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Curriculum minutes 04/30/2013

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

2012-13 MEETING #13 Minutes

April 30, 2013, 9:00 a.m., Moccasin Flower Room

Members Present: Bart Finzel (chair), Joe Alia, Donna Chollett, Mark Collier, Carol Cook, Pilar Eble, Pieranna Garavaso, Josh Godding, Aaron Goemann, Sara Haugen, Leslie Meek, Peh Ng, Jeri Squier, and Zac Van Cleve

Members Absent: Charlie Abraham, Clare Dingley, Gwen Rudney

Visitors: Nancy Helsper, Ted Pappenfus

In these minutes: Discussion of General Education and Assessment with chair of the Assessment of Student Learning Committee

Announcements

Finzel announced that, relating to the last meeting discussion about credits for prior learning experiences, Squier had found examples at other institutions that grant credits for prior learning without using the course format. The committee will be looking at that model next year in preparation for the next catalog cycle.

Approval of Minutes – April 2, 2013

MOTION (Cook/Ng) to approve the April 2, 2013 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

General Education and Assessment

Finzel stated that a discussion of general education was begun in anticipation of the need to report to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) on our progress with assessment of our general education program. Forums were held throughout the fall of 2011. A series of discussions with faculty, students, divisions, and the Curriculum Committee were conducted throughout that year. Because next year will begin the reporting stage of the outcome, he had asked Ted Pappenfus, chair of the Assessment of Student Learning Committee (ASLC) to share the progress the ASLC has made as well as their plans in the next year. Finzel asked if Pappenfus was comfortable that the curriculum links well to the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), or are there any in non-curricular areas? Pappenfus answered yes to both questions.

Pappenfus stated that the SLOs, approved by Campus Assembly in March 2010, list four outcomes in various categories. The ASLC did a thorough analysis where SLOs linked to Gen Ed and programs. Helsper noted that there was one bullet under the first SLO that was

problematic and ignored. Pappenfus stated that the ASLC decided to leave it to programs to develop their own outcomes since some programs may embrace it.

Ng asked if all bullet points under each SLO are intended to be filled by every course. Pappenfus answered that different outcomes will be weighed more heavily in different disciplines, so it is more of an “or” rather than an “and” list of bullets. Most major programs have been mapped to the SLOs but some programs did not respond. The data has not been packaged cohesively, especially in areas where programs haven’t submitted their data.

Pappenfus stated that it is the belief of the ASLC that although the Campus Assembly has approved the SLOs, they haven’t been fully embraced by our institution. They haven’t been visible to students, should be more transparent, and should be included in the catalog, in our syllabi, and be a part of freshman orientation. Finzel replied that part of the discussion about the SLOs last year was that we have a bit of a packaging problem. Collier added that the SLOs consist of long and cumbersome sentences. We need to simplify them to one or two-word headings to make them easier to remember and articulate. Finzel asked Pappenfus if he is asking the Curriculum Committee to look at the SLOs next year. Pappenfus replied yes, that they should be part of the course approval process. The ECAS forms in the Twin Cities include a section where the SLO is requested, as well as the direction: “Please explain briefly how this outcome will be addressed in the course. Give brief examples of class work related to the outcome.” If we do this, the HLC would say that we are focusing early on in our development of courses.

Pappenfus summarized the seven major requests of the HLC in their 2010 report: 1) review and affirm the general education requirements; 2) periodic examination of the underlying structure of the general education program needs to occur; 3) build a culture of assessment and develop a sustainable assessment process; 4) provide data on the assessment of student learning in the general education program; 5) develop assessment tools for assessing the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the general education program; 6) close the assessment loop by stating the learning outcome goals for each education program and general education program and assess the extent to which students achieve these learning outcomes; and 7) recap the achievement of item 6 by explaining how learning outcomes are utilized.

Pappenfus stated that the ASLC has surveyed graduating seniors since 2001. This group of graduating seniors have taken First Year Seminar and some may have taken College Writing. It is important to get some data now since it is the last time we can evaluate those Gen Eds. It may provide a way of comparing them down the line with the new general education courses, Intellectual Community and Writing for the Liberal Arts.

The survey asks for some background information, followed by a section of broad questions related to the general education requirements, and ends with a section pertaining to each of the general education categories. The response rate has increased from 38% to an outstanding 68%, resulting in a lot of data. Helsper noted that part of the reason for the increased response rate might have to do with the offer of a Higbies coupon upon completion.

Finzel asked if we know which of the global village requirements the students have fulfilled. Pappenfus noted that he would modify the survey next time to obtain that data in the future. What he likes about the Assessment of Learning Outcomes survey for incoming students is that it forces students to read the Gen Eds and pay attention to them. Finzel suggested that it could be an activity for the first session of IC classes, the Tuesday before classes begin.

Pappenfus stated that the ASLC sent a request to each discipline asking them to: 1) focus on at least one GER that is the most prevalent in their discipline; 2) come up with one or two objectives within that GER; 3) create a direct assessment measure [a list of 11 examples are provided]; 4) assess the students; and 5) report the results.

In terms of what's needed, the ASLC would like the Curriculum Committee to endorse the surveys. Finzel noted that it is difficult to do so, given the timeline. To endorse the effort is more easily done. A group of people will be going to the Gen Ed Institute in June and there may be an opportunity then to think hard about this. There will be time for revision after that.

Eble stated that with international students, the survey will be "mumbo-jumbo." It is important that they understand our general education program and the SLOs, so it would be good to have a session about this at the international student orientation.

Pappenfus stated that the HLC mentioned that we don't have a sustainable plan in place. The ASLC wants feedback from the entire campus. We can improve the web presence of the assessment practices on campus, and there has been a discussion about obtaining data from alumni. It is more important to know how Gen Eds affect our students after Morris, than when they are at Morris. The ASLC believes we should take advantage of existing surveys rather than create a new survey. UMM's current survey of grads is conducted by the Career Services office nine months after graduation. A survey taken 20 years out would be valuable.

The ASLC requests the Curriculum Committee revisit Category 4 (Capacity for Integrative Learning) as current objectives are not clear and are difficult to assess; text has been drafted for assessment purposes in the proposed Assessment of Learning Outcomes survey for incoming students. When the ASLC was working on developing methods to assess the SLOs, they ran into a problem with this bullet and decided to separate "knowledge" and "skills" into two questions.

The ASLC requests that the Curriculum Committee request that major programs develop "Essential Learning Outcomes" for each academic assessment category 1 of the SLOs. Such outcomes could complement or replace existing objectives in the catalog. He shared examples. Chemistry is presented in the current catalog with a list of objectives. Some relate to SLOs and some don't. He shared a model that outlined learning outcomes, making them more transparent. Some programs have their objectives tied to SLOs. The ASLC asks that the Curriculum Committee take the lead in requesting this from all programs.

The ASLC requests the Curriculum Committee to provide a summary of general education review to-date, focusing on procedures, discussions, and changes to First-Year Seminar, and College Writing requirements. The summary would guide further review and will be added to the report to the HLC.

The ASLC requests that the Curriculum Committee update the Gen Ed descriptions for accuracy and ease of assessment. Specific GenEd requirements noted are Foreign Language, Physical and Biological Sciences, Human Diversity, and International Perspective. Proposed changes are as follows:

Gen Ed Requirement	Current Version (from UMM Catalog)	Proposed Version (from 2013 AGE survey)
Foreign Language	To develop proficiency in a single language other than English at the level equivalent to the first full year of college language study.	To help students begin to communicate in a language other than their own and to gain insights into other cultures.
Physical and Biological Sciences	To increase students' understanding of the structure and dynamics of the physical and biological worlds, and of the scientific method.	To increase students' understanding of the physical and biological worlds and to gain exposure to the use of scientific methods.
Human Diversity	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.	To increase students' understanding of human variation within the United States.
International Perspective	To increase students' understanding of the interrelatedness of human society and the natural world.	To increase students' understanding of cultures different from their own.

Pappenfus stated that academic program reviews have been going on for some time, but has the data been shared? What is the intent? Are there any meaningful reviews that say something about assessment in those documents that could be used by the ASLC? Finzel replied that it has been inconsistent at this point. Maybe there is a method to make the reviews more systematic in the future.

Ng stated that the new definitions that the ASLC has come up with for some of the SLOs related to the Gen Ed are very different from the original version. We should be careful how we phrase things. There should be a more campus-wide discussion before these are changed. We should

be conveying a similar message, and now there are two versions. Pappenfus answered that the newer version more accurately reflects what we are teaching.

Cook stated that the ASLC has done great work. She asked if the ASLC has considered re-evaluating the Gen Ed courses when instructors change periodically? Pappenfus answered it is a good suggestion. Re-evaluation comes up in the HLC report.

Finzel thanked Pappenfus for his report and the tremendous progress the ASLC has made. He will be invited back to the Committee in the fall. Finzel thanked the Curriculum Committee members for their work this year.

Submitted by Darla Peterson