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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**  
**2011-12 MEETING #16 Minutes**  
**March 26, 2012, 12:00 p.m., BCR**

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

Absent: Joe Alia, Hazen Fairbanks

Visiting: James Cotter, Nancy Helsper

*In these minutes: EDP Review Subcommittee Recommendation; Geology Review Report*

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Finzel announced that there will not be a meeting on April 2. The following week, faculty in computer science will talk about their program review. In addition, he will meet with the Scholastic Committee this week to talk about narrowing the exemptions to the writing requirement expectation. He would like to phase it in going into next year. There are a few more spaces in college writing than in the past. He asked if the threshold by which exemptions are allowed should be tightened. Currently, students will be exempted from College Writing if they have an ACT at or above 27. Perhaps changing it to 28 or 29, based on space, would be a good baby step to take. Ericksen stated that we might be able to go to 29 because of other avenues of exemption increasing. Finzel replied that he would express that to the Scholastic Committee. Dingley asked when the change would be effective. Finzel replied that the ACT change to 29 will be in effect with freshmen registration. O'Loughlin stated that the change needs to be brought to the attention of the advisers. Dingley announced that freshmen begin registering on April 26.

**1. EDP REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

**Motion:** (Ericksen/Patterson) to approve the funding recommendation of the EDP Review Subcommittee.

Discussion: O'Loughlin stated that the committee met and followed the funding priorities. They also considered the number of students the proposal would benefit. One member of the subcommittee had submitted a proposal. For that proposal, the decision was made by only two people, so she welcomed a discussion of that decision. Finzel asked if the recommendation from the subcommittee was unanimous. O'Loughlin replied that it was.

Ng asked why an IC proposal in her division was not funded. The rationale given for denying funding was that it "fit funding priorities but one committee member felt strongly that the course description seems at odds with the intention of an IC course since it specifically speaks of a lecture approach and IC courses are not supposed to have lectures." She asked where it says that IC courses are not supposed to have lectures. Lab courses include lectures before they begin the lab work. That is a strong statement to say that an IC course cannot have a lecture. Turk stated that she did not disagree with that

but was concerned when she read the course description. There is no mention of a discussion. Ng stated that the applicant wanted EDP funding to help her make the course more discussion-like. Turk replied that it didn't come across that way to her in the proposal. She may have misunderstood what a lab entails, but the description of the class didn't fit the way we conceptualize IC courses. Ng stated that she had strongly supported this proposal and thought the reason for not funding was a bit strong. Patterson stated that in a lab course the students work closely together to solve problems. The lab component is designed to facilitate discussion. An IC community is spawned from it. The word "lecture" may be used as a crossing of terms.

Finzel applauded the subcommittee's work, following the priorities, with over \$30,000 in proposals and only \$15,000 to award. There will be another round in the fall.

Finzel stated that the information literacy proposal was funded, although it was not directly part of the priority list. It came out of an earlier general education discussion. O'Loughlin stated that they made the call to fund it for that reason. Drayna noted that Fairbanks (a member of the subcommittee who could not be at this meeting) had asked her to note that this course goes hand-in-hand with the writing requirement and that's why it is important to fund it.

Rudney stated that there are proposals that failed to be recommended, and though she understood about the difficulty in having to make a choice, one of them was for a course required for a new major in her division. Supporting a new major could also be seen as a priority for EDP grants.

Ng asked if there is any flexibility in the budget in reducing awards so that the IC proposal could be funded even partially. Finzel stated that the amount was listed and he would be hesitant to reduce it. Turk stated that it would have been helpful to her to have had a fuller statement by the division chair because she did not know that it is difficult to recruit IC instructors in the Division of Science and Mathematics. Ng agreed that she should have written a stronger statement. Turk noted that it is helpful to have statements from division chairs explaining how the course fits into the curriculum because this is information that she would not otherwise know.

Several variations of reducing the amounts of the recommended awards and funding the additional award were discussed. It was determined that there would not be quite enough to fund the additional proposal in a large enough amount, and the order of preference would be disrupted if an additional award went to that proposal rather than the proposal that was listed next in order of preference.

Ng asked if the IC proposal could be kept as an active proposal for the next round. Finzel stated that we can encourage faculty to resubmit unfunded proposals in the next round. He will bring to the committee a narrower list of priorities for the fall round. O'Loughlin noted that a new priority should be courses for new majors.

**VOTE:** Motion passed (11-0-1)

## **2. GEOLOGY PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT**

Finzel welcomed geology professor James Cotter. He stated that he asked Cotter to talk to the committee about what the geology discipline faculty saw as objectives or goals over the next few years, and to summarize the report of the geology program review report. After four years the program will come back to the committee to make a brief verbal report on the progress taken towards those goals. The intent is for the program review reports to be living documents rather than reports that sit on a shelf. He had invited each of the programs reviewed in the past year and Cotter had accepted his invitation to speak for the geology discipline. He asked Cotter to talk about the distinctiveness of the program and how its curriculum relates to the program and to general education, as well as how the program might improve.

Cotter stated that he would start by talking about the program's distinctiveness. Geology is a small program, which is the case on many liberal arts campuses. It is distinct in that it has always been entrepreneurial. It has brought in over \$100,000 a year in grants from NSF. It generates geology students mainly through undergraduate research opportunities funded through NSF. Students from across the country come in the summer to do research. We are making a national impact in a generation of scientists who have embraced our international geology programs in countries such as Sweden, Italy, and Brazil.

The geology curriculum is linked with the new environmental studies program, which requires a geology course and a couple of electives. The education program requires geology courses, and the environmental science major requires geology courses. A large number of geology courses are deeply imbedded in general education. Surveys of graduating seniors show that a large number say they learned a lot about the environment because of geology courses they took at UMM.

As for innovation, in addition to the international Geology programs, the Environmental Science program started because of funding from NSF that generated courses. As a result, Environmental Science is running 40 majors with only three years in operation. The program expects to graduate 7 or 8 students next year. Geology also offers innovative programming for Native American students. The Geology program now has 32% Native American students—a ranking of #2 in the country. Only one tribal institution with a geology (hydrology) program ranks higher. Beginning this year we have Native American students on track to graduate every year. Close to 10% of Native American geologists in the country come from UMM.

The STEP grant that is funding Native American research will run out next summer. The goal is to find increased funding for it. Two plausible avenues they are working on are through naval research and a directive with NSF to fund specifically Native American students in geology and environmental science. Another goal is to get Native American students aware of UMM while they are in elementary school, with such things as totally cool Rock Box, and science camps in the Dakotas. Another goal is to have high school students come to UMM for two weeks and use GIS technology to see if it is feasible to

put wind turbines on a reservation. If it goes through, there would be bridge funding for tribal college transfers.

Another goal of the program is to see the environmental science program strengthened with the addition of faculty. With budget cuts and hiring freezes, two geology faculty lines were lost. He would like to see someone hired in soils specifically. Many environmental science programs offer what amounts to a survey of science degree. Our program offers surveys of important sciences and the opportunity to choose five courses and field experiences in a specific field such as climate change, alternative energies, and clean water initiatives. They would like to add soils and sustainable agriculture. A fourth position in environmental science, housed in geology, in soil and sustainable agricultural science would take some doing and original funding would be sought outside the University.

Finally, a lot of institutions have gone to “earth and environmental sciences.” That is not a drive here, but it may happen at some point, depending on interests. The geology program is good and will continue to be good for many years.

Finzel asked what the curricular plan is over the next few years. Cotter answered that geology students declare when they are well into the major. The goal, with the new faculty member hired, is to offer a beginning geology course, mineralogy, petrology, and then every other year offer upper level courses for the major that are newly developed to be geared toward environmental science.

Ng noted that the geology discipline had promised to offer an IC course. Cotter noted that they are very busy. O’Loughlin noted that geology is doing a lot of good things that are relevant to the historical and current mission of UMM.

Helsper stated that she wished the whole campus could know about the impressive statistics Cotter has shared with the committee. Finzel added that it is a good model. Cotter noted that tracking is a bit easier in a small major, and NSF demands it, so he does it, but the numbers do look good.

Adjourned 12:51 p.m.  
Submitted by Darla Peterson