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Curriculum minutes 09/19/2011

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2011-12 MEETING #2 Minutes
September 19, 2011, 2:00 p.m., BCR**

Present: Bart Finzel (chair), Joe Alia, Bryce Blankenfeld, Clare Dingley, Caitlin Drayna, Janet Ericksen, Hazen Fairbanks, Sara Haugen, Leslie Meek, Peh Ng, Paula O'Loughlin, Ian Patterson, Gwen Rudney, Jeri Squier, Tisha Turk

Absent: Carol Cook, Heather James

Visiting: Nancy Helsper

In these minutes: Provisional Approval Process, Humanities Course Revision, and General Education Review Process.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 12, 2011

MOTION (Turk/Patterson) to approve the September 12, 2011, minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. PROVISIONAL APPROVAL PROCESS

Finzel stated that at the last meeting questions were raised regarding the provisional approval process. There has been confusion about when it can be used. The Campus Assembly minutes from April 30, 2004, show that the Curriculum Committee had approved a policy that all courses must receive Curriculum Committee approval (either provisional or regular) before being offered, and courses receiving provisional approval would remain active for the duration of the current catalog. Squier added that a provisionally approved course must be brought forward for regular approval by the committee in order to remain an active course in the new catalog. Finzel noted that one concern has been that a curricular change brought forward in the fall semester may not make it to Campus Assembly in time for spring semester registration that begins in October.

Squier explained that in the past provisional approval was used to approve variable topic courses. They were converted to course cluster headings. Patterson asked what variable topics were. Helsper explained that an umbrella course heading would be approved and any specific topics were automatically approved. Squier added that the courses under the variable topics umbrella would have the same course description and usually the same Gen Ed designator. Strand stated, for the record, that it was the understanding back in 2004 that provisionally approved courses would not be in the UMM catalog. Due to technological updates, they are now part of the online catalog.

3. COURSE CHANGE APPROVAL

MOTION (Rudney/Patterson) to approve the proposed course change.

LANG 1062-Reading in the American University (change from 1 to 2 cr)

Discussion: Ericksen explained that LANG courses are a work-in-progress designed for non-native speakers of English. Models from other U of M campuses were used and adjusted a little. This reading course works much better as a 2-credit course. Helsper mentioned that the request is for the change to be effective fall 2011. Squier explained that the change will retroactively apply to students enrolled in fall 2011 after it is approved by the Campus Assembly. Finzel noted that the change did not come to the Curriculum Committee until May 12. Squier added that this is an example of a course that could not be quickly approved with the provisional approval process because a change to an existing course cannot be provisionally approved.

Motion passed (12-0-0)

4. GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW PROCESS

Finzel asked Turk to describe the process that led to the General Education Review Report. Turk explained that the General Education Review Subcommittee tried to think about what general education precedents are out there as we start thinking about whether to revise our general education program. The subcommittee tried to think about what else is out there, what are the specific needs of our campus, who are our students, and what do they want and need. The subcommittee came up with distinctive or unique qualities of UMM (there is a list in the report). Then the subcommittee researched the different types of general education, and found three basic models: 1) Open Curriculum, i.e., essential no required courses or a very broad requirement; 2) Core Curriculum, i.e., where everyone is required to take a set of courses; and 3) Distribution requirement similar to what we have at UMM. The third model is the most commonly found. The report provides examples of particular schools that offered examples of the models. Out of the conversations of the subcommittee came strong opinions from individuals. Several conversations were led by Cheryl Contant in which she asked the subcommittee members to consider what it might be like to offer fewer classes with Gen Ed designators, and to think about which classes were built intentionally for the general education program. O'Loughlin added that the appendix of the report provides further context by looking at the Morris 14 and COPLAC institutions that are similar to UMM.

Finzel stated that the report was the starting point to “tee-up” the broader conversation that needs to be held campus-wide. Ericksen recalled that it was the expectation that the subcommittee would submit its report to the Curriculum Committee, and the committee would then oversee some kind of gatherings on campus in the form of either a survey and/or forums to collect feedback from the campus about our current Gen Ed program. The committee needs to get that feedback before it can move ahead with a proposal. Patterson stated that, as hall director last year, he had a captive audience and asked students what they thought of our Gen Ed program. The consensus he took from that meeting was that students feel there is a reason for a Gen Ed program, but they had particular gripes about it. In particular, students don't like the arts performance requirement, even though there is a logical reason for it. Art students don't necessarily want to take a science with and without a lab, but it is easier to take when they know that the rest of the campus has to take an art course that includes performing or presenting.

Ericksen stated that the kind of information Patterson shared is what the committee needs to collect from the campus and then come back to the committee to see what the next step should be in proposing clarification or change. Finzel asked Helsper to talk about the General Education Survey of Graduating Seniors that has been done for the past 10 years. Helsper answered that students thought they had achieved all of the general education categories, but they didn't find them all to be important. A couple of categories were continually rated very low. They also didn't understand liberal arts education and why they needed it. The Assessment of Student Learning Committee (ASLC) did a mapping of the general education categories to the new Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) last year. Finzel noted that the ASLC created a grid to map our SLO to the Gen Ed categories. Interestingly, it shows that there are some SLOs that do not have a clear connection to our Gen Ed program. A more thorough conversation about that will occur in the next couple of weeks. The committee now has to decide on how to gather campus input.

Meek asked Finzel to define the timeline. Finzel replied that it would require more than one year, and next year is a catalog year, which would require some stopping and restarting. It is possible to have the campus discussions this fall, bring that information to the committee in November/December, and formulate a proposal in early spring semester. Patterson asked when the last review of general education was done. Ng answered that it was reviewed during the semester conversion in 1997-1999.

Strand noted that Duluth just finished their review of liberal education that was approved in fall 2009. A committee was created in spring 2010 to work on implementation. They are just starting now to propose courses for 2012. That is a more realistic timeline. Rudney agreed that the timeline issue is important. It is also important to follow a model that shows us how to measure whether students meet the requirements rather than just asking them to assess themselves. Finzel stated that the last point brings overlap between this committee and the ASLC. The conversations should converge.

Finzel stated that the subcommittee's report provided examples of models and laid out the strengths and weaknesses of our current program. Now we need to plan how to broaden the conversation across campus. O'Loughlin replied that the people who attended the AAC&U conference on general education last spring met with Contant and laid out a timeline. That group said that there should be meetings with divisions where specific questions are asked. Open forums for students, staff, and faculty who couldn't make it to the division meetings could be held as well. It is the faculty who own the curriculum, so it should begin with the faculty's understanding of the general education program.

A discussion continued about which specific questions should be asked. Finzel asked for two volunteers to draft the questions and bring them to the next meeting for discussion. Alia and Patterson volunteered.

Meek asked what will be done with the collected data. Finzel answered that it could pose a challenge if there aren't convergent ideas or if one division says it is fabulous and

another doesn't like any part of it. Common themes might tell us to look at specific aspects of general education. Or we might find that we don't have substantial problems with our Gen Ed. We won't know until we ask the question. Meek stated that she keeps thinking of the comment Korth made in the April minutes that he tried to have a meeting in his division and one person showed up. Finzel replied that it would be better attended if the general education discussion could be done as part of a regular division meeting. He asked the division chairs to hold a division meeting sometime before November 1. Ng stated that it would be helpful if more than one committee member could be at each division meeting to take notes. O'Loughlin added that although there should be representation by committee members at the division meetings and student forums, they should stay silent and just take notes. Patterson stated that he had already forewarned the MCSA committee and will utilize that group of students to think about student forums. Ericksen stated that it would be useful to have the student input on the same timeline as the divisional input. Ng noted that she will expect the student reps to attend the division meeting, as usual.

Finzel stated that the committee will meet next week to go over the questions that Alia and Patterson propose. Helsper will report on the graduating seniors general education survey results. The chair of the Assessment of Student Learning Committee will be invited to discuss that committee's role and how it overlaps with this committee.

Adjourned 2:46 p.m.
Submitted by Darla Peterson