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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

MEETING # 6 Minutes

November 15, 2007, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130

Present: Roland Guyotte (chair), Escillia Allen, Ferolyn Angell, Janet Ericksen, Van Gooch, Harold Hinds, Michael Korth, Pareena Lawrence, Gwen Rudney, Nate Swanson, Laura Thoma, Kim Ukura, Jeri Mullin, Clare Strand, Nancy Helsper

Absent: Barbara Burke, Sara Haugen

Visiting: Brenda Boever, Dorothy DeJager, James Togeas

In these minutes: Approval of new courses (Hist 3361, IS 4894, Pol 3355) and Report by Subcommittee on Proposed Learning Outcomes

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Korth convened the meeting in the chair's temporary absence and asked for approval of minutes from November 1, 2007.

MOTION: (Hinds/Angell) To approve the minutes from November 1, with changes.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously

Discussion: Strand stated that the last full paragraph on page three include a statement that Strand asked why the field of study was chosen and that Mullin responded that the choices were limited with Social Science and Human Services being the best fit. Ukura's name needed correction on page three, also.

2. REGULAR APPROVAL OF COURSES

Hist 3361-An Environmental and Geographic History of the United States, 4.0 cr (ENVT)

MOTION: (Hinds/Lawrence): To approve the new course, Hist 3361

VOTE: Motion passed (10-0-0)

Discussion: Lawrence explained that this course was initiated for the environmental studies major.

IS 4894-Global Issues Honors Consortium: Research and Writing Tutorial, 4.0 cr

MOTION: (Gooch/Ericksen): To approve the new course, IS 4894

VOTE: Motion passed (10-0-0)

Discussion: Ukura asked if the course is similar to an honors seminar project. Mullin answered that this is the capstone course for the Global Issues Honors Consortium. It will only be offered as long as the program is viable. It is not intended for honors students, which is why it does not have an honors designator.

Pol 3355-Environmental Political Theory, 4.0 cr (ENVT)

MOTION: (Ericksen/Hinds): To approve the new course, Pol 3355

VOTE: Motion passed (10-0-0)

Discussion: Swanson asked why the effective term is fall 2007 but the course will be offered spring 2008. Mullin responded that she made it effective fall 2007 so that it would show up in the online approved list of courses (with description) when students register for spring term. Korth added that it becomes a course in fall 2007 but will not be taught until spring 2008.

3. REPORT BY SUBCOMMITTEE ON PROPOSED LEARNING OUTCOMES

The subcommittee members were Lawrence (chair), Swanson, and Burke. The subcommittee members looked at the Web sites of COPLAC schools, the Morris 14 peer group, and a few other institutions to find out if the sites list learning outcomes, the overall accreditation process, and how they structure their general education requirements. They also looked at documents that were written about the liberals arts. They put together a report using our current GenEd designators as measures of the learning outcomes, using the Twin Cities learning outcomes as a base to see which ones

fit UMM.

The subcommittee considered dividing the learning outcomes into three broad overlapping categories: knowledge, skills, and attitude. They proposed five specific outcomes for UMM: 1) Understanding interdisciplinary modes of inquiry and approaches to knowledge/process of discovery; 2) Social responsibility; 3) Cross cultural competency/respect for multiple perspectives; 4) Master a body of knowledge; and 5) Skills-based outcomes. Lawrence explained each outcome and the GenEd designator that matches it (see hand-outs for details). Lawrence stated that she also reviewed Dr. Contant's remarks made during her presentation on campus regarding core values and matched some of her comments to the learning outcomes. [Note: Dr. Contant is the UMM vice chancellor for academic affairs and dean-elect, to begin in summer 2008.]

Hinds stated that if "attitudinal based" means an appreciation of different perspectives and points of view, he would suggest using a less loaded word than "attitude." Lawrence answered that it came from the literature. Hinds stated that he would read it as an outcome in which a student is able to look at something from a number of points of view, sort them out, and come to a reasonable conclusion. Korth disagreed and stated that he thought it means to change how someone thinks about a subject, which is a fine line to draw between appreciating different perspectives and being brainwashed or indoctrinated.

Angell asked what the Curriculum Committee would do with this report. Korth answered that the potential is that UMM will adopt some learning outcomes; the Twin Cities campus has already adopted their list.

Rudney stated that it seems there is a mixing of what our outcomes are and what our goals are and how we are going to measure them. We have a critical thinking goal. Assigning a course or expectation to it will not necessarily ensure that the goal has been met. Are we certain that because we say everyone took FYS, we can say that everyone has demonstrated critical thinking skills? It would be helpful to think where they want to be at the end. What do we want them to have accomplished? That's where we come to a measurable outcome. Lawrence suggested that the new Student Engagement Planner has the possibility to scan a first paper and a final paper, which could demonstrate improvement in writing. Rudney replied that there are a lot of vehicles like that, but the academics need to remain dominant. Korth stated that it doesn't mean you've achieved the goal just because you've taken a course.

Rudney was concerned that the discussion refers to three divisions instead of four. Education realizes it is somewhat outside the liberal arts field, but Education is liberal arts in nature. She asked that people think campus-wide and not just division-wide. For example, in the field experience in education, creative thinking, communication, and cultural competence is applied and measured. She stated that she is not worried about the Education Division but wanted to make sure it is not overlooked.

Ericksen stated that the learning outcomes must be measurable. She asked Rudney how they measure learning outcomes in Education. Rudney replied that it is done in multiple ways: by external and internal evaluations, with required essays and portfolios. Data is collected on each student's reflection of their experience. Education students create curriculum that is assessed and recorded. A scoring rubric is used for one of the most difficult things they measure the UMM student's impact on their students' learning. All of these things can be assessed.

Allen observed that there is a focus on the capstone course as the epitome of all of the ideas, but we don't have set outcomes of all of our capstones right now. Swanson answered that it is an important issue. It was discussed by the subcommittee and the MCSA is talking about capstones now.

Ukura asked if co-curricular activities would be considered in measuring outcomes. She stated that knowing whether it would satisfy an outcome would be very important to her when deciding what she really wants to do. She asked if the capstone would also incorporate those things or if there would be some capstone of that experience. Currently, the capstone is academic in nature. Strand answered that the Student Engagement Planner might satisfy that. Another alternative would be to use the electronic portfolio which includes academic and co-curricular accomplishments. Ukura asked how it would be used and whether there is a way to measure whether students use it. Would students be required to include an essay at the end saying what they had learned?

Hinds answered that the history discipline did something like that. They asked students to reflect on two aspects of how the curriculum related to their life experience, asking where they had been and where they were going. The project was dropped because it appeared to impinge on their lives. Maybe it is time to try it again. The experience in history was mixed.

Lawrence stated that in APAS you meet requirements and that's how you are eligible to graduate. She asked if we want to make a requirement that they have to populate the Student Engagement Planner. Korth said no. Strand answered that an APAS report could be created that tracks these things and that is not a degree requirement but can be used for analysis. It could potentially be measured. APAS is used for NCA eligibility. She added that she did not think it makes sense to have it be required but that we can offer it as a good thing that students may want to utilize to help plan their lives.

Guyotte joined the committee meeting and was asked the earlier question of what the next step would be. Guyotte responded that we are looking at learning outcomes and how to measure them. It is important to keep in mind that we should not put any outcomes out there that we can't measure because that's the name of the game nowadays. Conversely, just because you can measure it doesn't mean it's an outcome. This committee is in a position at some point to endorse outcomes and take outcomes to the Campus Assembly. It's a big move and before we present anything to Campus Assembly we would have campus-wide forums and discussions about it. This is an appropriate place to start, and the work of the subcommittee is only the first step in the process.

Rudney stated that we need to remember that we don't expect everybody to meet all of the learning outcomes. For example, leadership is a huge outcome for UMM. Our students take on leadership roles. However, an individual student does not fail to graduate for not assuming a leadership role. If we use this outcome (a very UMM outcome) how do we measure it? Is it OK to say 30% do this and we are striving for 50%? We should think in terms of growth toward a number rather than saying every single one does it.

Thoma asked if the subcommittee found that other schools measure extra-curricular outcomes. They are an important part of the college experience but is it the college's job to keep track of that and not the student's job? Swanson answered that he didn't think that other institutions measure extra extra-curricular or co-curricular involvement even though it is encouraged. Strand added that the PeopleSoft software that the University uses is also used at many other higher education institutions. One of the many different pieces of the software includes a co-curricular transcript. The U of M chose the Student Engagement Planner instead because it is more robust than PeopleSoft.

Haugen asked if the Student Engagement Planner will be linked to the portfolio. Strand answered no, that they are two separate things. The portfolio is managed by students and includes such things as samples of work, a resumé, and a video, in the case of an artist. Angell added that it is not just for students. The entire University community can use it. Thoma stated that she had not heard about the portfolio or its purpose. She asked if and how other students know about it. Guyotte explained that it is a folder in which students can put their work and authorize someone to see it, e.g., an adviser or discipline coordinator. Strand added that some authorize a prospective employer to view it. It was originally created on the Duluth campus and lots of UMD students use it. We haven't promoted it because we have limited staffing to train, teach, and support it. There are links to it on our Web pages. Strand had tried to use it quite a few years ago and found it to be clumsy.

Strand stated that we could potentially have a transcript notation noting that the student accomplished something. Studio art and Education are using these transcript notations to indicate student accomplishments.

Guyotte invited guest Jim Togeas to share his thoughts with the committee from his perspective as chair of the Assessment of Student Learning Committee. Togeas suggested that, before the learning outcomes are taken to the Campus Assembly, the Curriculum Committee should take a look and see what has happened already. Any proposal might be dovetailed to something that has been done already. The self-study report for the Higher Learning Commission is available on the Assessment of Student Learning Committee's Web site. There are a lot of things being measured right now that would dove-tail into what's being discussed here. Guyotte added that consultation with the Assessment of Student Learning Committee would certainly be done as well before moving to the Campus Assembly.

Angell stated that the division of learning outcomes into three broad overlapping categories seems unclear and suggested that 1) the skill-based outcomes should be more articulate about what we are going for in a final product; and 2) the meaning of the word “attitude” needs to be agreed upon. This process is potentially contentious and also unifying if we can all have a healthy discussion about it.

Gooch asked Togeas if it would have been valuable and have made his job easier when writing the self-study report for the learning outcomes to have been available to him. Togeas answered that he didn’t think so because a lot of these things are being done already. A sensible approach is a ground-up approach and active discovery. He added that he didn’t need a superstructure to tell him what to look for.

Guyotte thanked Togeas for coming to the meeting and thanked the subcommittee for its work in providing information for a very useful preliminary exercise.

The next meeting of the committee will be on December 6, 2007.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.
Submitted by Darla Peterson