University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2011-12 MEETING #8 Minutes
November 21, 2011, 2:00 p.m., BCR

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

In these minutes: Curriculum Committee Membership on Program Review Committee; General Education Review (continued discussion)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Finzel stated that the next and final meeting of the semester will be December 5. At that meeting he will present a rough timeline for spring semester. He reminded the committee that Darla is seeking schedules for spring semester. Since this is a large committee, it is very difficult to find a time when all members are available, so please indicate if you have any flexibility in your schedule.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION (O'Loughlin/Patterson) to approve the November 14, 2011 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. MEMBERSHIP ON THE PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE

Finzel asked for two volunteers from the Curriculum Committee to serve as members of the Program Review Committee. The chair of the Assessment of Student Learning Committee has agreed to provide two volunteers as well. Students will not participate directly on the committee, and two at-large members will be identified later. Alia and Meek agreed to serve on the Program Review Committee.

3. GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW (continued discussion)

Finzel stated that the notes from the staff forum are insightful and interesting, but do not offer new or unique themes. One of the common themes that has come up in a number of the forums, and one about which this committee has not fully discussed, has been the Global Village set of requirements.

The lack of a U.S. diversity course expectation within our Gen Eds came up throughout the forums. There was no argument against including it, but there was a consensus that adding another required course to the Gen Eds was not a good idea. Helsper stated that the Human Diversity (HDiv) category under Global Village covers that area. The description of HDiv in the catalog states "to increase students' understanding of

individual and group differences (e.g., race, gender, class) and their knowledge of the traditions and values of various groups in the United States." HDiv is not a requirement, but it is one of the two choices out of four that students need to take. O'Loughlin suggested that it might be the title HDiv that is confusing. Ericksen stated that, again, it appears to be a packaging problem. People don't read the descriptions; they don't go beyond the HDiv. Ng agreed and said that happens with the IP category. We have International Perspectives (IP) now as a separate category, but people look at the title and not the definition of the category. Squier stated that the definitions are not easy to find in the catalog; they are listed separately and you have to dig down to find them.

Finzel stated that there were also comments regarding the need for something relating to our sustainability initiative. We already have the People and the Environment (Envt) designation. Do we have a packaging problem, or is the two-of-four requirement keeping students from being bound to cover that area?

O'Loughlin stated that our mission statement talks about environmental stewardship and community engagement. If we want to prioritize what is required in our mission statement, it should be a required Gen Ed course. James added that our motto as offering *a renewable, sustainable education* might be a way to package our general education program. Categories such as policy, ethics, human diversity, sociology, international perspectives, etc., all play into it. Patterson questioned whether it would still be considered general education after we have started to put it through a lens of sustainability. When it becomes specific to aspects like diversity, environmental ecology, etc., the aspects of general education are lost.

Finzel asked if the fact that we require two of four areas causes a difficulty with the requirements. There is a desire to add in some areas, and that's why we created the two-of-four model. Dingley stated that part of the charge of the General Education Committee in converting to semesters was to simplify and reduce the number of GERs. Helsper suggested that if we would allow more than one designator to count on a course, and if we allowed students to count all four categories under Global Village, then students would be able to cover all of the categories while taking fewer courses. Finzel noted that the possible number of permutations would be quite high in some disciplines.

For purposes of discussion, O'Loughlin proposed reducing Global Village to fewer categories with more options within the categories, and more chances to choose courses that intersect across the categories. She further proposed reducing the Gen Eds to three or four main categories with two courses in each area. It would not be ideal, she said, because some people would avoid certain areas. Helsper reminded the committee that students are required to take 60 credits in liberal arts general education courses, regardless what is required in the Gen Ed program.

Finzel asked the students to comment. Fairbanks stated that she likes the idea of having more options to fulfill a smaller number of Gen Eds. She would appreciate being able to take classes she enjoys to fulfill the GERs versus having to take specific required classes. Blankenfeld stated that he preferred the broader Gen Ed program we have now. Finzel noted that a theme has come up that breadth is valued.

James elaborated on a proposal that developed out of the staff forum. The idea came from the collaboration of a number of staff members. The model is Portland State University. The Gen Eds consists of clusters. Skills are built over four years with an end capstone in general education, apart from the major capstone. UMM could create some key requirements such as math, language, college writing, etc., but also have a cluster of interdisciplinary courses that students could take to follow a track in a couple of different ways. It would include co-teaching and laying out skills that need to be handled at each of the four-year levels. Alia asked if the IS courses would need to be created to match the skill sets. James answered that we would need more IS courses that are specifically designed for a GER. Rather than just an opportunity to take a broad range of Gen Eds, it would target our Gen Eds to accomplish certain goals. Finzel noted that this model could lead to fewer choices. Alia stated that fewer categories could be simpler and more flexible. It would solve a lot of problems, O'Loughlin noted, but we would lose some breadth. Finzel stated that there does not seem to be a dominant desire to decrease the number of categories with Global Village. However, there does seem to be a desire to add to them. Ericksen agreed that no group identified a field they were willing to cut.

Ericksen stated that an information technology requirement had come up in discussions, and she wondered whether that or other additions could be satisfied outside a specific class. Patterson stated that he still needs to fulfill his Artistic Performance (ArtP) requirement, but he has performed at Open Mic, and at other music venues. Would those performances not be an appropriate fulfillment of the ArtP credit because there is not an instructional component? Meek noted that he could petition the Scholastic Committee to waive that requirement.

Finzel stated that work in foreign languages, diversity at home, and a desire for fitness and wellness are additional areas yet to be addressed. Expanding the Foreign Language (FL) would require some additional resources. Our peer institutions do require more FL than we do. Ericksen noted that our FL requirement is less than that of the Twin Cities campus, and that is embarrassing as a liberal arts college. Dingley stated that we require foreign language proficiency equal to one year. Helsper noted that in the last Gen Ed survey of graduating seniors FL ranked at the bottom on the question of whether they have achieved the goal of the FL requirement, and whether it was important. Finzel noted that our current requirement certainly does not produce fluency. Ng stated that if we want our students to be fluent in a foreign language, the appropriate time to start learning it is earlier than college. She grew up bilingual because it was a requirement in her school system growing up. They did not wait until college to start to learn a language. James stated that a two-semester requirement is fine, but exemptions should only be made if a language was taken at the college level. Patterson stated that the problem is again one of packaging: students have the expectation that they will be proficient and good at a foreign language after one year. It is no surprise that they would rank it so low in the survey. Students who meet the requirement should also go to a country where they can immerse themselves in that language. It would help prepare students to participate in a global world. Alia suggested that the FL requirement might be combined with a study abroad experience.

James asked what kind of packaging FL needs. Patterson answered that we should not try to build proficiency, but rather an understanding of the language. Ng read the requirement goal from the catalog: "To develop some fluency in the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a second language; and critical insight into another culture." Ericksen added that it is nice and vague, and yet students see the word *fluency* and have unrealistic expectations. Ericksen stated that the Twin Cities campus does a far better job of packaging liberal education requirements. If we put College Writing, a second writing course, a second FL course, and information technology under a skills block, students could do all of those things and move onto other blocks. She added that there is no mention of a second language requirement in the Twin Cities liberal education requirements. Dingley noted that it is part of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) degree. It's not part of liberal education. Ericksen suggested that Morris could make it a requirement at some of the relevant major levels, such as global business.

Finzel stated that the next meeting will be on December 5. At that meeting he will provide a list for discussion of items that can be acted upon relatively quickly to address the problem areas in our general education program that we have identified and a rough timeline for doing so. Haugen asked a question regarding the thinking behind moving quickly to address some problems, while leaving more comprehensive changes for a later time. Finzel reminded the committee that the accreditation report indicated that the campus would benefit from a discussion about Gen Ed. We are having that discussion now and we have identified some problem areas that can be addresses relatively easily. He is proposing we do what we can this spring. Since the catalog will dominate the committee's agenda next fall, areas of concern that require much more work and discussion will need to wait to be addressed beginning spring of 2013.

Adjourned 2:55 p.m.
Submitted by Darla Peterson