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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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### Curriculum minutes 02/04/2009

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**  
**2008-09 MEETING #14 Minutes**  
**February 4, 2009, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130**

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

Absent: Donovan Hanson

Visiting: Jayne Blodgett, Dorothy De Jager

*In these minutes: Foreign Language General Education Requirement; Criteria and process for deciding whether a program is no longer viable*

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** (McChesney/Collier) to approve the January 28, 2009 minutes.

Discussion: Two minor corrections were noted.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**2. FOREIGN LANGUAGE GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT**

Contant explained that there had been a discussion on this topic at the December 3 meeting, but the Committee hadn't voted on the new wording to go to the Campus Assembly on February 19. She handed out a revised version based on the previous conversation for the Committee to discuss and vote on. One specific change that was proposed was to remove the footnotes and put that information into the text. The new version lays out the options clearly.

**MOTION** (Ericksen/Lawrence) to approve the revision to the catalog copy of the Foreign Language General Education Requirement.

**Discussion:** Boever noted that the statement reads "Students who plan to complete courses in the same language that they studied in high school must take the placement examination and abide by placement recommendation." In the past, students have asked and have been given an opportunity to retake the exam. Is that the accepted practice now? De Jager answered that a student may have one retake in the first two weeks of the term if he/she has not taken the course at UMM before. The Scholastic Committee allows it, and the Campus Assembly voted in favor of the policy.

VOTE: Motion passed (10-0-0)

**Further Discussion:** Gooch stated that he would like to change the word "exempting" in #2 of the list of ways in which the requirement can be met. If a student passes the placement exam, he/she has proficiency, rather than an exemption. Ericksen suggested the wording "Passing the appropriate placement exam." McChesney stated that a student must pass to the extent needed to get the requirement. Strand answered that is what appropriate means. McChesney stated that appropriate might refer to the language which a student plans on taking. Korth suggested "Achieving the appropriate score on a placement exam."

**MOTION** (Gooch/Murphy) to further amend the proposed FL requirement with a change to #2 to now read "Achieving the appropriate score on a placement exam."

VOTE: Motion passed (10-0-1) [Stewart arrived late]

The wording will now be as follows:

**Foreign Language requirement:** Proficiency in a single language other than English at the level

equivalent to the first full year of college language study. This requirement can be met in any one of the following ways:

- Successfully completing a beginning language II course
- Achieving an appropriate score on a placement exam
- Passing a special examination, such as AP or CLEP, or
- For non-native speakers of English, successfully petitioning the Scholastic Committee for an exemption.

Placement tests are given by language disciplines to determine the level of proficiency of a student with prior coursework. Students who plan to complete courses in the same language that they studied in high school must take the placement examination and abide by the placement recommendation. If, after an initial exposure to the recommended course, the placement seems inappropriate, they may follow the recommendation of their language instructor as to the proper entry course.

### **3. CRITERIA AND PROCESS FOR DECIDING WHETHER A PROGRAM IS NO LONGER VIABLE**

Contant explained that Ericksen and Collier would facilitate this discussion. Ericksen stated that she and Collier looked at many universities' Web sites to find if other institutions have a process laid out. They discovered that any changes to majors or minors should be tied to a larger program review, and tying it to the strategic plan and mission statement are always critical. Without regular program review, adding or deleting a major or minor will be difficult to justify.

Kuechle stated that when a major has been added, a form with all of that information was brought to the Curriculum Committee. Strand added that the University of Minnesota uses a standard set of criteria for new and changed academic programs. She read aloud from a document. Helsper noted that what Strand was reading was a more detailed explanation of the sections to fill out in PCAS. Ericksen asked if the PCAS form can be used for deleting a program as well by answering the questions in reverse. Most of the institutions they looked at used the same form for beginning and for deleting a major. The problem with answering some of the questions posed in the criteria list that Strand had read is the fact that UMM does not currently do regular program reviews. Program reviews might identify problems. Without them, who would initiate the process of filling out a form to end a major? Collier agreed that it is excited faculty who initiate a major or program. No one gets excited about ending a program. What exists is prioritizing other programs over ones being considered for elimination. We can't take it on a case-by-case basis and hope someone will step forward to fill out the forms. Helsper added that UMM had done program reviews in the past. Program reviews were mandatory at the University of Minnesota in the 1990s.

Strand stated that if a program is going to be eliminated, necessary documentation includes a plan to ensure that students currently in the program will be served. It must be documented when students will no longer be admitted into the program and can complete the major.

Kuechle recalled the removal of the health education program in 1993, but did not remember who initiated the process. She remembered that the Education Division Chair spoke at Campus Assembly about it. Helsper stated that a retrenchment was happening at that time, so she assumed the whole campus was involved in the decision.

Ericksen stated that a process of evaluating the effectiveness of a program should be considered before the process of how to remove a program is considered. Collier agreed and stated that the first step should be to define the goals of the institution. Until there is a settled opinion of what the desired ends are, the value of a program can't be deliberated.

Rudney stated that strategic plans are temporary. If everything is measured by centrality to a five-year strategic plan we would not have a long-term picture of the mission and institution. Ericksen agreed and stated that not every institution they looked at puts a strategic plan up front. Lawrence stated that if we look at the strategic plan, addition is the only option. There is never talk about subtracting programs in a strategic plan.

Helsper stated that academic programs at the University of Minnesota have been identified as central to the mission, not

to the strategic plan. Ericksen added that you can argue that a program is central to the mission, but other factors outweigh centrality to the mission. Lawrence stated that everything can be argued to be central to the mission but prioritizing is the key.

Contant summarized that we have a process by which students express interest in new fields of study, by offering areas of concentrations. That's also one way in which we track student needs, demand, and interest in a new field we may not offer. Would we see that as a prerequisite for developing a major? Ericksen answered that there are other ways in which students express interest, such as increased enrollments, Continuing Education enrollments, Directed Studies, etc. Contant asked if the enrollment in courses is a particularly good measure of a lack of student demand. Ericksen answered that it is one indicator, especially a course that is regularly offered or required for a major. Other indicators are what the program says about the major, whether it is serving students well, whether it is in the interest of the campus to put money into the program, whether students are graduating with the major, and whether the program is still producing students who can meet the goals of the major as comparable to other majors on campus.

Contant added that through the process of program review, the Curriculum Committee would be informed of areas it might wish to investigate. Stewart stated that we have also focused on internal demand. The environmental studies program was added after other schools began offering the program.

Collier stated that he would worry about using enrollment statistics to make a decision about dropping a program. The question of what programs we want to have and deem valuable should be considered rather than what is working now. It has to be a discussion about what our priorities are. If a major has 11 faculty members, it will generate a lot of interest. If a major has one faculty member, it will not generate interest. Statistics can be generated to fit what you want, so decisions should not be made by just looking at numbers. Helsper stated that she has heard over the years that at a liberal arts college there are certain majors that would never be eliminated, regardless of demand, simply because removing them would violate the integrity of our liberal arts core.

Strand stated that looking at the declared major on the original student application would be a relevant measure of student demand. Haugen replied that the information might be interesting but not sufficient. Students sometimes have no idea what else is out there and change their minds after they arrive and see majors that had not occurred to them.

Contant summarized that program review is a means to an end in determining both what changes need to be made to programs as well as whether a major/minor is sustainable. Whether there exists a level of interest, demand, and resources are considerations. There are a variety of measures, from mission, to student demand, to interest, to comparative advantage, to department of labor employment statistics, to all sorts of things that could be indicators. The argument would come out of this committee and not from an administrator or division chair, as part of the process of examining outcomes of program reviews.

Squier asked if courses that support interdisciplinary programs, such as Women's Studies or the African American Studies minor, are offered on a frequent enough cycle. Contant stated that this catalog cycle, the discipline coordinator offered to remove the African American Studies minor because there were not enough courses to support the minor. After a review by a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, it was determined that there would be enough courses offered. If a proposal to close down any major were offered, the decision must take into account how that would affect other majors and what the implications would be to those majors.

Ericksen stated that external program reviews from time to time would help in making hiring decisions. If a decision has already been made in terms of allocation toward a program, we are going backwards in terms of figuring out whether or not we are going to support a discipline. Contant stated that when an external reviewer from a particular field of study is brought in to review the program, their recommendation will not be surprising. They never say that given the resources provided, these are the implications of continuing the program. They will invariably recommend that more resources are needed to support the field, and with more resources, it would be a great program. Korth agreed that is exactly what happened in program reviews in the 1990s. Contant stated that it doesn't have to be that way. Program reviewers can be told what questions we want them to answer. We can ask them what changes can be made to a program to make it more effective without additional resources.

Collier asked if external reviewers can be brought in to tell us what programs we need to cut. Lawrence stated that the priority is ours, not the reviewers. Contant stated that a priority exists to reinvigorate our program review process. She would like to continue this discussion at another meeting.

Strand stated that it might be of interest to note how this happens on the other campuses at the University of Minnesota. The Twin Cities campus eliminated two colleges. It would be interesting to view the criteria they used to make that decision. Collier stated that since it is clear that a decision of a program's viability is tied to mission, there needs to be a collective discussion about what the UMM mission is.

Adjourned 9:05 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson