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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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2-11-2009

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**  
**2008-09 MEETING #15 Minutes**  
**February 11, 2009, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130**

Present: Cheryl Contant (chair), Brenda Boever, Janet Ericksen, Van Gooch, Donovan Hanson, 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: Mark Collier

Visiting: Jayne Blodgett

*In these minutes: Areas of Concentration*

## **1. AREAS OF CONCENTRATION**

Contant invited Lawrence, Boever, and McChesney to frame the discussion. Boever provided hand-outs. Lawrence gave a brief history of the issues that have been raised regarding areas of concentration. UMM has offered areas of concentration for a long time. An effort to formalize them some years ago came out of a retention task force that Lawrence had chaired. The task force surveyed students who were leaving or transferring out of UMM. One of the factors students mentioned in their decisions to leave UMM was that UMM did not offer a major a student was interested in. Several of the members of the task force took it upon themselves to talk to the students who were thinking of leaving. They encouraged some of the students to get an area of concentration. It's a lot of work for faculty to create a major plan, so the task force obtained a list and samples of successful areas of concentrations. The list was divided between task force members who looked at other schools with the majors. They then looked at whether the areas of concentration would be doable at UMM. They contacted faculty in the areas of interest, showed them the information they had found, and asked them if they would work on a sample plan, with the help of task force members. Sample plans were created and the current prototypes were the result. Helsper added that the prototypes came to the Curriculum Committee for information. Lawrence concluded that the motivation to formalize areas of concentrations was first, a retention issue to help students, and secondly, a way to help faculty who said they didn't have enough time to look up other institutions' majors and prepare a plan.

Boever compared the current (2007-09) and revised (2009-11) catalog copy. The revised copy offers students the opportunity to create their own program and gives the framework in much less detail. Contant added that the reduction in detail allows more discussion behind the scenes and removes language about the prototypes. It directs people to a Web site that can be updated.

Ericksen asked if the prototypes are still online. Boever answered that they are currently on both the advising Web site and on the academic affairs Web site. There is a link from the online catalog. Kuechle stated that sports management area of concentration is the only area of concentration that shows up in the catalog. Ericksen asked if the prototypes state in big letters that the prototypes are only samples. Sometimes students have viewed prototypes as pre-made majors that do not require any discussion between student and adviser. Problems occur when courses listed on the prototype plans are not available.

Clare announced that she had not yet heard anything about APAS and its role. She stated that she did not take the time to enter some of the prototypes into APAS because no students had declared them. They were not officially approved by the Board of Regents, so she did not have to enter them. The most popular areas of concentration are sports management, peace studies, international studies, and digital media, and are in APAS. She also noted that prototypes have not been removed when they became majors. She stated that she would assume the dean would not want to approve a prototype when a *bona fide* major exists. Boever responded that the reason some majors are still listed is because the Web pages have not been updated.

Contant stated that the real key to success of areas of concentration is good advising by people who are cognizant of the minimum requirements that are implicit and unstated about level of depth and rigor required in a major. The second part of the advising issue has to do with the issue of substituting courses. Prototypes are not the absolute requirements,

and we would encourage and expect students to substitute courses that fit their needs better. However, advisers should be aware of key content in areas of concentration that should not be removed entirely. Other issues of concern are whose responsibility it is to review prototypes for course updates, updating the Web pages, and capturing the crux of the major.

McChesney stated that advising has been a real problem. He personally has a peace studies area of concentration, and his first adviser didn't know about areas of concentration at all, let alone peace studies. Ericksen asked if it would be helpful to have advisers designated for the prototypes with a link to the designated adviser. Boever stated that it all comes down to being responsive to students' needs. If we are going to offer the prototypes, we need to support them. Boever stated that the advising office took on the task of updating them in the last catalog cycle.

Contant stated that it should first be determined if we want to continue areas of concentration. Then, we should decide if we want to continue to provide prototypes. She added that she would prefer the name *sample plans of study*, because prototype sounds like baby versions of the real thing. If affirmative to the first two questions, the next questions are whose responsibility it is to update and clarify the requirements of these different individualized majors, and how to address the advising issue.

McBride asked how areas of concentration take place. Contant answered that the student submits an approval form on which justification and expected curriculum are entered. It is signed by an adviser, two faculty members, a division chair, and the dean. Stewart wondered at what point in time an area of concentration has less oversight than a major, and at what point in time should it be considered a major. It seems sports management has many more people than some of our current majors. Contant answered that it is her understanding that without a full-time, tenure-track faculty member in the area of sports management participating in the conversation it would be ill-advised to make it a major.

Strand stated, for the record, that the procedures says that the student should provide a comparable program from another institution, so it's not likely a student would have all courses at the 1xxx level if they are modeling another program. She asked if students have to show the comparable program if they use a prototype. Lawrence explained that the problem with lower-level courses occurs when students substitute courses or transfer courses from other institutions that transfer at a lower level. Strand stated that on a ten-year average there were only 19 approved areas of concentrations. It's a lot of work for that low a number. Helsper responded that areas of concentration might attract students to UMM, even though they may change their mind and not graduate with the area of concentration. Gooch agreed.

Gooch asked to add to the list of concerns the issue of online courses. How many should be allowed, and how do we judge their quality? Strand answered that he should look at the initiative by president Bruininks that says the University of Minnesota is going in the direction of online learning. Contant asked Gooch if he was concerned about the unknown rigor and depth of the online courses and transfer credits from other institutions. Gooch agreed that was the case.

Contant asked for an unofficial show of hands on the question of whether we should offer areas of concentration. The vote was unanimous in favor of continuing.

Contant asked for an unofficial show of hands on the question of whether we should offer sample plans of study for selected areas of concentration. The vote was nearly unanimous in favor of continuing, with one no vote by Strand (a non-voting member), and one abstention by Korth. Korth explained that he thought there should be sample plans of study available, but they have been misnamed and misrepresented.

McBride stated that the Academic Center for Enrichment (ACE) office could be working with students who don't like their major and are interested in something we don't offer. The ACE office can give them the name of a professor who they can speak to about their area of interest. We can avoid having all 1xxx-level courses by having the student work with someone right at the beginning of the process who will explain to them that it's not going to work. Boever responded that it happens by default when faculty members send students to the Advising Office. It would be nice if it were more structured. Ericksen asked if it would help to require approval across two major disciplines that were involved in the area of concentration, instead of one. Strand stated, as a point of clarification, the area of concentration procedures state "In consultation with the adviser and perhaps other faculty." What that says to her is that there isn't an

assumption that you are to have approval from multiple faculty and different disciplines. Lawrence stated that there are two lines on the approval form for faculty signatures. Korth stated that the second faculty signature is optional. Lawrence stated that she does not sign as division chair unless the student has obtained two faculty signatures. Strand stated that we are not communicating accurate information to our students. Contant stated that we could identify two or three disciplines from which students should draw faculty signatures when they use the sample plans of study. For example, in sports management, one faculty member could be from wellness sports science and one from management. Peace studies could require philosophy and political science.

Contant stated that areas of concentration are important recruiting and retention tools. We need to come up with adviser names for areas of concentrations for which we have sample plans of study, and we need to identify key disciplines for faculty signatures. Boever suggested that we go back to the original group of faculty members to work on updating the sample plans of study before annual planning.

Kuechle asked if sports management should remain in the catalog. Helsper answered that it will appear in the PDF-only version of the 2009-2011 catalog. Strand stated that it needs to stay in APAS because we have a number of students tracking their progress toward graduation. She announced that she will change the name from prototype to sample plan of study.

Gooch stated that sometimes students want to propose an area of concentration that falls outside of the liberal arts mission of UMM. Some prototypes lean toward professional areas of study. He would like to see something in writing that the areas of concentration need to follow the mission of UMM. That way the dean could deny areas of concentration that are not liberal arts majors.

Contant thanked Boever, Lawrence, and McChesney for their work on areas of concentration. She announced that the discussion at next week's meeting will address program reviews and the criteria to include in program reviews.

Adjourned 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson