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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

2016-17 MEETING #16 Minutes

April 24, 2017, 2:30 p.m., Moccasin Flower Room

Members Present: Bart Finzel (chair), Pieranna Garavaso, Arne Kildegaard, Peh Ng, Gwen Rudney, Tracey Anderson, Mary Elizabeth Bezanson, Stephen Crabtree, Kellie Meehlhause, Maggie Elinson, Christi Perkinson, Stephanie Ferrian, and Judy Korn

Members Absent: Jennifer Deane, Jessica Gardner, and Kerri Barnstable

Visitors: Janet Ericksen, Nancy Helsper, and Jeri Squier

In these minutes: Discussion of Proposed Catalog Copy for Global Village Revision

Announcements

Finzel thanked the committee members for agreeing to meet on May 1. That meeting will be held in 122 Welcome Center. The environmental science program review will be on the agenda, as well as continued discussion of the global village Gen Ed revision.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting #15, April 17, 2017

MOTION (Bezanson/Anderson) to approve the April 17, 2017, minutes. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Discussion of Proposed Catalog Copy of Global Village Revision

Finzel welcomed task force member Janet Ericksen to the meeting and explained that he prepared the catalog copy to show changes that resulted from the previous meeting and conversations he has had with individuals. One change involved the fourth category under Integrated Liberal Studies: Making Connections. The 4th area was originally proposed by the task force as “Ethical Reasoning and Civic Engagement,” and has been changed to “Ethical Engagement and Civic Responsibility.” Also, note the acronyms that appear in the Catalog copy draft for the four areas are not final. Any suggestions would be appreciated. Finzel stated that nothing in the proposal refers to the process by which the courses would be approved. It purposefully does not include the language from the original proposal regarding how AP, CIS and other course work fulfills the Integrated Liberal Studies requirements and does not imagine changes in how these courses are treated. He does, however, support requiring explanations of how a UMM course synthesizes material in any four credit 2xxx and 3xxx course proposed to meet both a Category III and a Category IV requirement. Squier asked how that would work for the large number of provisionally approved courses. Finzel answered that it may be that we won’t have a provisionally approved process for those courses. We may want a more thorough vetting.

Kildegaard stated that the following issue came up at the Social Science Division Global Village discussion: several courses meet the IP Gen Ed under the current structure that don’t have anything to do with cultures or diversity. One example is the Model United Nations course. No Social Sciences faculty were aware that Global Village should cover people and not systems. It appears that we do a lot of talking about system thinking but we want to talk about our differences rather than the processes through which we solve problems collectively. Garavaso

stated that the requirement talks about social constructs. Wouldn't that be social and economic systems? Finzel asked if task force members believed the proposal addresses Kildegaard's concerns or if they thought it needed to be clarified. Erickson responded that it was not the intent of the task force to word it in such a way as to exclude systems and only focus on people. Finzel stated that if anyone has strong suggestions about the language to share them with the task force.

Korn noted that in an earlier meeting Ericksen mentioned that task force member Barry McQuarrie had reviewed courses that currently satisfy the Global Village requirements; she asked if the task force reviewed the same courses to see if they would fit the revised Liberal Studies category. Ericksen answered that the task force did not want to be the ones making that judgment. They assumed most would stay, but there are some courses that have the HDiv designator when the focus is on the U.S. Finzel noted that it is his assumption that most current Gen Ed designations would map into this list. Over time the Curriculum Committee would ask for a stronger rationale for why courses meet the Gen Ed requirement. As a transition, it's good to include them.

Kildegaard stated that Environmental Stewardship category is focused on human societies, and he doesn't believe that Science and Mathematics courses focus on human societies. Anderson disagreed and responded that if a course is about environmental impact, it would address the idea of people making that impact on the environment. Crabtree added that he teaches two geology courses that carry the Evt Gen Ed. One of the courses, Geol 2311-Forensic Geology, covers the connectiveness of people and environmental artifacts. In his course, he discusses deposits and how they are extracted, bought, and sold in market. It's not a key component of the course, but they do address how people use the artifacts and why an emphasis on stewardship would affect the process.

Ng stated that the previous Evt Gen Ed interpretation was broader. This one is more specific. She interprets the commas in the description as "and," meaning that the course must satisfy a concise list of criteria. Ericksen noted that the description of the new ES Gen Ed comes out of the campus learning outcomes, but it doesn't require that every course talk about stewardship. Crabtree stated that the word 'stewardship' will implicitly make students think every course is about stewardship. Rodney added that she wondered if a course that isn't focused on stewardship would fit the category. Bezanson stated that there is a fine distinction that is not captured in the description. We have the opportunity at this moment to make it clearer.

Anderson stated that when this change is presented to the campus community, they will not see it in isolation. They will also see the Gen Ed modification to the FL requirement. The trend is to increase the footprint impact, and those concerns will be raised. We are moving in a direction of increasing the number of categories not independent of the FL. Finzel replied that we have not made the FL change. Anderson stated that this is the impression we are giving to the campus.

Crabtree stated that the four new category descriptions have a greater specificity and have become more verbose. The first two (A & B) read as fairly defined course descriptions, which seems a bit much.

Ng stated that it's not clear in the catalog copy (until you look at Provision iv) that some of the courses in category IV can be combined with courses from category III. She asked if that detail could come sooner on the page. Erickson replied that they could change the head for category V

from “four courses of at least two credits each” to “four courses of at least two credits each, some of which might be from category III.”

Bezanson asked why it is that courses have to be four credits and cannot be two credits. For the Gen Ed ArtP we allow two-credit classes to meet the requirement. Ericksen answered that four credits allows for more synthesis. A two-credit course in category III can be taken, but a four-credit course is required to preserve the clarity of category IV.

Kildegaard asked if a student took courses in each of the six “ways of knowing” categories, would they take two fewer classes than under the current scenario, as the catalog copy suggests. If so, we are at least hypothetically shrinking the footprint. Ng stated that we’re not necessarily shrinking. It would depend upon whether a student chooses to take two-credit or four-credit courses.

Kildegaard stated that there is a whole taxonomy on “ways of knowing” that includes language, sense perception, emotion, reason, imagination, faith, intuition, and memory. That’s not really what we are teaching. Ericksen replied that the description Kildegaard gave is *a* taxonomy, but not the *only* taxonomy. Kildegaard stated that it’s not about knowing, it’s a method of inquiry. It’s not about what you achieve or what knowledge you hold, but it’s about what practice you engage in. Finzel noted that he would simply say if you look at our current Gen Ed, you will find contradictions and ambiguity. The problem is that proposers are making things longer so they can be clear, and there is an inherent ambiguity in language. Perkinson stated that “ways of knowing” is the idea of lenses through which we look at things, e.g., sociologically, scientifically, philosophically, etc. Bezanson stated that most students are just trying to meet the requirements. They won’t be picking on the language of the requirement in the same way as this committee. Kildegaard stated that the main thing this proposal has done for him is to help him think of this as not a list. That’s a big improvement.

Perkinson stated that as a prospective student, she participated in the Community of Scholars and was asked the question, “How do you see education? As a pyramid?” It was explained as almost like a pyramid that begins with IC, where students interact with others, and slowly builds up to the capstone where students can synthesize what they have learned. It hasn’t been related to her since that interview 4 years ago, but it stuck with her. Anderson stated that she liked the idea, but if we view Gen Eds as having a capstone, that should be met by all of the divisions with some equity.

Bezanson stated that if you look at St. Olaf’s website, it has a pretty and powerful map of how categories are related and how they function together. We present information in a very linear way. Ng added that it’s what this campus chose to do. We can’t just fit into somebody else’s model.

Korn shared the following comments for consideration:

1. The Twin Cities campus has been reviewing their Gen Ed program, which was inspired by two things: 1) it’s time to do a full review that hasn’t been done in nearly twenty years, and 2) the emphasis on retention and graduation rate inspired by the Minnesota State Legislature’s model of supporting the U based on improving retention and graduation rates. The Twin Cities created a new APAS report that includes a “bucket” that identifies courses that students completed but are either not contributing to progress towards the degree or not efficiently moving students towards the degree. The new APAS, and the data it provides,

reveals that the Twin Cities' model of allowing core liberal arts courses to also satisfy ENVT, ECR, HDIV, the IP, or Technology and Society is negatively impacting retention and degree progress. They hope to develop a more streamlined model of Gen Eds because students are taking more credits to satisfy the Gen Eds than they had realized.

With three variations to fulfill Global Village, the Morris Gen Ed proposal is more complicated than the TC core and theme liberal arts Gen Ed model.

2. While Morris could “clone” the TC APAS structure (which they hope to discontinue) it will not work well for the proposal. She and Twin Cities APAS experts reviewed the proposal, Morris's current APAS structure, and the Twin Cities structure. Within the core/theme set up, the Twin Cities' Gen Eds are very consistent in regard to credit count. The Twin Cities APAS team believes that Morris's proposal would require increased diligence at the ECAS level which then might drive a “group code” for the variety of ways that the requirements could be fulfilled (2 and 4 credits classes, one or two Gen Eds, and different criteria based on the level of a course).
3. A gentle reminder that if the Curriculum Committee approves the proposal, and it moves forward to Campus Assembly, the Campus Assembly would first have to vote to allow a course to carry two Gen Ed designators, since the Campus Assembly specifically voted against this practice for the Morris campus.
4. A gentle reminder that the Scholastic Committee is responsible for review of transfer credits and nationally recognized exams for satisfying general education requirements. Faculty are responsible for review of transfer courses contributing to a major and for course substitutions.
5. Before we make any Gen Ed decisions, we need to assess the last change to the Gen Eds, WLA, to determine if it has had an impact on recruiting and retention. In addition, the Office of Admissions should be consulted in order to determine if the proposal would support recruiting or hinder recruiting.
6. Morris has been asked to implement the “new APAS” report that includes the “new bucket” that identifies courses that are not contributing to the degree or delaying degree progress. The new APAS report will be innocuous at the beginning of a student's academic career, but as Morris courses are completed, the “bucket” will be filled with AP, PSEO, CIS, IB, Level A, and transfer courses that Morris accepts for credit but Campus Assembly decides cannot count towards Gen Eds, as is the current WLA practice. This practice impacts recruiting, enrollment, and retention. In addition, students with credits that do not contribute to the Gen Eds, a major, or a minor will find themselves on financial aid probation, and worse yet, on financial aid suspension because they have run out of eligibility.
7. And a final gentle reminder. The Minnesota State Legislature House Higher Education Bill has a special \$1.5 million provision to offset Morris tuition. That provision is still in play in Senate conference committee discussion. The Minnesota State Legislature also endorses AP, PSEO, and CIS opportunities for Minnesota high school students who may not be able to use those courses/credits to satisfy the Gen Eds at Morris. The Minnesota State Legislature orchestrated the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and the board of regents implemented it. We are a public institution. A unique, rigorous, exceptional PUBLIC liberal arts institution.

Ng asked why AP and PSEO credits wouldn't count in the same way they always have counted. Korn answered that the proposal says they won't count because it's too complicated. Kildegaard

asked if this was true just for the Global Village. Korn stated that it's the new category 4 that could affect AP and PSEO credits. We have students coming to us with a lot of college writing and public speaking who have to take another course. Global Village will affect students in that way as well. [Note: Korn's comments are in reaction to the original proposal. The current proposal no longer includes the statement that excludes AP and PSEO credits.]

Finzel stated that the state of the art Gen Ed programs around the country require some sort of laddering and advanced curriculum, not simply entry level work. Korn's critique would suggest that laddering cannot be done in Gen Ed. While the U of M has said we would accept the entire transfer curriculum to meet our Gen Ed requirements, we are free to strengthen our general education for those that do not enter with the transfer curriculum. Korn answered that it will affect students who have not finished the transfer curriculum. Ericksen asked where a transfer of a 3xxx-level course would go. The task force's initial proposal specifically excluded AP and CIS kinds of courses because we would not have a way of knowing the justification. Korn responded that she still thought that will scare people away from Morris. Ericksen noted that the idea that it's a bad thing if a course goes in the "bucket" if it's not a Gen Ed or contributing to the major, implies that those courses are a waste of time, and that is not at all how we think. Crabtree agreed that there is something unpleasant about the "bucket." This would lead advisers to dissuade students from taking courses they are interested in outside their major. He asked whether courses would remain in the "bucket" if the student later added a minor. Korn stated that those courses would move out of the "bucket." Korn added that if everyone is OK with students filling their "bucket," they should be aware there are consequences to the decisions they are making.

Finzel announced that there will be one more meeting. He asked that people send him any suggestions regarding the text of the proposal. He will send them to the task force for reaction.

Submitted by Darla Peterson