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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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5-5-2010

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## UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

### 2009-10 MEETING #19 Minutes

May 5, 2010, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130

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

Absent: Talia Earle, Nicholas Johnson

Visiting: Jayne Blodgett, Dorothy De Jager, Tara Greiman, Nancy Helsper, Ian Patterson

*In these minutes: Catalog Changes Timeline and Process for next year*

#### **1. Approval of Minutes – April 28, 2010**

MOTION: (Thoma/McBride) to approve the April 28, 2010 minutes. Motion passed by voice vote.

#### **2. Catalog Changes, Timeline, Process, and Form A**

Thoma introduced two guest students who will serve on the 2010-11 committee: Tara Greiman, MCSA secretary of academic affairs, and Ian Patterson. An additional first-year student will be named in the fall. Contant added that two members will not be on the committee next year, McBride and Stewart. Contant thanked them for serving on the committee and welcomed Greiman and Patterson.

The timeline for division course revision review was discussed. The division order will be Science and Math, Social Sciences, Humanities, Education, Interdisciplinary Studies, and a wrap-up meeting. All materials for review will be submitted a week in advance to the committee in PDF format via email. Meetings will be held in a room with a projector so documents can be viewed by all when they are discussed. Once changes are done and approved we must be diligent in looking ahead at additional course changes and taking them back to disciplines to see if they have an interest in those changes.

Contant suggested that the old Form A be used in advance of the PCAS forms. All disciplines should submit them, even if they didn't make a change to their PCAS forms. This would give the committee the ability to see a summary of all credits required for the major, courses, summary of intent, staffing implications, etc. It would also provide a nice set of summary sheets for campus assembly to help them understand the context of proposed changes. This year she would like her presentation to Campus Assembly to focus their attention on the programs and not on minor details.

Contant suggested requiring more information about proposed new courses, other than what is required on the ECAS form. She would like to get a sense of whether the committee would like to have more info and not simply ECAS. Additional information would include a course outline, methods of evaluation, etc. Roberts stated that it may be too constraining on faculty. Standard courses and required courses that have been taught for years are taught differently across campus. Some instructors are pro-test, and some are not, and for some, the textbook is a huge issue. He personally would not want to be assigned to teach a course with a prescribed text he would have to follow. Constraining faculty would be bad policy. Haugen suggested that they use language such as "may include" or "such as" when listing texts, making it less constraining.

McBride asked if a new course proposal were required to include a syllabus, would the committee be approving the course and the syllabus. If the syllabus is subject to approval, then it is too prescriptive. Or will it be used as evidence in evaluating the course? Turk stated that the emphasis might differ, depending on the type of course. If offered by multiple people, the text would differ, but not the learning objectives. The type of textbook would be mentioned but not a specific one. Textbooks come in genres.

Rudney stated that in terms of objectives or concepts, the added requirement makes sense. Questions come to mind such as how is this course different than other courses, why is this course necessary? We get a lot of requests at the

same time using the rationale of increased enrollment. How does it fit in the discipline? Why is the course at a particular level? Those are the questions that come to mind, rather than what textbook would they use. Contant agreed and added that another question is how new courses link up to curricular changes, where does it fit, and why is it important? Ericksen stated that the course changes have already gone through the discipline and division approval. She stated that she trusted her colleagues and did not think the committee should assume that those questions weren't already answered at the division level. The Curriculum Committee should look at how the course fits in the overall curriculum.

Squier stated that most faculty use a Word form when designing a course. Why not require them to ask three to five additional questions concerning the rationale? It could be revised in ECAS with a Word document attached. Stewart asked what questions would be added. Squier answered that the rationale for change or new course is already on the form, but it's usually filled in vaguely. Contant agreed that it should not just be filled in with a sentence that says it is the field of interest of the faculty member. Korth replied that we don't control the fields in ECAS. Squier replied that every division except Science and Math still use the Word document prior to using ECAS. Contant stated that it could be requested in that field. We do have control. ECAS and PCAS are not in charge. The technology is driving how to do things and that's wrong. It would be nice to get an explanation as to why course fulfills a Gen Ed category. Lawrence asked if it would be acceptable to ask for learning outcomes. Stewart answered that he wondered whether two instructors teaching the same course would have the same learning outcomes. Helsper noted that the Assessment of Student Learning Committee is planning to send out a survey to ask how all current courses meet learning outcomes. Stewart asked if multiple faculty members teaching the same course can have different learning outcomes. Lawrence answered that a discipline can meet to agree on the core learning objectives, and some courses can have more.

Ericksen stated that because of deadlines the division has already approved a lot of catalog changes for next fall. She asked if they will have to submit new forms. Contant answered that she would like to see a Form A submitted for each of the disciplines and an updated 4-yr sample plan for each major. Korth answered that we have 4-yr plans for all majors. Roberts added that the documents were very helpful for advising. A drawback of the 4-year plan is the randomness of them. The document indicates the many different choices students have. McBride noted that they would be helpful, but students don't know about them, unless an adviser tells them. Thoma agreed that students aren't completely aware that the plans exist. Contant stated that the plans should be updated so they are current, accurate, and available to students. Dingley stated, for the record, that the intent of the Sample Plan is to demonstrate that a student can complete a program within four years without having to take more than 17 credits per semester. When the environmental science program was brand new the provost office questioned that. They were looking at whether it was worthy of going through to the Regents.

Contant stated that she sees three major themes coming out of the discussion: 1) not to be too onerous and constraining; 2) try to do our fundamental role on campus, which is to serve as the first cut for ownership for the curriculum on campus and do our best at protecting the interest of the campus by asking questions; and 3) trying to link the curriculum to things such as learning outcomes and advising. We need to make sure advisers know how to help students find their way through our curriculum. Stewart noted that the Curriculum Committee is actually the fourth cut. Trying to keep in mind how a course is different from other courses is something the discipline has already answered. This committee is not necessarily in a better position to assess it than the discipline. Haugen answered that it would be nice for the committee to know if the discipline has already discussed it. Stewart agreed as long as it's just informational.

Dingley stated that there needs to be a discussion about prerequisites. Faculty should be encouraged to make clear when a course is required or when a course is recommended and does not need to be enforced. Another level of defining prerequisites is needed. Roberts answered that the general understanding is that it is required and enforced. Dingley replied that if it is not enforced, it is not a prerequisite. Roberts asked why she would not enforce a prerequisite. Squier explained that not all disciplines have a problem with students not following prerequisites. Korth stated that the default has always been not to enforce them. The disciplines were discouraged from enforcing any of them. Squier added that PeopleSoft told us not to enforce them because it would plug up the system by having to look up the student record. Rudney asked whether the consent of the instructor factors in.

### **3. Year-end Conclusions**

Contant summarized the accomplishments of the 2009-10 Curriculum Committee. The First-Year Seminar course was revised into a model that got more courses recommended than we needed. Student learning outcomes were created for our campus. Processes were established in which catalog revisions will be transparent on important things. And, a lot of work was done approving courses and curricular changes, especially in Education. Contant thanked the committee for its work and thanked outgoing members McBride and Stewart for their service.

Adjourned 9:04 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson