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## UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

### MEETING # 8 Minutes

**December 10, 2007, 2:00 p.m., Behmler 130**

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

Absent: Gwen Rudney, Jeri Mullin

Visiting: Brenda Boever, Dorothy DeJager

*In these minutes: Self-Study Steering Committee Report, Continued discussion of the Report by the First Year Experience Disappearing Task Force*

### **1. SELF-STUDY STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Guyotte explained that this agenda item is a report and request for response on matters relating to the self-study preparatory to UMM's reaccreditation visit in 2009-10. Korth, chair of the Self-Study Steering Committee, stated that the self-study is required by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The team from the HLC will review the report, visit UMM, and make a recommendation on whether UMM should receive reaccreditation.

UMM was invited by the HLC to participate in their special emphasis self-study process. In the regular process the basic idea is to take five criteria supplied by the HLC and address every one, explaining how the institution is achieving its goals by meeting the criteria. The HLC Criteria for Accreditation are: 1) Mission and Integrity, 2) Preparing for the Future, 3) Student Learning and Effective Teaching, 4) Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge, and 5) Engagement and Service. The idea of a special emphasis self-study is to refocus around some topic of value to the institution that fits its goals and mission. A special theme helps to further our objectives and encourages us to do what makes us unique. We are still required to respond to the criteria but the way in which we approach them may be different. UMM has already done a lot of planning, with the Strategic Plan and mission statement. After considerable discussion the Self-Study Steering Committee thought of a theme that fits UMM with an organizational focus: "Practicing the Liberal Arts Explore, Renew, Sustain, Lead." The hope of the committee is that this theme describes everything UMM is doing. The next step is to develop it and determine how to approach the process. A subcommittee is writing about where UMM is, where we want to be, and what we are doing to get there.

*Explore* happens in a lot of ways, i.e, majors, courses, ideas, research with faculty, and study abroad. *Renew* implies a certain amount of recognition of value, hanging onto that value, and being open to change and innovation. UMM does it in our curriculum, institutionally. *Renew* and *sustain* both touch on environmental issues, of course, but they aren't seen as exclusive. *Renew* can mean looking at new things. *Sustain* can mean hanging onto good stuff that UMM has. One danger in planning is always focusing on glitzy new stuff and ignoring the core good stuff. *Sustain* also has to do with the idea of sustainability, not only ecologically but also human. A liberal arts education is an education for life that enables one to continue building on it for the rest of one's life. *Lead* can be interpreted as UMM leading as an institution, developing leadership, students, faculty and staff. Leading also has to do with outreach, co-curricular activities, and civic engagement. One of the goals of the theme is to have focus but be big and broad enough to allow for expansion. The theme is not fully developed, and the committee asked for feedback or questions from the Curriculum Committee.

Guyotte stated that one of the underlying elements of the theme is the widespread perception that many people in the United States do not have a clear view of what a liberal arts education or experience is. Why do some have a better background to make or sustain the claim than others? It's a challenge and something we seem to be agreed upon. UMM has a lot of diversity but not a lot of divergence about what we are. Korth stated that a special theme is made available to an institution when there is no terrible thing going on. It's offered to encourage us to sharpen our institutional focus. Burke noted that ten years ago UMM did a special theme on the student experience or college life that focused on the student. The Self-Study Steering Committee thought this theme would also show how the institution is developing.

Guyotte explained that the Self-Study Steering Committee has met with the Campus Resource and Planning Committee,

the Vice Chancellors Group, the Division Chairs Group, and now the Curriculum Committee. Korth added that the Self-Study Steering Committee is still at the point of planning what the self-study process will be and has a couple of months to develop it before sending the proposed theme and detail to the HLC requesting permission to do it. By mid spring the implementation phase will begin and run all of next academic year. The implementation phase includes doing the self-study, getting information and draft reports from subcommittees, and putting together a report late spring and summer 2009. There is a list of data that needs to be assembled in one place for the team to review. In fall 2009 a draft of the self study report will be circulated on campus and mailed to the visiting team a couple of months before their visit.

Hinds observed that the key word *integration* was missing from the theme. He stated that integration across broad areas of knowledge is what the liberal arts education is about. DeJager recalled in November 1998 a consultant was sent to review preliminary work and ensure us that we were on the right track. That was very helpful and might be helpful if they still do that. Guyotte stated that Korth, Burke and he attended a Self-Study workshop in September sponsored by the HLC, where they were told a staffer would be working with us. Korth added that we can send drafts and they will comment on them.

Angell stated that criteria 4c talks about usefulness of curricula in preparing students to live in a globally diverse and technological society. She suggested that we also prepare our students to function in societies that are not technological. If one ends up in a refugee camp in Darfur, technological knowledge may not be as helpful as human diversity skills. Gooch answered that the words “global” and “diverse” should cover that area. Korth added that UMM prepares students in a wide variety of situations to be knowledgeable and aware. We don’t need to constrain what we say to respond only to the way they have worded it. Hinds stated that there is a section on technology and society in additional materials that the Twin Cities campus provided in their formal review of their liberal arts requirements.

## **2. Report by the First Year Experience (FYE) Disappearing Task Force - Continued**

Guyotte stated that the Curriculum Committee would now complete its discussion of the FYE item that was discussed at the last meeting to see if there are things that it would like to move forward. He asked if there were further comments from the committee after it has read the draft that the FYE Task Force presented at the last meeting. Korth stated that it seems like some problems or issues are identified and are pretty much the same issues that have been known for some time. The Curriculum Committee should decide what connection it wants the First Year Seminar (FYS) to have with the FYE. The report seems to hint that UMM can have a FYE without FYS. That seems like a pretty important point.

Burke stated that FYS was expected to address orientation to college, allow teaching in an instructor’s specialty, and focus on diversity from different perspectives. What she did not see was teaching students what liberal arts is all about. First year students should learn why UMM is a liberal arts institution.

Lawrence answered that the task force looked at what it is that students do their first year. They have opportunities such as orientation, seminars, events, student activities, etc. They are offered all of these opportunities but there is no way to guarantee that they are taking part in them. With FYS we can make sure they are attending because it’s a class in which attendance can be taken. If FYS is canceled, how and should participation in FYE be monitored? Most students don’t get the importance of liberal arts and many faculty members don’t get it.

Strand suggested eliminating FYS as a graduation requirement and going back to offering a non-mandatory, small-group freshman seminar taught by people who want to teach it. Hinds added that he was involved in the transition from honors to the freshman common experience course. There was an expectation in 1970 that students in your section were also your advisees. Hinds found that exceptionally rewarding.

DeJager stated that the Common Experience course came out of a task force reworking the old ProsPer course into a seminar. The name was changed to FYS because it was being called that anyway. To correct weaknesses in the current version of FYS would invoke problems that prevented previous versions from working. If you make people teach prescribed curriculum they won’t be happy. If you let them teach their area of expertise there is no commonality.

Angell stated that when she first started teaching Inquiry (one of the earlier FYS renditions), she was attracted to the idea that she was going to help students who just finished high school to get into the mindset of critical thinking, looking at things from different perspectives, knowing how to examine sources, and learning how to respect people with different perspectives.

Swanson asked if there are other institutions where there is a first semester course in College 101 and a second semester covering academics in the liberal arts setting. Boever answered that the Task Force did see a model like that but there aren't many that are two semesters long.

Hinds stated that one of the problems with the FYS is that it serves too many goals, and none are served well. It has become overloaded with add-ons, causing it to lose its focus. He added that his ideal FYS would be a vehicle to establish an intellectual climate at UMM. When he was a freshman, there wasn't an equivalent to FYS, but there were an established set of expectations that gave students the resources to succeed intellectually. UMM students might be more successful if they started out with the understanding of an established intellectual climate.

Guyotte asked why people did not like the jamboree. Ukura stated that at the faculty forum most faculty members expressed that they found it to be another add-on to the course that did not fit with what they were trying to do. For example, one FYS section was studying genocide. The faculty member asked how you can have a celebration with genocide as the topic.

Ericksen asked the task force members if there is anything based on what they found that might be something the Curriculum Committee could implement right away. Boever answered that the best practices subgroup is working to put those suggestions together.

Strand suggested that the 120-credit graduation requirement be reviewed. But any changes now might not be wise since UMM is doing a self-study based on what is currently being done. Any changes should come after the self-study has been completed. Korth answered that the self-study should not stop anything from changing. The self-study can mention changes we are exploring.

DeJager noted that the FYE report states what FYS is not doing right. She asked if the task force could mention anything that the FYS is doing right. Boever answered that some of the stated outcomes and goals of FYS have not been very clear to faculty teaching it or the students taking it. If the expected goals and outcomes are clarified, that would help immensely. DeJager recalled that when she worked with FYS every time a new professor was assigned to teach FYS, DeJager tutored them on the goals of FYS. Lawrence added that the course evaluations list the goals of FYS and that is the first time some faculty see them. Whatever system was in place does not work well with turnover. DeJager added that the FYS faculty workshop is also no longer being held.

Strand commented that someone had mentioned that students begin their experience at UMM at orientation. She would argue that it begins when they look at publications, come for a visit, and attend new student registration at which time liberal arts and our general education program are explained to students.

Guyotte thanked the committee members for attending the additional meeting and reminded the committee that the meeting schedule for spring term will be Tuesdays at 3:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.  
Submitted by Darla Peterson