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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2008-09 MEETING #12 Minutes
December 10, 2008, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130

Present: Cheryl Contant (chair), Brenda Boever, Mark Collier, Janet Ericksen, Van Gooch, Donovan Hanson, Sara Haugen, Michael Korth, Judy Kuechle, Pareena Lawrence, Axl McChesney, Alex Murphy, Gwen Rudney, Dennis Stewart, Clare Strand, Nancy Helsper, Jeri Squier

Absent: Mike McBride

Visiting: Jayne Blodgett

In these minutes: Spring Semester Meeting Schedule; Cluster Headings

1. SPRING SEMESTER MEETING SCHEDULE

Contant announced that the meeting time for spring semester would be Wednesdays at 8:00 a.m. At the beginning of next semester, we will approval minutes from both the December 3 and December 10 meetings. We've had some higher priority items take precedence over getting minutes done.

2. CLUSTER HEADINGS

Contant asked Helsper and Korth to lead the discussion on cluster headings. Korth distributed handouts and explained that the reason the issue of cluster headings came up is because as requirements and course listings have gone online, certain things in the catalog don't appear online with them, such as the little paragraph with cluster headings in the printed catalog that explains cluster headings. The online listing is fed from the course database and allows no space for any text other than specific course information. Korth stated that he and Helsper met with representatives from the history and French disciplines (disciplines with the most cluster courses) to discuss their concerns and how they might want to address the issue. An important item to discuss is to what extent the PDF-only version should be identical to the online version.

The French and history program requirements serve as models of how disciplines can deal with cluster issues in a way that will appear in online listings. In French, it clearly conveys to students what the clusters are and what they mean. Because French requires a certain number of credits from a cluster, this builds effectively. History has a lot of clusters, but really only uses them as a way to organize their courses in their curriculum. They do not require that students take courses in any distribution pattern across clusters. Under electives, text explains what all the clusters are, but it doesn't direct students to take so many credits from this or that cluster. The two programs show how clusters can be kept and explained both in the online-only version and in the PDF-only version that we are going to have. Now, in the case of history, the message that we got was that it was adequate to drop the cluster headings. French said they would like to still have the cluster explanation inserted into the PDF-only version in the list of courses. The question as to how we deal with that appears open. Getting the online listing changed through Twin Cities ECAS programmers to include the text would involve programming changes in ECAS and restructuring of the online listing. Korth concluded that he didn't feel optimistic of that happening.

Contant asked, for clarification, if the French example is not just an extract from PCAS, but that it is PCAS extract with text added. Ericksen answered that it is only in the program section and not in the course listing. Helsper added that PCAS allows 3200 characters under the catalog descriptions. In the top part of the program requirements, we are limited to 1600 characters. Early Modern Studies has 500 characters. Korth stated that they built clusters into the course titles as well in French. In history, in the online-only version, there would be no differentiation or notice that clustering is in the description at the top of the page. Helsper added that the PDF-only version can be manipulated if we want to.

Strand stated that she had three comments. 1) The PDF-only version would be static. New courses that might be created would not be included in that version, so it's not a 100% solution. Students will be confused; 2) in some ways history is clustered because of numbering. Groupings are listed numerically in the online-only version, so they are sort

of clustered; and 3) it would be worthwhile to make the request that the online catalog be modified.

Korth asked if the PDF-only version would be static for one or two years. Contant answered that it has not been determined. The decision will have to do with the amount of additional work involved in it. If the PDF-only version results in content identical to PCAS, it's just a dump, but if it remains similar to the current printed version, then a tremendous amount of work is involved. Helsper added that there is another piece of work involved in the current printed catalog that she would assume would continue: having the courses directly follow the major requirements. The Twin Cities online catalog puts all majors in front and all of the courses in the back. She has revised the catalog to have courses follow major directly. Contant added that PCAS doesn't dump with all courses behind it; Helsper has to pull ECAS courses into it. Strand stated that PCAS is designed so courses are hotlinks. Contant answered that hotlinks don't help Helsper prepare the catalog. She added that it sounds like the PDF-only version would be updated every 2 years.

Contant asked if course numbers can be re-used. For example, when a course is inactivated and an instructor has sworn never to teach it again, can we go back and use the number again for a new course? Helsper answered that the policy is that we are not supposed to revise numbers. Contant replied that she feared we will run out of course numbers in some of the history groupings. Given the list provided, we have about 5 numbers left in the 335x to 336x grouping. Squier answered that if we were to re-use a course number, it would share the same identity as the old course and students would get the message that they had already taken the course. Korth asked if it would show up that way if a student printed a new transcript. Squier answered that the Twin Cities has in mind that we might run out and there is a way to purge numbers. Strand disagreed and stated that we cannot purge any numbers because they must always remain in the database so transcripts can be printed. Helsper added that we do tend to reactivate courses that have been inactive for some time.

Kuechle asked how we are doing all of the printed stuff that isn't in PCAS. That's where all of the education stuff falls. Helsper answered that she sends out requests to people in charge of the front portion of the catalog and asks for updates for catalog revision. It all gets inserted into the new catalog manually.

Strand suggested that online catalogs could point to online versions of policies as they are changed, giving people access to the most current policy. Almost all refer to an active link. Helsper replied that the Twin Cities automatically puts in links and will continue to do so. Contant stated that it has been a nightmare to deal with updating the policies. Some are Twin Cities-only and some apply system-wide. It might be helpful to look at the Twin Cities undergraduate catalog so the committee can see how they do things. Helsper stated that the Twin Cities catalog is online in PDF format. No one will be producing a printed catalog.

Rudney asked if she understood correctly that the parts that tell people about teacher education will not be in PCAS. Helsper answered that any of text in the printed catalog that's not a major or minor (for instance, Italian) doesn't appear online. Contant commented that PCAS is an odd duck. It only allows you to deal with major or minor programs. Kuechle stated that secondary education is not a major program. Rudney stated that it should be a system that makes things very easy to find and understand, and the added text does that for us. Strand stated that page 97 of the printed catalog includes it. Kuechle explained that they managed to include it because secondary education is being called a minor even though it is not. Helsper added that page 91 provides an introduction to all of the education programs, but those two columns will not be in the online-only catalog.

Ericksen asked if there will or won't be links under English for students who want to teach high school English. There won't be any link at all in the online-only version. Helsper answered that it will appear in the PDF-only version. The question is how much effort we want our campus to put into including all of the additional information in the catalog. Strand answered that this is an advising issue for teacher education. Ericksen stated that a lot of students want to look at it and not just hear it from an adviser. Strand replied that she wasn't sure what was missing. The English major is separate. Ericksen answered that there are students who want to see information about teaching when they look at the English program. Now they would have to go to education and then find the section that applies to English. Strand countered that a lot of students shop on the Web and if the Web sites have the information, they will find it. We are just rethinking how we are sharing the information. Hanson agreed that he never looked at the printed catalog. Instead, he looked online. McChesney added that he looks at the registration system to look at courses. The problem is that it is

not going to offer exactly what you want no matter what. Even if a course is listed as offered in odd-year spring, it doesn't guarantee it will be offered in an odd year in spring. It's like false hope.

Contant asked if there is anything that needs to be done with cluster headings. French has dealt with their issue, and history has dealt with theirs (until they run out of course numbers). Ericksen answered that French wanted it in the course listing as well. Contant noted that all of their courses have the phrase "early modern studies" in the course title, so why do they need it in the description as well? It seems repetitious. Part of the reason for putting the words in the title was to prevent having to put cluster headings in. Boever stated that it is clearer when students are selecting from a list in the Class Schedule. Korth replied that cluster headings have never appeared in the Class Schedule. Also, the short title goes on the transcript without the cluster header. Helsper stated that some disciplines need to be warned that if cluster headings go away, to start thinking how they want to show it instead.

Contant concluded that curriculum changes are the responsibility of the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee is the property of Campus Assembly, and curriculum is the one thing that does require Campus Assembly attention. Curriculum is the heart and soul of what we do and that belongs there. That said, she stated that she does not want to be dealing with course changes that missed the deadlines and will not make it into the catalog. Strand asked if there will be no new courses approved. Contant answered that there are five so far awaiting approval. They will not be in the PDF-only version of the catalog. We should not have five courses that were submitted after the catalog division deadlines. Ericksen answered that part of the reason for the late course proposals is that divisions only recently found out about leaves and changes to next year's staffing. Strand stated that it is all the more reason to have a dynamic catalog. Students don't look at the printed or static catalog. They look at courses that are offered the semester they register for. Grad planner tells them what they need and jumps to the online catalog to tell them all about that course. Strand added that if it would be helpful she could do a live demo for everyone, and that students have a very different experience than faculty doing advising and teaching. Contant answered that she is not a student and cannot get into grad planner. Strand answered that she could give her access temporarily. Contant answered that is the problem. Faculty do not have the same tools and can only look at it with the students. Strand replied that she and Boever could make house calls to get the faculty up-to-speed. Contant stated that scolding each other for things we are not capable of accessing is not necessary. Contant concluded that her proposal on the cluster headings is that we need to produce a catalog that looks like the PDF catalog, with clusters handled similar to the two examples, but without the cluster headings on the course listings of French that seem to be overkill. Other ones will continue to do what was done in the past, but will migrate to one of the two models. They will be in the PDF-only version, so they can be accessed as examples to follow.

Squier stated that she would be willing to be a contact for disciplines because she created both of the examples. Contant asked the division chairs to let the other disciplines know that we are heading away from cluster headings and moving toward a different way they can show up in the PDF-only version of the catalog, providing the two examples as options.

Strand suggested that Contant send a formal request to the systems people to revise the online-only system. If you look at all Italian listings, you would be able to see the paragraph that explains what Italian is. Helsper added that we would want every discipline to be able to grab the objectives and put them in the program description. Korth asked if any student is going to read the paragraph. Hanson answered that he wouldn't read it if he wasn't interested in taking those courses. Strand stated that the course guide could have the catalog description, but it would need to be populated. It currently says to ask the instructor for details. Boever asked if it would be helpful to have information like some of the computer science people use the course guide to describe exams, lectures, projects, and a snapshot of what the course is like. Kuechle asked if you could attach old syllabi to a course. Strand stated that at the very least, a URL for a Web page could be inserted. Contant asked how that is done. Strand said that faculty should call Jeri. The Registrar's Office has a very good Web site. Strand added that the dean and division chairs need to tell faculty to update their course guides over the winter break. She works over the holiday; and didn't see why faculty shouldn't do the same. She is thinking of sending a message to prompt people to think of their course guide. Contant stated that Strand should wait until after the first week of classes to contact faculty, after they have already prepared the course content and have it available. Boever stated that, from an advising point of view, it would be very helpful to students and there might be less drop/add being done at the beginning of the semester. Collier stated that it's not clear which links have content and which don't have content. It doesn't show if it's empty until you click on the link. Strand answered that it was designed that way so every course would have information. Squier added that you are not actually clicking on each one, you're scrolling. It brings you to the one you are looking at. Hanson stated that every time he clicks, there is nothing there.

Strand stated that she had something for the committee to think about over the break. She recently discovered the way that PCAS was designed was that all ECAS course changes are approved first and then PCAS is done. It's a very different way of thinking of revising curriculum. If we were to send through all new and inactivated courses first, then everyone would be informed about which new courses have been created and which have been dropped, and then revise majors/minors knowing what the course curriculum is. That way everyone would be informed. Contant noted that the committee would have difficulty making sense of course changes without also seeing program changes.

Adjourned 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson