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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2011-12 MEETING #13 Minutes
February 20, 2012, 12:00 p.m., BCR**

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

Absent:

Visiting: Nancy Helsper

In these minutes: General Education Packaging

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Finzel announced that the college writing requirement proposal will be on the Scholastic Committee agenda right after spring break. That should allow time for conversation prior to the Campus Assembly meeting in April. Also, the Curriculum Committee will take a week off and will not meet on February 27.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: (James/Patterson) to approve the February 13, 2012 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. GENERAL EDUCATION PACKAGING

Finzel stated that this discussion will focus on how we can better present the general education package to students. Some headway was made when Dingley took the initiative to revise APAS to include Gen Ed descriptions. Ericksen and Patterson have also been working on changing the advising material that relates to Gen Ed.

Ericksen shared a copy of the Gen Ed sheet that has been given to advisers to use when they work with new students in the summer. It showed the GER code on the left with a checklist on the right. What she and Patterson came up with is something that should either go home with the student or be accessible online instead of staying in the adviser folder. The revised version provides the GER goals and descriptions (copied word-for-word from the course catalog) on one side. The other side of handout puts the GER in the larger framework of what is required to get a degree. The header was taken from AAC&U's LEAP documentation. The key emphasis is on achieving a liberal arts education as a combination of three things: Gen Eds, a major, and the Student Learning Outcomes. It would be used as an advising tool.

It might be helpful to hand students a four-year plan for their major when they register (including Gen Ed suggestions), or at least have it more visible electronically. Four-year plans are available, but they vary widely discipline-to-discipline and in specificity. Some include Gen Eds and some just list requirements in the major. Students don't see it as a

whole package. They understand the importance of the major requirements clearly, but they view the other stuff as either a burden or extraneous.

O'Loughlin stated that she liked the breakdown into three columns of skills, perspectives, and major. This layout allows students to think of the major as just a piece of total educational experience. Rudney agreed but suggested an additional column showing that there is also a choice to take something of interest outside the major or Gen Ed requirements. Cook replied that electives are there in the major column. Alia added that choice could be a row among any of the categories.

James stated that she had gone to a school where she was given sheets that had to be filled out and filed the beginning of her junior year that laid out her plan and worked as a contract.

Dingley stated that there are other things that make up the total of what it takes to graduate. The requirement of 60 credits outside the discipline of the major is also an important and complicated requirement that has prevented more than one student from graduating on time. The APAS report will give the student the whole picture.

Patterson stated that it is important to note that the current iteration of APAS, in terms of planning as a freshman or sophomore, could be overwhelming. This document is intended to provide an early, uncomplicated model that the student can talk over with their adviser. The other elements could be added in other conversations.

O'Loughlin stated that the first page should include something about Learning Outcomes. These are a means of achieving a liberal arts education. A connection between Learning Outcomes and General Education should be made. Finzel noted that the Assessment of Student Learning Committee is continuing their goal of mapping the Gen Ed goals to the Learning Outcomes. O'Loughlin added that she envisioned the first page showing Learning Outcomes, then Goals of Gen Ed, and then a map showing the links of Gen Ed to the Learning Outcomes. Cook noted that the Learning Outcomes are not only fulfilled by Gen Eds, but also within the major. Haugen added that some Learning Outcomes can be achieved by participating in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. Ng observed that everything that is listed in the equation at the top is laid out except the Learning Outcomes. Patterson stated that adding Learning Outcomes would provide clutter, from a student's perspective. The simpler sheet will provide the expectations of the Gen Ed program and a sheet to plan it. Learning Outcomes need to be addressed in a different way other than tacking it onto this sheet.

Finzel stated that the question appears to be whether the form would be better expanded to include the Learning Outcomes, or whether it would be better to keep it brief and include a link to the Learning Outcomes. Ericksen answered that she could include a link to resources that describe the core of the Learning Outcomes, the BA, and the requirements. Alia stated that the current system is too complicated and the goal is to have a succinct presentation to avoid that perception. Patterson suggested that an 8.5" by 14" foldable brochure be slipped into the folder students receive when they register. All

of the information could be on that, and the single sheet that advisers use could have the simplified proposed information.

Squier stated that the space assigned to the major would not be useful for most majors. Drayna replied that some majors have their own worksheets, so the major doesn't have to be specified on this sheet. Dingley added that APAS has replaced the major/minor worksheets. APAS is accurate and is used to decide whether a student will graduate. When the student is in the adviser session, the APAS that is relevant to the appropriate catalog will come up. O'Loughlin agreed that the proposed adviser sheet should not include the specificity of every major. It is designed to show the relationship with Gen Ed and the Learning Outcomes. Turk stated that, speaking as an adviser, this would be a useful tool to help students imagine how it all fits together. Squier added that the major area could just include a description of the major and a link to APAS.

Dingley stated that there is a strong initiative underway to have the disciplines' pages link to the current Sample Plans rather than have each discipline or major use slightly different approaches. Patterson noted that it is good idea, but people don't know that Sample Plans are even available. The key issue isn't just one of location; we want people to know they exist. Dingley responded that the Sample Plans need to be updated and that is why she had not promoted them yet.

Finzel asked where else the repackaging should be targeted. Should our course catalog include an overarching statement regarding what we are trying to achieve? Is the top of the proposed handout the kind of statement we would want to include in the catalog, or should it be modified in some way? Ng stated that our emphasis on a liberal arts education should clearly appear not only in the catalog but in all of UMM's marketing materials. Patterson noted that the current Admissions materials emphasize that Morris is a small campus in a small town with a wind turbine. The current pitch has strayed away from the liberal arts emphasis.

Squier stated that what is missing on all of the descriptions of our Gen Eds, with the exception of CW, is why it is important. The Twin Cities campus specifically states, in simple terms, the importance and usefulness of each Gen Ed. O'Loughlin agreed that there needs to be a broader discussion of why the specific requirements contribute to the goals. Ng asked if the committee was ready to talk about changing the definitions this semester. Finzel answered that the broader Gen Ed discussion will occur starting in January of next academic year. There will be a window of opportunity to add to the broader framed objectives that were lifted from AACU. There will be time also to have a general campus conversation about substantive changes to Gen Ed. Clearly we can improve the language used to describe our Gen Ed.

Finzel asked if there was a consensus that the language used to describe our Gen Ed program needs to be revised. Helsper stated that the current catalog has a lot of language about the importance of Gen Ed. The section under "Degree Requirements" includes eight paragraphs that were carefully written by Bettina Blake a long time ago. The existing language should be looked at to see if it needs revising as well. Finzel clarified

that there is no overarching summary statement in the catalog. O'Loughlin added that it doesn't explain how the columns connect.

Rudney stated that the equation at the top of the form does not add up to the full B.A. O'Loughlin added that the whole UMM degree is equal to more than the sum of these parts. Erickson replied that she will add an asterisk with a note that directs one to see APAS for complete degree requirements.

Finzel stated that the committee will come back in a couple of weeks with a revised version from Ericksen and Patterson. If endorsed by the committee, it will be shared with the Advising Office as a recommendation. Catalog copy changes will require more discussion.

Adjourned 12:45 p.m.
Submitted by Darla Peterson