. Thorner supplied 1,500 copies of this flyer [both a fund-raising appeal and announcement of the April 21 AC General Meeting] to VP Nube on Monday, March 9).

We also discussed assembling a current AC parent email list from teachers' records.

## **Next ACAC Meeting**

Our next meeting will be on Friday, April 10, 2015, 7:30-8:35 a.m. in BHS Conference Room B in the D Building.