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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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11-11-2013

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
2013-14 MEETING #3 Minutes  
November 11, 2013, 1:00 p.m., MFR**

*Members Present:* Bart Finzel (chair), Joe Alia, Donna Chollett, Mark Collier, Carol Cook, Pilar Eble, Eric Gandrud, Pieranna Garavaso, Sara Haugen, Zach Johnson, Leslie Meek, Peh Ng, Gwen Rudney, Jeri Squier, and Emily Sunderman

*Members Absent:* Clare Dingley and Mitchell Moe

*Visitors:* Nancy Helsper, Judy Korn, and Kellie Meehlhause

*In these minutes: SLOs on ECAS, SLOs and Program Objectives, Assessment of Student Learning Committee's suggested Gen Ed description revisions, and Gen Ed designators on 3000-level courses*

**Announcements**

Dean Finzel invited members to attend the first annual UMM Founders Scholar Forum on the Liberal Arts on November 18, 2013. Three founders scholars will talk about how UMM uniquely practices the liberal arts. Joining them on a panel will be former Dean Bettina Blake and retired chemistry professor James Togeas. A panel of five students will ask questions and interact with the panel. Finzel also reminded the members that the EDP grant deadline is November 25 and the recommendations of the EDP review committee will be presented at the December 9 meeting of this committee.

**Approval of Minutes – October 14, 2013**

MOTION (Garavaso/Meek) to approve the October 14, 2013 minutes. Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote (with one abstention).

**Student Learning Outcome (SLO) Questions on ECAS Form**

Finzel stated that professor Pappenfus, chair of the Assessment of Student Learning Committee (ASLC), had met with this committee last May and provided a suggested list of items for the committee to act on. First on the list was a suggestion that SLOs be rolled into the ECAS information when new courses are proposed and when existing courses are revised. Rudney and Squier prepared a form that faculty could fill out before the division staff enter it into ECAS. The form lists the SLOs and asks which one this course fulfills. Finzel asked if this is the kind of info the ASLC will need when they assess whether our students are achieving the SLOs. Helsper stated that the ASLC has not attempted to track tools used by faculty to assess their courses, but rather to provide faculty with an idea on how to assess a course.

Finzel stated that the actual ECAS cannot be changed at this time, but this form can be used to collect the informaton for input later, when the Twin Cities is able to make the necessary revisions. Finzel stated that he had hoped that there could be a simple drop-down list in ECAS. Squier noted that since two items cannot be selected in a drop-down

list, it will have to be a checklist. Ng suggested that it would be helpful to have a list of available SLOs to choose from on the form. Specific revisions to the form were discussed. Collier stated that we don't have enough of a process to know what will be done with the SLOs. It might be helpful to take a step back and provide definitions to help faculty learn what the SLOs are. Ng stated that they were approved by Campus Assembly in 2010. It is time we implement them.

A motion to approve the ECAS Course Proposal Form with suggested changes was approved by unanimous voice vote (12-0-0).

### **SLOs and Program Objectives**

The second suggestion made by the ASLC was to encourage programs (majors/minors) to state objectives in light of SLOs in the course catalog. Pappenfus had provided two examples (chemistry and economics) from the current course catalog. This committee needs to consider whether it agrees with the suggestion; and if so, the ASLC asked this committee to encourage programs to make the changes prior to the next catalog cycle. The ASLC has taken on a great deal in response to the Higher Learning Commission's request, and this is something that this committee can take on. Finzel stated that it will lead to less narrative and more bullet points in the catalog, and asked if there were any objections. None were voiced.

Collier asked if these are measurable objectives that can be tied to actual outcomes. Finzel answered that we are under mandate to assess the SLOs and prove how SLOs are achieved.

Ng asked if the more narrative statement of "students will. . ." will be applicable for all students, or only majors? For example, "students who major in mathematics will demonstrate. . . ." Garavaso agreed that there are programs that include a lot of students from other disciplines but also prepare students in our majors to reach a different level. Ng added that if we go to the proposed wording we will lose some of that. We need to be careful to list an overarching objective. Helsper noted that you could add a second paragraph and talk about non-majors. Ng stated that we could have a paragraph about the discipline and a second paragraph that addresses the SLOs specifically.

Johnson asked how interdisciplinary (IS) majors would word their SLOs where they have multiple courses from different disciplines and combined majors. Finzel answered that IS program goals are in alignment with our SLOs. Chollett added that in the IS major of Latin American Area Studies, there are preset goals and outcomes. That can be done in any IS major. Squier noted that the placement of this information in the catalog tells her the audience is majors and minors and not those who might take a chemistry class because they have to take it.

Collier stated that the old version is quite different for some programs that are designed to prepare students for graduate or professional school. A student doesn't have to learn SLOs right there, but rather what the discipline can do for them. It shouldn't take the place of that information. Finzel agreed and said that it goes to Ng's point that we should

add SLO information to the information about the program rather than replace it. This committee should determine what it feels are essential elements for the catalog and provide a template for the programs to follow.

### **Assessment of Student Learning Committee's Suggested Gen Ed Description Revisions**

Finzel noted that the ASLC had also suggested that SLO #4 be revised because it is difficult to assess. He added that he believed this was a very large and complicated task that would require Campus Assembly approval. This is something that can better be done when the entire General Education Program is reviewed next. Helsper explained that this became an issue when trying to come up with questions for the freshman survey. Some SLOs were too confusing to make easily understood by incoming freshmen, so they tried to make it easier by editing them. These aren't the best changes, but it starts a conversation. The ASLC's suggestion was to ask the committee to go back to each discipline and ask how they might suggest word changes. Chollett noted that simplification is important but it has to be in a way that's accurate. Helsper asked what the committee thinks would be the most appropriate process to do this. Finzel cautioned that changing the language that describes a requirement is the same as changing a requirement. The ASLC is asking the Curriculum Committee to revise the Gen Ed on the fly. It takes time to change a program, much less the Gen Ed Program. The ASLC has the liberty to provide student-friendly descriptions on a survey. That's short of changing the requirement.

Garavaso stated that it will not be helpful to the ASLC if they are concerned about making the changes now. Finzel answered that it took a long time to come up with the SLOs. They were communicated to the campus and they were brought to the Campus Assembly and approved. Finzel stated that he will communicate to professor Pappenfus that the ASLC is free to make interpretations of the SLOs which would allow them to assess categories, but this committee is not prepared to consider changes to the SLOs at this time.

### **Gen Ed Designators on 3000-level Courses**

Finzel explained that the request by the ASLC to reduce the number of courses that fulfill General Education categories was begun by this committee a year and a half ago. At the time it was requested, the ASLC found it very difficult to assess a program when every course had a Gen Ed designator. Last year we asked programs to look at 4000-level courses with prerequisites that carried the same GER. Programs were not asked to remove them where appropriate but to remove the GER from a course if the prereq for the course carried the same GER.

Collier stated that it would be rational to get rid of the redundancy. Eble noted that this suggestion helps the ASLC because those courses that drop the Gen Ed would not have to be evaluated for SLOs. Collier noted that it seems to pit the needs of the ASLC against those of the students who may need the Gen Ed. Helsper noted that one reason for assigning Gen Eds to every course was a need to relieve bottlenecks and to make it easier

for students to fulfill their Gen Eds. By moving away from that practice, will students have difficulty getting their Gen Eds met again? Ng stated that when that was a problem in the past, a lot of students appealed to the Scholastic Committee to get Gen Eds. Eble asked if there would still be a process where a student could appeal to have a Gen Ed applied to a course. Finzel answered that students can always appeal, although he did not foresee it being a problem, since the Gen Ed would have been met with the prereq.

MOTION (Ng/Rudney): to encourage disciplines to review 3000-level courses during the next course catalog cycle and remove General Education Designators with the same GER in the prereq. Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote (13-0-0).

Finzel noted that there has been a lot of talk about the WLA course on campus. He was asked to state what the Curriculum Committee's intention was regarding WLA, which was that all students be required to take the course. If there is a need to reaffirm the intention, it will be brought back to this committee at a later date.

Submitted by Darla Peterson