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## Curriculum minutes 01/30/2012

Curriculum Committee

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
2011-12 MEETING #10 Minutes  
January 30, 2012, 12:00 p.m., BCR**

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

Absent: Bryce Blankenfeld, Ian Patterson

Visiting: Nancy Helsper

*In these minutes: Request for Gen Ed Designator on Directed Study; EDP Program (Revised Call for Proposals, Review Committee, and Timeline); General Education Discussion, Writing Requirement*

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Finzel welcomed the committee to the first meeting of spring semester. This semester the committee will talk about the General Education over-arching theme. There will be other items of business to cover, but we will keep coming back to relatively small changes that are doable in the short-term. The more substantive changes will be addressed next year.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** (Ericksen/Rudney) to approve the December 5, 2011 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**2. REQUEST FOR GEN ED DESIGNATOR ON DIRECTED STUDY**

**Motion:** (Cook/Alia) to approve the requests for ArtP GER for Hum 2993.

Discussion: Cook asked if the directed study is in progress. Ericksen answered that it is, but the student would do the directed study regardless of whether the Gen Ed designator is approved.

**Vote:** Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**3. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (EDP)**

**Motion:** (Cook/Alia) to approve the revised EDP Call for Proposals (CFP).

Discussion: Finzel stated that, as a result of the October 3 meeting, he has revised the Call for Proposals. Some of the process information was removed, hybrid courses were added to the list of priorities, and the amount of funding per proposal has increased from \$2,000 to \$3,000. He was able to identify \$15,000 for the budget. The change of date for next year's program will result in two years of funding in the next fiscal year. There might be a modest drop in the next year, dropping back to \$12,000. The four areas given priority are: 1) Honors Program interdisciplinary courses, 2) courses that integrate

sustainability across the liberal arts, 3) intellectual community (IC) courses, and 4) courses that utilize technology in innovative ways, including efforts to develop hybrid courses. Ng stated a concern that faculty may want more explanation of what hybrid courses are, other than what is written in the CFP. Finzel answered that he would like the review committee to have flexibility in determining whether a course falls under the definition of hybrid.

O'Loughlin asked if the list of funding priorities is in priority order. If not, she suggested adding a statement that they are listed in no particular order. Finzel agreed to clarify that. Rudney wondered if it might be better to have fewer items in the priority list to have a tighter focus. Finzel stated that programs listed are all in need of courses. It may be cumbersome, but he would like to stick with four priorities for this round and revisit the number in the fall.

**Vote:** Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Finzel asked for volunteers to serve on the EDP review committee. Historically, the review committee consists of three members, usually two faculty members and one student. O'Loughlin, Turk, and Fairbanks volunteered. O'Loughlin agreed to chair the review committee. Proposals will be due on March 20.

#### **4. GENERAL EDUCATION DISCUSSION: WRITING REQUIREMENT**

Finzel asked Turk to talk about the Writing requirement proposal, its origin, and the extent of the discussion that led to it. Turk explained that the English department has talked for some time about wanting more students on campus to take the college writing course. Since spring 2009 they have talked about wanting to raise the ACT and AP scores that allow students to place out of college writing. When the revision of the general education program began, plans to change college writing were put on hiatus. After hearing what came out of the discussions about general education, as well as the report of the subcommittee and the Curriculum Committee, it was clear that a lot of people across campus believe that students need more writing.

Based on the feedback, the writing requirement proposal changed from envisioning a slight change in current procedures to a change in the Gen Ed requirements. The proposal is simple: everybody takes college writing, and no one can place out of it. If a student has taken college writing elsewhere, those credits can go towards graduation, but the student must still take our college writing course in the classroom. The English faculty would also like to supplement college writing with additional 2xxx-level writing courses as well, but that is not germane to the Gen Ed discussion, so it is not part of the proposal.

Meek stated that the proposal was beautifully written. Ericksen suggested that the title be changed. Students take college writing in high school and come to Morris and say that they have already had the class. Alia added that a title change would help change the perception that most students think they are being stuck in a remedial course. That's not a good attitude to have entering a class. Fairbanks stated that it is really important that

every student take college writing, but she questioned whether there would be enough English faculty to teach it.

O'Loughlin stated that she liked the idea of changing names. She was also curious about a second writing course. Turk answered that the future possibility of writing intensive courses was discussed. Although that would be super in theory, the bigger priority would be to get college writing for all students. Writing intensive courses are complicated, from an administrative view. Faculty would need time to develop new syllabi or significantly change existing syllabi. Teaching a writing intensive course means not teaching other courses. There are current courses that require a lot of writing but don't have an actual writing instruction component. Courses would need to be reviewed to determine whether they meet writing intensive criteria. A lot of faculty would require a fair amount of mentoring and training. Because of all of those factors, it is a longer term plan that would require a commitment by the English faculty and a campus-wide discussion.

Ng stated that she liked the proposal to require everyone to take writing from faculty at UMM. However, one concern that the English discipline came up with many years ago was that if we require everybody to take it, the ability level of all of the students will be different. That is why they came up with fundamentals of writing I and II. Is it possible to design the courses according to ACT level? Turk replied that fundamentals of writing would still be offered. When she came to Morris, fundamentals was a one-semester course for students scoring below a 19 on their ACT. They would follow that course with the college writing course. Fundamentals did not fulfill the CW GER. Shortly after she got here, the fundamentals course was changed to a two-course sequence. It allowed instructors to plan the class for a whole year. It provided advantages of flexibility and staffing. English faculty discussed having a system like the Twin Cities campus, where they have three courses at the 1xxx-level: a fundamentals equivalent, college writing, and 1401 for students with a high ACT. The Twin Cities has a complicated way of deciding who gets placed in the 1401 class, involving factors such as a high school English class GPA and ACT scores. Turk stated that she was surprised to experience that the classes are much easier to teach when they include students at the upper level. Those students can set the bar high in terms of peer review and feedback. Having a peer in the class who does well helps students understand what it means to do it well.

Finzel asked if transfer students will be able to fulfill the CW requirement with their transfer credits. Entering HS students will have to take college writing, but his son took the college writing course online as a high school senior. Would that student have to take it again on campus? Ericksen added that many students do College-in-the-Schools (CIS) in which they take a college level writing course in their high school classroom for which they receive college transfer credit. Dingley stated that the college transcript does not identify where a person was sitting when they took the course. We have to be very careful about discriminating against particular students because their school may not have a good program and we don't want to accept the credits. We would have to look at the content of the course and not who is taking the course. It is not just general practice in the field, but also University policy. If a course is taken online or in a classroom it will show as a UMM course on the transcript. We can say that we will not accept the transfer of a writing course from a particular school, rather than saying we will not accept it from

a specific student. James asked what would happen if we did not accept it from transfers or PSEOs. Dingley stated that it would not be wise for Morris to reject every transfer credit from high school students just because they were in high school when they took the class. O'Loughlin added that we could also leave it as is and say that everybody who comes to Morris has to take this additional writing course. We could offer fundamentals, college writing, and then a higher level course such as writing in the liberal arts. That would address the issue that Dingley is raising, but we don't have the number of faculty to do it.

Cook suggested that we accept the general writing course transfer but offer a 2xxx-level course that everybody takes so that they will have had some kind of writing course while at UMM. Turk stated that an on-campus writing requirement was discussed so that even those whose credits transfer here would be required to take a 2xxx-level writing class, but that would affect staffing. An earlier version of the proposal suggested that model. After discussion, the consensus among the English faculty was to propose requiring everyone to take a 1xxx level writing course. Given the issues Dingley brought up, we could talk about the possibility of changing the nature of the requirement so it can be an on-campus course requirement that most would fulfill. Cook asked if the Gen Ed program will be revamped to make it optimal and match the Student Learning Outcomes. As long as we are now in conversation, why not mandate it and set our bar high?

Cook asked if writing intensive meant that the course is a writing course rather than a course in a major that has writing going on in it. Where are students getting the instruction on how to write a research paper? Turk answered that the instruction is offered mostly at the Writing Room. All college writing courses cover research as well. Ericksen added that when we talk about a writing intensive course, we are talking about taking a regular course, removing a piece of the syllabus and replacing it with a writing component. Turk added that a writing intensive course would spend a lot of time in class talking about writing, offering extensive feedback on writing, with opportunities for revision.

Turk stated that schools that offer a two-semester composition sequence focus on process in the first term and on research project writing in the second term. There are shared conventions of academic discourse and certain basics of research. College writing teaches students to engage in scholarly thinking. We assume that some of that happens in the major. Cook noted that although Morris is known for its undergraduate research, we do not teach writing for research. Finzel stated that the proposal before us does not preclude that development.

O'Loughlin stated that it is a good idea to require writing, but we cannot lose our transfer curriculum. It is vital to our numbers. Finzel replied that we could change our culture and say that we expect everyone to take a writing class, and ACT scores would not exempt students from that requirement. Even if we would accept transfer credits as meeting the requirement, many more would take it. O'Loughlin replied that they can't take it again and get credit for it. Dingley noted that it would depend on the content of the course. If the transfer course is close to the Morris course, they should not get credit for it. If it is not similar, we could think of it as a prerequisite for our course, resulting in

a win-win situation. Dingley went on to say that at some future point, as we look at exemptions, we should involve the Scholastic Committee in the discussion, since that committee oversees exemptions.

Rudney stated that she fully supports the proposal that all students should take college writing. There has to be a way to accept credits for college writing as well as to give credit somehow for taking it here as well. Perhaps it could be a repeatable course. Then they could come in with their transfer credit and get an additional four credits for taking it at Morris. Dingley noted that there is a movement at the national level to not allow students to repeat a course. One other thing to keep in mind is content and whether or not it is of high enough quality to satisfy what our English faculty would be teaching so that our students won't be disadvantaged. Squier suggested that the transfer credits for a writing course transfer in as a Humanities Gen Ed. Turk answered that that was considered. The English discipline has no objection to counting it toward a graduate requirement, but not toward the CW requirement. Content is a big issue. There are two really different ways to think about writing for college. One is focused on grammar, and the other on critical thinking skills. When Morris High School tried to implement CIS, we told them what our standards were and a lot of kids were failing because they were not prepared. Some schools dumb down the curriculum so that students don't fail. They should be doing that in high school, but not when it turns into college credit. That's a problem.

James asked if instead of three levels, the Gen Ed requirement was a second course like writing for the liberal arts that touched on high levels of critical thinking skills and research. The first course could be a college writing course, for which we accept transfer credits. It could be a hybrid of fundamentals and college writing with the name of college writing. Students would have the option to place out of it. The second course could be writing for the liberal arts (a 1xxx-level requirement for everybody). Both would be hosted by the English discipline. Later on, disciplines could take on the writing intensive courses in the majors. We would throw ACT scores out of the equation. Ericksen asked if the 300 people who take college writing now would then have to take two courses. James stated that only the second course would be required.

Turk stated that, in terms of campus culture, that proposal would not fix the remedial stigma and would make it worse in some cases. A simpler way of thinking about that would be to institute a two-semester composition sequence. Students can opt out of the first semester, but are required to take the second semester. That's a common way to handle college writing. Helsper noted that was doing that back in the early 1990s. Finzel asked what people thought of a bar that's higher, with fundamentals not perhaps as high as composition. Ericksen stated that her preference would be no bar and no exemption. Finzel thanked Turk for starting the discussion. A decision will have to be made in the next week or two.

Adjourned 12:59 p.m.  
Submitted by Darla Peterson