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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2015-16 MEETING #6 Minutes
December 11, 3:30 p.m., MFR

Members Present: Bart Finzel (chair), Pieranna Garavaso, Peh Ng, Gwen Rudney, Tracey Anderson, Mary Elizabeth Bezanson, Stephen Crabtree, Kellie Meehlhause, Christi Perkinson, Emily Sunderman, Lauren Velde, Kerri Barnstuble, and Judy Korn

Members Absent: Sarah Ashkar, Jennifer Deane, Madison Hughes, and Arne Kildegaard

Visitors: Melissa Bert and Nancy Helsper

In these minutes: Course Approval, Continued General Education Discussion, and Agenda Plans for Spring Semester

Announcements

Finzel announced that the committee will meet next semester on Mondays at 2:15 PM, every other week, beginning February 8. The committee will have a full agenda in the spring.

Approval of Minutes of November 20, 2015 Meeting

MOTION (Bezanson/Crabtree) to approve the November 20, 2015 minutes. Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Course Approval

Division of the Humanities

CMR 4123 – Rhetoric of Advertising (4 cr, HUM)

Finzel noted that at the last meeting of this committee this course was sent back to the discipline for clarification. Members had questioned whether the course content will be limited to print media, as the course description stated, or if it will expand to other advertising media, in which case the description should be changed to reflect that. Bezanson explained that Rhetoric of Advertising is a new course that will cover only print ads. The class will study rhetorical constructs by creating print ads. They will look for clients on campus to create an ad for men's tennis. They are also looking into doing an ad for an IC course.

MOTION (Anderson/Ng) to approve the Humanities course CMR 4123. The motion passed unanimously (10-0-0).

Continued General Education Discussion

Finzel shared a General Education proposal for information and discussion, with the intent to gain the committee's endorsement to go forward with the suggested approach, which will include the appointment of a small task force.

Finzel explained that our general education program has remained essentially unchanged for twenty years and the last full review was undertaken in the fall of 2011. At that time, the Curriculum Committee sponsored six forums involving faculty, students, and staff. Participants were asked to discuss what aspects of the general education curriculum were working or were not working, what aspects of the program were redundant, and what was critical to the success of the program. At that time, writing was the greatest concern of the campus community. This committee strengthened writing with the addition of the Writing for the Liberal Arts (WLA) requirement. Another concern was related to the Global Village set of requirements. Global Village consists of four content areas, from which students must take two courses. There was a universal sense that we should require students to take a course in all four areas, since all are essential to our mission. It was also evident, however, that there was no desire to expand the number of courses required. Other concerns include limited expectations for students in foreign languages, which was discussed by this committee in November 2015. And, finally, there was a concern that all of the Gen Eds can be completed by taking a bunch of 1xxx-level courses.

Finzel asked the committee members to think about the concerns mentioned and to consider whether our general education program is adequate, whether the goals should remain as they are, be more refined, or be replaced by other goals. He asked members to consider the following goals for General Education reform that he has outlined:

- A) Ensure content of each of the four Global Village requirements is required of all students while not increasing the number of courses needed to complete the General Education program
- B) Ensure some curriculum is making meaningful connections across academic disciplines
- C) Ensure students pursue general education throughout their UMM careers
- D) Add value to pursuit of advanced foreign languages
- E) Ensure courses are purposefully designed to meet the goals of general education

The following proposed structure provides four basic ideas that might allow the committee to address many of the goals and concerns:

- 1) The current IC requirement and the “skills” component to general education (WLA, FL, M/SR, and ArtP) would remain as is, although the FL requirement might be revisited. Many of these requirements should be completed in a student’s first year at UMM.
Note that IC and WLA have been recently modified and seem to be working well. M/SR and ArtP have not been subject to much criticism.
- 2) The outdated Expanding Perspectives set of eight requirements would be replaced by a menu of purposefully designed 2xxx-level courses from different knowledge paradigms forming a traditional core of liberal studies. The faculty would be asked to propose courses in their disciplines that might meet the new requirements. A subset of these would also address the thematic areas of vital importance to liberally educated people now captured in our current Global Village requirements, specifically HDiv, Envnt, and E/CR. Many of these 2xxx-level courses would be taken by students in their second and third year at UMM.

The College of William and Mary, for example, identifies three “knowledge domains” including: The Natural World and Quantitative Reasoning; Culture, Society, and the Individual; and Arts, Letters, and Values. Courses in each of these knowledge domains must also include an explicit “looking out” to another domain by considering aspects of the domain within the course—literary representations of nature in an ecology course or the biology of fisheries in an environmental economics course. At UMM, we might partially realize this interdisciplinary objective by “looking out” to the themes within the Global Village set of requirements, e.g., an ecology course that includes an E/CR module, a studio art class incorporating HDiv. This structure might allow us to reduce the number of courses required under expanding perspectives from the current eight to five or six.

- 3) Replace the current IP requirement with a global studies requirement. Many UMM students would fulfill this by engaging in study abroad in the third year. Many could also meet the requirement by completing a year’s worth of advanced training in a foreign language. Other courses at the 3xxx-level could be proposed to meet the requirement.

Global citizenry is explicitly mentioned in our mission statement and yet we do little to ensure students leave Morris globally aware. This requirement would provide a focus to our efforts to have students study abroad and will also “reward” students who continue to study language at an advanced level (rather than take a year of 1xxx-level language) and create additional “depth” in our general education program.

- 4) Designate the senior capstone required in nearly all majors as a general education requirement. This change would reinforce the notion that general education is completed throughout a UMM career. It would also mean, perhaps controversially, that students would need to complete only one “capstone” requirement should they choose to double or triple major.

Finzel stated that this structure is a way to move us forward. He is less concerned about the content of areas than he is on how to structure the program to include Global Village and have Gen Ed present throughout the four years.

Ng asked how many majors currently do not require a senior capstone. Finzel stated that virtually all of the majors require the capstone. Econ/management offers a senior capstone but does not require it because the number of students could not be accommodated. Also, some self-defined majors do not require a capstone. If we already require it, it is a way to get Gen Ed into our senior year, without adding a course.

Anderson stated that ten years ago we put a lot of energy into designing capstones across campus. It was challenging. Although the capstone truly is a liberal arts experience, the way we are doing it is not sustainable in the larger majors like biology. Crabtree questioned the single capstone concept for students with multiple majors. Some of the majors are very different products. Biology and chemistry would have a natural merging together, as would others that share a division. Perhaps one capstone per division instead of one overall would ensure a little more clarity. Each division would have somewhat more cohesive standards. Perkinson agreed. She is a psychology, sociology, Spanish, and LAHS major. It would be difficult to combine Spanish, psychology and sociology into one capstone.

Anderson stated that we have so many students come in with the bulk of their Gen Eds completed before they finish high school. This compromises our attempt to educate them as college students. Do we take college credits without plugging them into the Gen Eds? Korn answered that the Scholastic Committee oversees the transfer and they use the definitions of our Gen Eds when reviewing transfer courses. So many factors play into the transfer of credits. One major factor is the law. With Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC), if a student has completed it, it's done, we have to accept it. Finzel noted that with the proposed "looking out" approach to Gen Ed, it would be unlikely the transfer students would have taken a 2xxx or 3xxx-level transfer course that includes "looking out."

Bezanson stated that teaching an IC course with a transfer student in the class who has 60 college credits, creates a problem because the student's experience of college has already been started. It's difficult to bond the class together as a cohort. Is it possible to exempt a transfer student with a high number of incoming college credits? Finzel noted that it is already the case. Sunderman stated that she was a PSEO student who came to Morris with 60 credits and took IC. Most PSEO students are going to MNSCU or a community college. That experience is very different from the Morris experience. She felt it was beneficial for her to take IC to get to know the Morris experience and meet her cohort. Ng agreed that IC is an important cohort-building course for students who are new to Morris. Technically, it is still the student's first year at Morris, regardless of the number of credits they bring. It's the first semester at UMM that is important.

Anderson stated that if we want to get people to take more upper level courses to fulfill their Gen Eds, she would love to take the Gen Ed designators off some of the introductory courses. Finzel stated that with his model, many courses would be stripped of Gen Eds, and then we would ask faculty to propose courses. A task force would work on language and description of the Gen Ed core components. This would be an opportunity to revisit all of these things. Anderson stated that biology used to have an introductory course for non-majors that was specifically Gen Ed. They are no longer able to offer it. Crabtree stated that he liked the idea of more courses in the 2xxx or 3xxx level but questioned the likelihood of hitting capacity, in terms of resources. Most of the classes he teaches now are capped at 12 or 24. It may be a taxing change to the physical space or faculty resources. Finzel answered that he would imagine there would not be a lot of new courses offered the first couple of catalog cycles. Velde stated that now, the class sizes in the major reduce as you progress deeper in the major and the courses become more focused. If class sizes increase, it would add more perspective with non-majors and majors in upper level courses, but the classes could not be as focused as they are currently.

Ng stated that before adding a lookout to the Expanding Perspectives, the task force would have to figure out critical mass to be sure there are enough courses to offer. There seems to be an abundance now. Finzel stated that some things will go away. We have courses that are taught primarily for Gen Ed and some will come back into programs where they are dependent on Gen Ed enrollment. Bezanson stated that there are not enough HUM classes that don't carry prereqs. There is a lot of pressure on some HUMs and not enough on FA classes. Korn noted that a lot of students wait until the last minute to take some Gen Eds and can't fit a course into their schedule. Crabtree stated that seniors taking what is meant to be a freshman-level course are taking them pass/fail just to get the Gen Ed. Finzel noted that this speaks to the general weakness of having a program that relies heavily on 1xxx-level courses.

Rudney stated that she likes the idea of taking Gen Eds through four years of college, but asked for clarification. The Gen Eds met in the first year by 1xxx-level courses would be the skills. Then the proposed idea to discuss involves year two. Finzel stated that these are the courses students should be taking their second or third years. We would want to recast those. Rudney asked, for a first-year student who does not know yet which major they will take, will they be taking 2xxx-level classes for Gen Ed? Also, double-listed courses would be needed. We already have courses that have the lookout feature. It may not be such a grand overhaul of every course involved. Part of the recognition is that courses have a content and a theme. Sunderman stated that a good example of an area that could be easily double-listed is global citizenry if a student takes a course abroad. For instance, she was at the International University in Spain and took an art class while living with a host family in Spain. Korn noted that HUM and Global Perspective, E/CR, and people and the Env't are themes that are often matched with another goal. When we continue the conversation we often bump up against students who come in with a lot of credits, and although they don't get to take a lot of our Gen Eds, some are our best students here with multiple majors. They bring a lot to our campus as well.

Submitted by Darla Peterson