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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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4-16-2001

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**University of Minnesota, Morris**  
**Morris, MN**

**MINUTES 2000-2001 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING # 16**

April 16, 2001 3:30 p.m. Behmler Conference Room

Present: Neuharth, Urness, Evans, Carlson, Mooney Gooch, De Jager, Korth, Finzel, Nellis and Kissock

Absent Lee, Chabel, Thielke, and Ostrowski

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Korth asked for a motion to approve the minutes from April 2, 2001.

**MOTION:** (Understood).

**VOTE:** Unanimous in favor (6-0-0)

**TOPICS COURSES MOTION:** Korth presented a motion changing the approval process of topics courses. The motion was read as follows:

Because of the speed and flexibility of curricular change that is available through the provisional approval procedure, because all courses at UMM should undergo the same examination by the Curriculum Committee and the Campus Assembly, and because the current umbrella structure is causing unnecessary complexity and confusion, all new topics courses will henceforth be required to undergo the regular (or provisional) approval process. All new topics courses must be proposed through the divisions to the Curriculum Committee on Form NC. Umbrella courses will be stripped of their prereqs and GER designators since each topics course will now define its own.

A member questioned if the NC (new course) form would be used in place of the TC (topics course) form. Another member suggested that the point would be to eliminate the TC form. The creation of the TC form was questioned and a member responded that the form was created to clear up confusion about which topics courses needed approval and which did not. There was discussion among the members that if umbrella courses have a GER designator, then the Topics Course would have the same GER. A member stated that was true for some courses however some umbrellas said "see specific topic for GER, prereq" etc. Since umbrellas are in the catalog but not all specific topics, the need for topics courses was questioned. Several members agreed that they are important and used to cluster courses. A member stated that the NC form would make things clearer for teaching purposes, however, it would be more difficult and more paperwork. Is the process of approving topics courses necessary other than for consistency? A member stated that, yes, the main idea is consistency in the curriculum review process but also issues with GER's and prereqs. The process doesn't need to be messy; currently provisional approval is granted within 2 weeks. The speed and flexibility that some members are questioning are still provided through provisional approval. A member stated that another issue is that currently there are many courses that are not approved by CC or Campus Assembly (CA). Mooney noted that currently there are 81 Topics courses that have no course description and even though they were promised to her, they have not been received. A member brought up concern about the lack of flexibility if a NC form needs to be completed and approved for each Topics Course.

**MOTION:** (Kissock, Gooch) To approve proposed motion.

Discussion: A member stated that she prefers the flexibility with our current system and doesn't think the new proposal would provide enough flexibility. Her impression is that a Topics Course cannot go through the approval process to be created as quickly as it is now. A member questioned why the current system is causing confusion. Mooney noted that faculty are unsure of which Topics Courses need approval and which ones don't. The member asked if the division secretaries know which ones need approval. Mooney responded that the secretaries contact her to find out which courses need approval. If a Topics Course matches all aspects of the umbrella then it does not need approval however if the umbrella says "see specific course for GER" then the Topics Course needs approval for the GER. A member suggested he would like to see rigorous enforcement of GERs and if they were strictly enforced then the Topics Course would be created to fit the umbrella. Mooney noted another issue is that sometimes when she reminds faculty that the Topics Course needs to go through approval to add the GER then a decision is made to omit the GER so the course does not have to go

through the approval process.

A member noted that she sees Topics Courses as a treat and if they were too difficult to get approved they won't be taught. There was discussion about the ease of approving Topics Courses and a member questioned if provisional approval is not easy? Another member stated that to have a NC form completed with all necessary information, have Division Chairs sign off on it and receive provisional approval within two weeks, does not seem too difficult. Two members stated that a course could go for provisional approval and regular approval at the same time. Provisional approval does not go to CA and is completed in two weeks for a one-time offering. If it is going to be offered more than once then it goes for regular approval.

A member stated that this motion would make a consistent process for all course approvals. A member stated that the process of approving each Topics Course by CC seems cumbersome. Mooney reminded CC that courses could go for provisional and regular approval at the same time.

Korth noted that one main issue right now is that Mooney is not getting course descriptions for Topics Courses. A member questioned if this problem could be policed another way. A member stated that CC put in standards and peer review for courses being offered and should be consistent. Provisional approval would provide consistency with peer review by Division Chairs. Another member stated that Topics Courses do not get Division Chair or discipline approval unless they go through provisional or regular approval, and thus no peer review. Some courses that are being taught are questionable based on the title because there is no description. A member stated a faculty member could bypass their colleagues to teach a Topics Course that may not have been approved.

A member stated that although the number of Topics Courses is not alarming, it is concerning to approve a course with a GER and no course description. The committee made a recommendation to Mooney that she should not create Topics Courses submitted without a course description.

**VOTE:** (4-5-0) Motion failed.

Meeting adjourned 4:30 p.m.  
Submitted by Karen Van Horn

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Send comments to Curriculum Committee: [curriculum@morris.umn.edu](mailto:curriculum@morris.umn.edu)