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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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11-14-2011

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
2011-12 MEETING #7 Minutes  
November 14, 2011, 2:00 p.m., BCR**

Present: Bart Finzel (chair), Joe Alia, Carol Cook, Clare Dingley, Janet Ericksen, Hazen Fairbanks, Heather James, Leslie Meek, Peh Ng, Paula O’Loughlin, Ian Patterson, Gwen Rudney, Jeri Squier, Tisha Turk

Absent: Bryce Blankenfeld, Caitlin Drayna, Sara Haugen

Visiting: Nancy Helsper

*In these minutes: Honors Course Approval; Program Review Procedure Changes; General Education Review*

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Finzel reported that there is one additional campus meeting scheduled to provide an opportunity for UMM staff to give their comments on the general education program. James will lead the discussion at noon in the Moccasin Flower Room. Finzel asked for a volunteer to take notes at the meeting. Cook and Dingley volunteered.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** (Patterson/Ng) to approve the November 7, 2011 minutes with one minor correction. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**2. COURSE APPROVAL**

**MOTION** (Cook/Patterson) to approve the new Honors course:

IS 3991H-Honors Co-Curricular Directed Study (1-2 cr)

Discussion: Finzel explained that this course is the result of an honors co-curricular study initiative. A student in the honors program may earn up to two of the eight elective credits required for graduation “with honors” by writing an analytical paper based upon the successful participation in a co-curricular activity (e.g., study abroad, MAP, UROP, REU, off-campus internship, national student exchange, service learning, North Star STEM Alliance, Multi-Ethnic Mentorship Program, etc.). Neither attendance at events nor participation in student organizations is a suitable activity for this option. The paper will range in length, depending upon the number of credits sought and the nature of the experience. For credit-bearing experiences, the paper would be largely reflective. If it is not credit bearing, it must have a formal research component that is developed in consultation with the honors director as well as others involved.

Ericksen asked if the students would be working directly with the honors director. Finzel replied that the projects will be directed and assessed by the honors director with the help of faculty serving the honors advisory group (comprised of three faculty members and the honors director). He added that one of the things he is concerned about is the potentially

burdensome workload on the director and advisory group. The program will be reviewed after a year to assess its popularity and implementation process.

O'Loughlin stated that the UROP students cannot receive credit for their work that they are getting paid for. They can only receive credit as long as the credit is for writing a paper that doesn't include a duplication of what they had to do for the UROP. Secondly, since the theme of honors is interdisciplinary, then the paper should be more interdisciplinary. Finzel added that for credit-bearing experiences, the paper might explore how students understand liberal learning. Cook asked if this course would apply to an experience that already requires a paper for credit. Finzel replied that it would then require an additional, more reflective paper. Alia asked if there is a way to ensure that the course doesn't completely overlap a course for which students are already getting transfer credits. Finzel replied that, as described, the paper becomes more reflective if the experience was credit-bearing. The work required for the credits would not be the same.

Helsper stated that the ECAS form indicates that this course is an independent study; however, the title says it is a directed study. Also, the course number that was assigned to this course is for an independent study. She suggested that the title be changed to replace "directed study" with "independent study." Ericksen added that the honors director would have to be meeting with the students regularly to consider it a directed study. Finzel stated that it is not a directed study in the traditional sense. The honors director would not be directing the work; she would just be working with the student in preparing the paper. The committee agreed that the course title should change from "directed study" to "independent study."

**MOTION Amended** to approve the new Honors course with the following title change:

IS 3991H-Honors Co-Curricular Independent Study (1-2 cr)

**VOTE:** Motion passed as amended (12-0-0)

### **3. PROGRAM REVIEWS**

Finzel stated that he is bringing a slightly revised program review process and procedures document to the committee for endorsement. The proposed changes are ones that improve the process. He pointed out that the original document was endorsed by the Curriculum Committee on 10/29/09. In the section titled "Process for Program Review" it states that a report summary and recommendations will be presented to the committee for information. That has not happened, but will be done for future reviews. The programs which have already completed reviews will be given an opportunity to present to the committee.

Under "Contents of Self-Study Report," a line was added to note that the Dean's Office will provide Library resources supporting the program. Also, estimates of future demands for graduates with majors/minors in the program will be prepared by Career Services and distributed by the Dean's Office. Number 3 in this section has been changed. Some wording is replaced by a request for programs to provide a short

description or explanation of how their program has changed in the last 10 years. There is an addition to section 5.B. that notes that the program review is not a personnel evaluation. In 5.E. "Methods for Improvement," programs had previously been asked to respond to a hypothetical question that was perhaps not terribly helpful. It was changed to a request for the program goals for the next four years, based on the review, and the process in place to achieve those goals.

The section "Review Committee Membership" underwent more substantive changes. Under the existing procedure, each program review committee consisted of at least three faculty members. Membership on the committee is the responsibility of the Dean. That was difficult to do because of the large total number of faculty involved at any given time in program reviews. Instead, one committee of five or six members (a couple from this committee, a couple from the Assessment of Student Learning Committee, and, depending on the programs, a couple of at-large members) would be named. Of those six, three would be assigned to a specific program review. No members would do more than a couple of reviews. This change was made to take advantage of economies of scale and to provide uniformity instead of reinventing the wheel each time.

The review committee's charge was not described in the original document. The revised document states that the review committee: 1) reads the self-study and meets to determine a schedule of tasks; 2) interviews students in the program to learn what they see as the program's strengths, what areas of change they might desire, what questions they have about the current program; 3) collects additional information if needed; and 4) writes a report evaluating the program's strengths, challenges, and plans/goals.

The timetable has also been changed to make it possible for programs to make their presentations to this committee within the academic year. The timeline will be revised as needed going forward. The revised timeline has already been relaxed a bit, based on staffing circumstances facing programs. The hope is to stay to the timeline and have programs provide oral summaries in late spring or early fall. One of the new items added to the timeline is that four years after the review year, programs reviewed will provide an oral report to the Curriculum Committee on program changes and progress towards goals. The schedule is on an eight-year cycle. The programs that are being reviewed this academic year are Art History, English, History, Physics, and Sociology.

Patterson asked if, when determining membership of the program review committees, students were envisioned to serve. Ericksen stated that faculty might be reluctant to have their programs reviewed by students. Some faculty would say that there is already a way for students to have input through course evaluations, and the overall program report should come from their peers. Turk added that, although as someone who might not necessarily object on those grounds, she agreed that it might not be appropriate because program reviews are supposed to provide a long view, and students are not in a position to know what happened in the field over the last ten years.

Ericksen asked if the new document should be sent out to programs already doing their review this year. Finzel replied that they should be given the new document and he hoped they would be agreeable to the changes.

Ng asked how soon any changes to the schedule would be needed. Finzel replied that at its first meeting in the fall, the dean will provide this committee with a list of the programs that will undergo program reviews that year.

**MOTION** (Ericksen/Turk) to endorse the changes to the Academic Program Review Process and Procedures

**VOTE:** Motion passed (12-0-0).

#### **4. GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW**

Finzel stated that some common themes have emerged as a result of the committee's discussion on general education. Since the last meeting the student meetings have taken place and the notes from those meetings were sent to the committee members. No new or unique themes were identified as a result of those meetings. The most common theme brought up at all of the meetings so far is College Writing, along with various aspects of a writing expectation. Finzel added that this is one concern that the committee will wish to address, and he plans to have it on the agenda for a couple of the meetings in the spring.

Another theme that was addressed by a good number of people was depth. Dingley stated that it was her general understanding that the overall bachelor's degree intentionally assumed that general education provides breadth and majors provide depth. Finzel explained that the concern is that we currently expect depth in only one area. The common suggestion is that our program would be stronger if we provided depth outside the major as well. Too many courses meeting GERs dilute depth. Dingley stated that she would like to go on record to explain why that is. Before we converted to semesters, Gen Ed was criteria-based. A subcommittee reviewed curriculum in light of the criteria to determine if a course met the proposed GER. There were a number of courses that were never presented to fulfill a GER, which was extremely frustrating to students, when it seemed fairly clear that a course had met the criteria. To avoid that happening again, every course has to fulfill a GER or explain why it does not. The culture of the campus became then that every course was supposed to have a designator. That could be moderated by allowing only 1xxx-level and 2xxx-level courses to carry a Gen Ed designator. Dingley added that Gen Eds might not include upper level classes with prerequisites. Ericksen stated that there are students who want to take those upper division courses. One comment students made is that they want to be able to take some depth. We could require it in one area (such as a secondary concentration), although it might be difficult to monitor it. Helsper stated that our previous Gen Ed did have a requirement for a 3xxx-level course outside the division of the major. Dingley replied that it delayed graduation for some students. Dingley stated that, while our exceptional students would welcome it, she could not help but wonder if the average guy on the street would want depth or additional requirements. Patterson explained that students who take an introductory course and find that they would like to pursue that area further, see no benefit of it credit-load-wise. If it had a GER, they would have an incentive to seek more depth in areas outside their major. O'Loughlin stated that one way to address this is to

reduce the number of categories in our Gen Ed program. We could require students to just take three courses from each of three areas. That is a common practice. Patterson agreed that it would open up the opportunity for flexibility. Currently there is a very rigid prescribed set of categories with boxes to check. Flexibility is a key to allowing breadth. Ng stated that maybe we could consider 2xxx-level courses as upper level. Helsper noted that we need to be careful about the terminology we use since 2xxx-level courses are not considered upper division. Ng stated that how we talk about the levels doesn't jive with the people who are taking the classes.

Finzel stated that another theme that came up in many conversations was a concern that every course has a Gen Ed designation. The last time the committee discussed this issue there was disagreement about that. It is something that could be dealt with without too much difficulty. Turk stated that she would like to see the system changed. The 3xxx-level classes she teaches are not designed to fulfill the purposes of Gen Ed. They are in the major. Gen Ed is a way of introducing students whose primary specialization is not in that field to topics in that field so they have a working knowledge base. That is different from focused, in-depth exploration of something specific in the field. That is the fundamental difference between general education and the major. People with an interest or expertise can fulfill an interest in another area by taking classes that are not in their area, but that is not Gen Ed. James asked if there is room to have courses that are not designed for Gen Ed but are not closed to only majors.

Helsper stated that many faculty offer courses that clearly fulfill more than one Gen Ed category. Students could be allowed to count all categories that qualify, freeing them for time to take courses outside their major. O'Loughlin replied that we have to be able to assess our Gen Ed program as well as our major program, and it would be difficult to assess a Gen Ed if every course fits it.

Patterson stated that when he chose a course to fulfill the FA GER, he took a 3xxx-level Art History course because it looked interesting. It was a great class about Renaissance Art, but it did not give him a general understanding about Art History. What is considered general education but to study other areas of interest? Finzel noted that the example suggests that Patterson had a breadth expectation. If that is our view of general education, then it would make sense to couple it with a depth expectation.

Cook stated that the committee needs to have a clear definition of general education. Also, there needs to be a process to validate whether a course fulfills its Gen Ed and are approved. The committee is now approving the Gen Ed designator at the same time they approve courses, and are virtually rubber-stamping the Gen Ed. It is not compared to the criteria for the assigned Gen Ed designator. Dingley answered that the committee assumes that the discipline and division have done that review. Cook noted that a reevaluation should happen every three years or so, after the course and/or instructor has changed, to ensure that the course still meets the requirements of the Gen Ed requirement assigned to it. Dingley stated that the course proposal form used on the Twin Cities campus requests an explanation for the use of the Gen Ed designator. Cook stated that the explanation should included in the course syllabus so that it can be assessed.

Helsper stated that in the past, students were allowed to choose one Gen Ed designator from a number of designators assigned to a course. If the course is actually meeting more than one GER, why wouldn't we allow them to use that course to fulfill all of them? Finzel noted that when courses did have multiple designators assigned to them it was confusing for students who would choose a course thinking it fulfilled all the GERs listed, only to find that it had only fulfilled one of them. Helsper stated that if we allowed more than one GER per course, this would serve faculty who have trouble choosing between multiple GERs that apply to their courses, as well as serving students who want more than one GER per course.

Finzel stated that another common theme is packaging. At last week's meeting, Patterson had said that we might solve other issues by tackling the packaging issue. We will need to revisit the Global Village GER as well. Finzel stated that the discussion will need to become more focused in order to move forward.

Adjourned 2:59 p.m.  
Submitted by Darla Peterson