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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2009-10 MEETING #3 Minutes
September 24, 2009, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130

Present: Cheryl Contant (chair), Talia Earle, Janet Ericksen, Mark Fohl, Sara Haugen, Michael Korth, Pareena Lawrence, Mike McBride, Gwen Rudney, Dennis Stewart, Elizabeth Thoma, Tisha Turk, Clare Strand, Nancy Helsper

Absent: Dave Roberts, USA rep to be named and student rep to be named

Visiting: Dorothy De Jager, Jeffrey Ratliff-Crain, Jeri Squier

In these minutes: First-Year Experience Curricular Component Discussion.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 17, 2009

MOTION (Ericksen/Earle) to approve the September 17, 2009 minutes with minor corrections. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE (FYE) DISCUSSION (CONTINUED)

Contant welcomed guest Ratliff-Crain to the meeting and proposed a slightly amended course of action for the year. The focus this semester will be on learning outcomes and the curricular component of FYE. The General Education discussion will be tabled until spring semester. The two topics this semester lend themselves well to being done or moving along for progress prior to beginning a conversation on General Education.

Contant asked the committee to share what they think the purposes and outcomes of a curricular component of a FYE should be, focusing on a more general and theoretical level, rather than thinking of how to fix the First-Year Seminar (FYS). It is easy to say what isn't working, but it would be more valuable, although harder, to talk about what we want it to accomplish.

Members suggested the following purposes and goals for the curricular component of FYE:

- There should be credits associated with the experience. That acknowledges and validates time being spent on an experience.
- It should help provide a smooth transition between high school and college.
- College Writing should be a curricular component for all first-year students.
- It should have all of the parts of a college course, such as a test, and a paper, because college could be a terrifying experience if a student has never written a college paper or taken an exam. Also, it should teach new students about the resources that are available on campus, such as the value of the library, the writing room, and academic counseling.
- It should touch on diversity. One of UMM's strategic goals is intercultural competence.
- There should be a discussion aspect in the first year to accomplish an ability to articulate an argument, listen, absorb other ideas, and re-articulate it.
- Students should learn critical reading. It's difficult and students get very uneven levels of that during high school.
- Students should learn research methods across the different disciplines and understand how they differ.
- Students should learn to prepare a thesis and defend it with evidence.
- Students should develop an understanding of the role of the individual in learning, or the notion that a UMM student is not just a person sitting in the classroom.

- A first-year seminar should be interesting to the student. A solution to that is to make FYS more disciplinary. Listening to a professor talking about his/her particular area of research that the professor is excited about might draw the student into that enthusiasm.
- Whatever the student learns (e.g., research methods) should be used in the class and not just talked about.
- There should be some sort of communal experience shared by the entire class. Recognizing faces and feeling a part of a community is important.
- Students should be helped to decide what they want to major in. A student who doesn't know his/her major may get a late start in a major and won't graduate in four years.
- Students should learn what the liberal arts are and how they affect the way we think.
- Learning outcomes also take place outside the classroom, so we would want to suggest that in the curricular elements of FYE.
- The curricular or co-curricular needs to spill over into the spring semester. Now we just have FYS in the fall semester.
- Students should learn time management, relationship skills, and life skills.

Contant noted that there will not be a meeting on October 1. On October 8, Ratliff-Crain will be a guest and the two sub-committees will receive their charges. A schedule for the remainder of the semester will be set, including meetings of the sub-committee and the larger committee.

Adjourned 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson