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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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### Curriculum minutes 03/03/2010

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## UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

### 2009-10 MEETING#13 Minutes

March 3, 2010, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130

Present: Cheryl Contant (chair), Clare Dingley, Janet Ericksen, Sara Haugen, Michael Korth, Pareena Lawrence, Mike McBride, Dave Roberts, Gwen Rudney, Jeri Squier, Dennis Stewart, Elizabeth Thoma, Tisha Turk

Absent: Talia Earle, Mark Fohl, Nicholas Johnson

Visiting: Jayne Blodgett, Nancy Helsper, Jeffrey Ratliff-Crain

*In these minutes: Review of Directed Studies*

#### **1. Approval of Minutes – February 24, 2010**

MOTION: (Ericksen/Thoma) to approve the February 24, 2010 minutes with a minor correction. Motion passed by voice vote.

#### **1. Review of Directed Studies**

Contant stated that the current directed study form that students submit is relatively brief. It doesn't really match up with our current best practices in terms of thinking about what a course does, its purposes, how it accomplishes that, and what sorts of learning outcomes a student is expected to have. How do we ensure both that the student is receiving the proper number of credits and that the time commitment by the faculty member is considered? Also, why do students do directed studies? Are they treating them as an alternative to the classroom experience?

Lawrence stated that it would be helpful if the committee could see data about directed studies by discipline. Ericksen added that it would be helpful for disciplines to receive copies of the directed study forms so that they can assess what students want that is not currently offered. Large disciplines do not necessarily know what kinds of directed studies their colleagues are doing. Rudney asked if the directed study forms go through the disciplines. Ericksen answered that they do in the Humanities. Lawrence answered that they do not in the Social Sciences. Ericksen added that in the Humanities three faculty from the discipline plus the coordinator have to sign off on directed studies. Contant said that it would be interesting to see how many student credit hours are taken in directed studies. Ratliff-Crain added that he would also like to see them broken down by level. Stewart asked if courses out-of-sequence and practicums will be included with the review of directed studies. Roberts answered that a course out-of-sequence is very much like a directed study. To get meaningful data we should address that too. Contant asked Helsper to provide data for the committee on directed studies, courses out-of-sequence, and practicums, as well as internships and field studies.

Contant then asked why students do directed studies. She suggested two that came to mind. First, a student has an interest in a topical area in which we don't offer courses and finds a faculty member who has expertise in that area and can, in a relatively straightforward manner, lead that directed study. A second reason is that after a student has taken a course that we offer, he/she wants to pursue the topic further and chooses to work one-on-one to advance their understanding of that material. Haugen said that when she was a non-trad student she took directed studies for the flexibility of not having to take courses that were offered when she was working full-time. Directed studies are extremely useful for non-trads and student parents. Dingley added that there have been a few areas of concentration where the student designs a particular course of study that includes a number of directed studies. Roberts stated that a course out-of-sequence is often taken to fulfill requirements when needed courses are not offered. Dingley said that is the only reason it should be approved. McBride shared that students also use directed studies to fulfill major requirements when they switch majors half-way through college or come to their junior year and find that they still need a number of requirements fulfilled by the end of the next year. Other examples offered included a one-time opportunity such as sustainable costuming, a course that fit with a theatre production that was being done at the time, or the history of jazz that Dr. Carlson offered over the summer.

Roberts stated that a directed study of an enrollment of six doesn't sound like a directed study. A directed study is a more individual, one-on-one course with an instructor. We instead have ongoing pseudo-courses that for some reason

are called directed studies. One is offered in mathematics. It's offered every year. It's really a course that should be in the catalog so it's not a hidden thing to bypass the regular course approval process.

Rudney shared that in Education, their directed studies are very pragmatic. They do a significant number of out-of-sequence courses because of the rigid course schedule in education and the need to fulfill requirements and work around the student teaching requirement. Courses out-of-sequence are also taken by licensed teachers seeking an endorsement.

Contant asked if it would be inappropriate to ask students on the form why they are enrolled in a directed study. Also, the form could be a two-sided form, with the student being responsible for filling out the first side and the faculty member filling out the second side. The first side would require the student to explain why the student is taking a directed study and the expected work commitment, including hours per week. The flip side would request the faculty member to provide a set of objectives and learning outcomes. They would be asked how the course would be delivered (e.g., face-to-face, classroom) the number of students taking the course, the number of hours of student work and faculty work, and how the course would be evaluated. Ericksen stated that she would like the form to clearly explain which areas the student fills out and which area the faculty member fills out.

Turk said that she is currently doing a course out-of-sequence and a directed study. The course out-of-sequence has a syllabus. The directed study is a nightmare because the student has no workplan. It is a lot easier to teach a directed study if a student has taken a class and wants to explore some aspect of it in more depth. If there is no class, the students don't even know where to begin. It comes back to reasons why students do them. Contant stated that for all other courses you need a contract with the student, which is what the syllabus is. With directed studies, we don't require them. This could lead to misunderstandings and bad experiences. Ericksen asked if the revised form would require an attached working syllabus. Contant replied that it should, with both the instructor and the student signing off.

Korth stated that there are very different models in faculty minds about whether students or faculty members take responsibility for creating a directed study. To the extent to which a directed study is an independent study varies greatly. Some faculty don't view it that way. Sometimes the faculty are teaching a course they taught five years ago, have a syllabus set, and have made it known to the students the range of things they will do. The faculty member will sometimes state what they are willing to do. Contant asked if that would fit in a new model of students saying why they are taking it and providing an agreed-upon syllabus. Korth answered that it would work as long as the student is not required to create the syllabus. It would work if there was an option for the faculty member to create the syllabus. The form now has both signatures on it. Lawrence agreed but added that often before she as a division chair signs off she spends a lot of time following up with questions about credits and workload that would be provided on the proposed revised form.

Roberts stated that faculty workload is a concern. Turk agreed and added that we want a faculty member to have the right to say no for his/her entire career. She is not getting paid for doing them during the academic year. There have been discrepancies in that faculty have been paid for doing directed studies during the summer. Because they don't get compensated during the year, a lot of faculty will do them during the summer.

Dingley noted that the all-U policy states that directed studies do not require a syllabus. It may be a good idea but we can't require it. Rudney replied that there is a difference between "does not require" and "cannot require." Contant added that we could as a campus require a syllabus. Dingley also stated that because we have a policy, it speaks to the number of credits and says the instructor must set the number of credits. Contant replied that we could link the policy to this form to show what is permissible and what is required.

Contant stated that she would bring in a proposed form for the committee to wordsmith. The result would be a form through which the student and faculty reach an agreement that is then sanctioned by the division chair or dean for credit.

Contant said that next week's agenda will include a similar conversation about internships and field studies. Internships are often a 3-way arrangement that includes the relationship that the student has with the employer or intern location, and the arrangement that the student has with the faculty member, clarifying what aspect of that work is for credit. She would like to come to an understanding of how those experiences are different from directed studies and then clarify the expectations in those arrangements. Ratliff-Crain suggested inviting Gary Donovan to the meeting because the career

center is involved in how internships are developed. Contant agreed.

Adjourned 9:02 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson