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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2009-10 MEETING #4 Minutes
October 8, 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, Dave Roberts, Gwen Rudney, Jeri Squier, Clare Strand, Elizabeth Thoma

Absent: Nicholas Johnson, Dennis Stewart, Tisha Turk

Visiting: Jayne Blodgett, Dorothy De Jager, Nancy Helsper, Jeffrey Ratliff-Crain

In these minutes: Learning Outcomes Subcommittee Charge and Membership; First-Year Experience Curricular Component Subcommittee Charge and Membership; Affirmation of UMM current practice of not scheduling classes on Saturday.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 24, 2009

MOTION (McBride/Lawrence) to approve the September 24, 2009 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND CHARGE

Contant stated that the Learning Outcomes Subcommittee should seek input from other participants on campus, such as the Scholastic Committee, the Student Services Committee, the Assessment of Student Learning Committee, and the Morris Campus Student Association. It should also hold campus forums with an opening presentation giving the background of and the need for learning outcomes. The presentation should also include some alternatives, as well as the ones that the Curriculum Committee has approved for conversation on this campus. The hope is to get input by the end of fall semester. This committee can then take input to reform/revise, and if appropriate, take a proposal to Campus Assembly.

Learning Outcomes Subcommittee: Contant (coordinator), Ericksen, Fohl, Helsper, Lawrence, McBride, Rudney.

3. FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE (FYE) CURRICULAR COMPONENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND CHARGE

Ratliff-Crain distributed a draft of a charge for the FYE Curricular Component Subcommittee.

As a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, the subcommittee will be primarily involved in the revision or re-envisioning of the curricular aspects of the first year. This should, however, be considered within the context of the other relevant aspects of this transition year for students. Accordingly, it is expected that the subcommittee will consult and/or meet with other relevant groups (e.g., Student Services Committee, Scholastic Committee, Assessment of Student Learning Committee, and MSCSA). Any courses or other curricular inventions should be clearly connected to UMM's mission, learning outcomes, and clearly state the curricular purposes. The subcommittee should be mindful that changes in the current First-Year Seminar (FYS) will require changes in current general education requirements. Also, campus resources (both financial and human) need to be kept in mind.

Ratliff-Crain explained that the draft focuses on the curricular but can also integrate into the broader FYE, considering transition aspects of a new college experience and the broader liberal arts experience. The resulting curricular component should clearly connect back to the mission and should be clear to anyone who looks at it.

Roberts stated that it prejudices the situation towards the status quo when the charge states: "The subcommittee should be mindful that changes in the current First-Year Seminar (FYS) will require changes in current general education requirements." We talk about curricular components, but FYS is the central component. Ratliff-Crain answered that the current GenEd requirements are in the catalog and we do need to be mindful of addressing them if we change the course. Changes can have ripple effects that should also be addressed. Roberts replied that the Curriculum Committee would be perfectly capable of removing the requirement. Ratliff-Crain agreed that there are ways to deal with the requirement as it stands. Contant stated that the GenEd requirement could be changed or deleted. Strand added that it could be put on hold, which is what has happened in the past.

Korth stated that if nothing is decided in the next couple of months, FYS will be taught a year from now. If there is a

contemplation of not doing it next year, it's time to make the decision in this committee well before the end of semester. If the committee were asked if FYS should be continued or even be listed as one of the possibilities, it would not get a resounding positive vote. Contant stated that it might be helpful for the subcommittee to decide what sorts of decisions need to be made along the way and report back to the committee with a recommendation of what should happen. The committee could say 1) it's OK as is; 2) we know we don't like it and want to change it but need a transition plan; or 3) we've found a great alternative. Ratliff-Crain asked if a deadline should be set. De Jager stated that the Campus Assembly will meet on October 14, November 19, and December 1 this semester.

Roberts stated that it would not be illegitimate for the full committee to decide very soon. The Disappearing Task Force report came out a year and a half ago. We should have a resolution very soon before continuing. Rudney agreed that the subcommittee should start with the Task Force report and not start over. They worked hard, and to start from scratch doesn't make sense. The Task Force had very specific suggestions. Lawrence noted that the subcommittee will take that into account. Roberts suggested that he would vote to have a FYS but to substantially change it. He would remove the Human Diversity umbrella, give faculty more freedom, and give students more topics of interest.

Contant asked the division chairs to speak about other models that they heard about at a recent meeting. Lawrence answered that two models she heard about were very intriguing. One was a learning community model, consisting of a set of three or four courses that first-year students should take depending on what track they are on. College Writing would be a common theme throughout the courses.

Another model was the Great Problems model. A problem to address is chosen (e.g., environmental issues, ethnic violence, hunger, etc.) Ericksen continued that in the model that was presented to them, everyone had the same framework for the name of the course. Courses were seminars of 15 to 20 students, co-taught. They had a four-credit class and students received 2 regular GenEds for it. It was challenging and interesting. There was a lecture the first half of the semester and small groups the second half. Students learned how to do research, were given regular writing assignments, and had to present and work in a group. Rudney added that it was real and grounded in actual content. Ericksen added that the things they produced were phenomenal. Topics included air pollution in China and whether a student has a responsibility for it. Students spoke about how much better off they were having done this project.

Contant stated that even if significant changes were made to FYS, it would have to be renamed because it has such a bad reputation on campus. If major positive changes were made to it, it would still take time to lose the bad rep. We would have a much better chance of success by clearing the slate and starting over with a course with a fundamentally different approach. Strand stated that anybody could propose a course with a new name and components to substitute for the current IS 1001. The idea that there is a curricular component filling GenEd wouldn't change, just the course. Contant stated that a December goal is not hard-and-fast. All FYS instructors had not been named as late as April of last year. Ericksen suggested that a new option could be piloted the first year, giving faculty a choice of FYS or the new course. Ratliff-Crain stated that the GenEd requirement in the catalog is broadly written: "To teach students to think critically, to assess sources of information, to help students to become aware of the lenses through which they perceive, and to recognize that their perceptions are not universal." The GenEd category does not give a course number and does not mandate Human Diversity. The course description has Human Diversity in its title and states that it's a 2-credit course.

Contant stated that there are now four options: 1) keep as is; 2) suspend and propose an alternative; 3) propose a great new solution; or 4) offer FYS and an alternative pilot course. Roberts stated that, as the person who first raised the issue of urgency, he realized that the full committee is not prepared to vote. He was happy to hear that Contant was not supportive of keeping FYS as it is.

Contant stated that non-committee members can volunteer to be on a subcommittee. One of the things in the charge to both subcommittees is to get input from other participants on campus. The committee has to have done its homework and be prepared for Campus Assembly.

First-Year Experience Curricular Component Subcommittee: Ratliff-Crain (coordinator), Blodgett, De Jager, Earle, Haugen, Johnson, Korth, Roberts, Stewart, Thoma, Turk.

4. NEW BUSINESS: SATURDAY CLASSES

Ericksen stated that she received a request to hold a class on Saturday mornings and wanted to know if the Curriculum Committee has a position on Saturday classes. UMM does not have a written policy on it. Squier stated that there are some Saturday classes but they are certificate classes. Thoma asked if the class was required for a major. Ericksen replied that it was required for secondary education licensure. Roberts asked for the rationale for the request. Ericksen answered that the instructor drives from the Twin Cities and the half-semester class works better in a longer block of time, which is easier to schedule on a Saturday. She added that it can work, but do we want to set a precedent?

Thoma stated that, speaking as a student, she would say no to the request. It is hard for a student to have five days of classes and then add on a sixth day. The students can't go home on weekends. It is inconvenient and frustrating to give up that much time on a weekend. Strand added that it is especially hard for those for whom it is required. Thoma agreed and said that she would not argue against it if it were an elective course. Ratliff-Crain asked if it would be possible to offer the scheduled weekday option as well as the weekend. Ericksen stated that it wouldn't be possible because of the cost. Squier asked if an evening offering would be better. Thoma agreed that it would. McBride added that it would be better than a Saturday morning class. Ericksen asked if there was a general consensus that the committee does not think it is a good idea to have Saturday classes. Strand answered that it would be bad to set a precedent.

Contant asked if anyone wanted to make a motion or affirmation. Ericksen added that it would be a good idea to have it in the records. That way if anyone ever did want to do it in the future, such a request would have to come through the Curriculum Committee.

MOTION (Lawrence/Ericksen) to affirm our current practice of not scheduling classes on Saturday.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Korth asked if we also have a current practice of not scheduling after 6 p.m. on weekdays. Ratliff-Crain answered that we hold a lot of classes after 6 p.m. Squier explained that when she started scheduling there wasn't a written policy, but Continuing Education had evening courses, and the day school courses ended by 6 p.m. so they didn't take away from enrollment in evening courses. No policy on it was written down.

Adjourned 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson