Minutes for the 2/6/2018 Critical Thinking Committee teleconference:

Attending: David Gribbin, Courtney Joiner, Val Czerny, Mary Waalkes

The committee discussed the next critical thinking conference. Val noted her concerns that the budget is not secure, yet if we were to continue with the conference, we should invite our speaker now which would entail approval of the funds. She also mentioned the fact that we do not have a solid structure in place with the Business Office for charging attendees. Courtney also brought up the fact that course releases have ended.

Val suggested coming up with a substitute for the conference. Dr. Vess wants to promote the learning commons environment. We could possibly choose a month for each of us to lead a brief session on critical thinking. Val’s example was of guiding students through close reading of a text, interpretation and then application. With assistance from Katelyn Moore and/or Courtney Powers we could publicize the event to get the students to come.

Courtney stated that in Swainsboro, the Learning Commons idea currently means that professors devote an hour a week tutoring students, but she also noted that the students are not showing up. This is consistent with making a similar attempt years ago. She is concerned that our efforts might also be poorly attended by students. Even when it comes to faculty participation the current CTL Lunch and Learn workshops, for example, faculty members rarely attend. The one held the day before yielded only three attendees. We would need to justify our efforts by showing reasonable numbers.

Mary noted the same problem in Augusta with low attendance for workshops and tutoring. She suggested that we consider having one speaker address a critical thinking issue at the faculty workshop in the fall.

Courtney was at the recent Lunch and Learn where Natasha Goss presented some of her findings from the Governor’s Teaching Fellows Program. She highlighted giving more time to planning courses, working from a backwards design perspective. At the Lunch and Learn workshop, Dee McKinney said that Dr. Vess plans to change the faculty workshop dynamic, going to more than one day in Swainsboro. Courtney said that we could possibly see if Natasha could present in the fall workshop. We might also see if we can get someone from the Governor’s Teaching Fellows Program to come and speak.

Val noted that in the past, we have asked for space to speak at the fall workshop and were told there was no available time. Courtney said that we might have time to get in the program if we ask the committee working on this. She recommended asking Dee to pass on the idea to the committee.

Mary mentioned that we might need to also try the once a month discussions as we will have nothing to fall back on if we cannot feature a speaker at the fall workshop.

Val noted that it is difficult to get people to come, including students, though students will sometimes respond if extra credit is involved or if attendance is tied to a grade.

Mary suggested having a forum once or twice a year, possibly in the evenings, where two or three faculty can present on their research interests.

Val suggested using the Morgan House, as the First Friday events are evening events. She noted that we could keep the presentations at about fifteen minutes.
David noted that the Morgan House on the first Friday is a casual event. Alan Brasher routinely jams
with others in the living room.

We then discussed using the Morgan House, possibly sandwiching a short presentation between music
sessions. There are a few small rooms that might work for this purpose. We decided that Mary will do a
presentation in March and Val will do one in April. Val will email Angie to see if we can get on the
agenda for March and April. She will also contact Alan to make sure this will work for him too. If this
goes well, we can later ask other faculty to present.

The next Critical Thinking Committee meeting is set for Tuesday, March 20, 2018, at 1 pm.

Mary Waalkes
February 7, 2018