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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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11-29-2010

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**  
**2010-11 MEETING #10 Minutes**  
**November 29, 2010, 12:00 p.m., 2200 Science**

Present: Cheryl Contant (chair), Janet Ericksen, Mark Fohl, Tara Greiman, Sara Haugen, Michael Korth, Leslie Meek, Ian Patterson, David Roberts, Gwen Rudney, Elizabeth Thoma, Tisha Turk

Absent: Clare Dingley, Molly Donovan, Pareena Lawrence, Jeri Squier

Visiting: Nancy Helsper

*In these minutes: Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment.*

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES November 15, 2010**

MOTION (Thoma/Patterson) to approve the November 15, 2010 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**2. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT**

Contant stated that the agenda item is driven by a request received by the Assessment of Student Learning Committee (ASLC), asking for clearer definitions of some of the words in the UMM Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) provides a set of definitions and rubrics. Most of the items in our SLOs are covered in those, with the following exceptions:

- Engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
- Artistic expression
- Multi-media communication
- Technology literacy
- Aesthetic/artistic engagement
- Environmental stewardship

Of the 21 items listed in the SLOs, 15 are already defined in the AAC&U rubrics. If desired, she could send the AAC&U rubrics to the ASLC and tell them that 15 items have rubrics and definitions provided and the committee will get back to them with definitions for the remaining 6 items. Contant asked the committee members if they would be comfortable with that plan.

Haugen asked if the minutes from earlier Curriculum Committee discussions of SLOs might contain some definitions. Turk answered that minutes from the SLOs subcommittee might be more helpful, if they discussed definitions. Contant stated that some of the items and wording were the result of suggestions received from various groups on campus who responded when meetings were held across campus to discuss SLOs. The addition of aesthetic/artistic engagement, technology literacy, and the combining of two items into the one bullet of creative thinking and artistic expression are examples of changes that resulted from those meetings.

Contant noted that in determining a definition for the first item (engagement with big questions...), it would be helpful to look at the AAC&U web site for definitions. We could provide a broad definition for the first item as issues of importance and consequence to cultures, politics, humanity in general, and also the planet. Or, a specific list of items could be offered, such as poverty, hunger, climate change, etc.

Roberts stated that when looking at a long road the best choice is not to go down it. The SLO document contains the key words that were agreed upon in this committee and approved at Campus Assembly. This is not the time to attach a definition to what was approved by Campus Assembly. The perceived vagueness is a real strength of the document. It allows for slight evolution over the years. We shouldn't incorporate any official sense into the definition.

Contant stated that the committee isn't asked to adopt official definitions, but guidelines to assist in the assessment process. She added that she understood his fear that we will have tacitly provided definitions for things we may not want to have set. Roberts answered that part of the point is that words come with definitions that already have generally agreed-upon meanings. Small detailed differences in definitions will never be resolved, no matter how much documentation is applied.

Turk stated that rubrics might be useful for ASLC. They translate those things that are agreed on and give a more concrete

framework on what they look like in action. It is useful to have models. Her suggestion would be to send the AACU definitions and rubrics to use as a guide.

Rudney stated that she thought rubrics were a good assessment tool, and she understood that from the perspective of the ALSC, they need such a tool. She was surprised that the big question was included in the list of items needing a definition. She thought that people had an understanding of the big questions as being essential and important questions. Contant answered that the ASLC appears to be asking what big questions should be listed. However, the process of engagement with those big questions is what is important, not the big question itself. They should not get bogged down in the technological or methodological minutiae.

Thoma stated that she felt that sending rubrics is a good suggestion. Patterson stated that he agreed with Roberts because there are different meanings to some things. Definitions could rob some of those meanings from the SLO document.

Turk stated that one pitfall of sending rubrics is that it is very well adapted for looking at individual courses and how they fit into the curriculum. The memo from the ASLC however states that its “goal was to determine which SLOs are met by the current Gen Ed requirements on the sole basis of the descriptions (not on individual courses). . .” She wondered if they were being too detailed-oriented. Not all of the SLOs will be met by the current Gen Ed program.

Contant explained that she asked the ASLC to consider the SLOs for this year and see how the categories check off, based on our current Gen Ed program. They could list them on a chart to check off whether a course meets an item on the SLO list. When they saw the third bullet under the first item, regarding the big questions, they asked what do *they* mean by that, rather than what would *you* mean by that. She would be comfortable telling the ASLC that the rubrics may be useful in measuring the achievement of students toward the SLOs, but that they are examples and guidelines only, and not a formal document.

Roberts stated that he would not be against sending the rubrics as long as the primacy of the SLO document is emphasized. He would rather the ASLC use their own judgment on the SLO document, and if the rubrics are sent, they should not be sent with any endorsement.

Rudney stated that she liked the idea of a chart. Helsper responded that the subcommittee of the ASLC has done a chart and are now hoping to fill in specific boxes in the chart that they could not fill in. For instance, if a student had taken a course with an Environmental Gen Ed, would he/she have looked at a big issue? Rudney answered that there is a course in the elementary education major where a paper or topic could be linked to the big issues. Contant added that the big issues could be housed in Gen Ed, or in a major, as Rudney suggested. Her sense was that the ASLC needs to go back to the chart and if it's evident, put a checkmark; if not clear, put a question mark; or leave it blank.

Contant concluded that the committee agrees that the SLOs are really good, but the ASLC would like guidance in how to assess them. She will send a reply to them, along with the rubrics, and state that some definitions and rubrics are provided, but the primary document containing the core principles is the SLOs. The Curriculum Committee had common definitions in mind (not specific definitions). If that does not satisfy the ASLC, she will invite them to come to a meeting in the spring.

Contant congratulated the committee members on a job well done that resulted in the passage of all but three curricular changes at the Campus Assembly meeting last week. The three courses that were tabled and not considered at the Campus Assembly meeting were new courses added in anticipation of the Sport Management Major proposal that will come forward for approval in the spring. Those courses will now need to come forward as part of the curricular proposal for the major program. If the major is not approved, the courses can still be presented to enhance the rigor of and add depth to the current area of concentration in Sports Management.

The agenda for the first meeting of the Curriculum Committee in spring semester will include a report from the Gen Ed review subcommittee, the German Studies Major proposal, the Sport Management Major proposal, and dissolution of two other major degree programs.

Adjourned 12:41 p.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson