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MINUTES--1996-97 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING #22

April 23, 1997; 3:00 p.m.; Behmler Conference Room

Present: Ballou, Bauer, Ellis, Farrell, Frenier, Hansen, Imholte, J. Lee, Schuman

Absent: Davis, Kissock, Korth, M. Lee, Thielke, Vickstrom, Whelan

Guest(s): Tap Payne

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF THE COMMON EXPERIENCE PROPOSAL:

Schuman passed around a note of greeting he had received from Maria-Luisa Lee, a CC member who is ill. He indicated that the last CC discussion of the Common Experience proposal was held during meeting #20. At that meeting, the CC worked through a number of issues. There was a straw vote on offering the course in the first semester and a majority of members did prefer the first semester offering. The remaining issue is the question of two credits versus four credits. He asked J. Lee, who chaired the Common Experience Task Force (CETF), for introductory comments.

Lee said that the CETF, at the beginning, thought that a 4-credit course would be optimal. Later, that level of credit did not seem feasible. The CETF concluded that a 4-credit course proposal would not go anywhere. Another reason for fewer credits: the purpose of the common experience is to provide an orientation or transition for high school students into the higher education environment. It doesn't have to be a full-credit course if the objectives are similar to the Summer Scholars Program and initiated with 2-3 weeks of good presentation. In that sense, having a 2-credit offering is not a negative aspect at all. Lee believes that a 2-credit experience can provide a good orientation for freshmen. It should be a model course for freshmen.

Schuman summarized Lee's arguments as principally utilitarian. A two-credit course could pass through the governance system and work, while a four-credit course would not. Lee said offering the common experience half in the fall and half in the spring could work, but it still means committing 36 faculty slots to teach it. In a small school, that is too overwhelming. For disciplines with 3-4 faculty, that would be difficult to staff.

Hansen thought the campus ought to try the four-credit version in both semesters and see if enough faculty will volunteer. One of the reasons Inquiry was not successful was that it wasn't seen as a relevant course because it was only 3 credits. If we want students to take the common experience seriously, then it needs to be worth 4 credits. Imholte did not think that was the case. Having 2 credits refers to quantity, not quality. He has heard many complaints about Inquiry over the years, but never that argument. He had heard that the 3 credits were awkward to fit into students' schedules, but not that it was considered a "slough off" course because it didn't carry 5 credits. He does think that needing 36 faculty would be a problem. The CETF discussed having a cadre of faculty to teach the course who want to do it year after year. Maybe 12-14 faculty would be willing to do this. They would get good at doing it with years of experience.

Frenier did not understand the reference to the Summer Scholars Program. Those students come here because they want to be in the program. That is different from requiring all freshmen to take a course. She did not think that students see the number of credits as quantity, but rather as quality. If the common experience is a 2-credit course, it is less important than a 4-credit course. There are music classes for 1-2 credits, but they are fun and fit in a different slot. The cadre idea bothered her. If we don't get 36 faculty, then the faculty is suggesting that the course is not important. If we don't have the resources, then maybe we shouldn't do it at all.

Schuman noted that, as we move to semesters and a 4-credit module, we will probably see a larger number of 2-credit courses.

Lee responded to Frenier's comments about the Summer Scholars Program. He intended to make the point that, if we come up with a well organized course with enthusiastic faculty, then the atmosphere for the common experience will be

the same as that for the Summer Scholars Program. Prestige could be associated with taking the course. Trial and error may be needed. Frenier wondered if there could be a pilot offering. Lee agreed that the course might change over time.

Ballou commented that, although she had never taught this seminar, she has taught 2-credit courses in Education. If the course is a student-led discussion, then 2 credits is an appropriate level. If it is a 4-credit course, then there is too much discussion time and students tend to become unfocused. This is a crucial point. She supports the 2-credit option. It would be the optimal amount of time. She is also concerned about the number of faculty required. We would need twice as many faculty for the 4-credit course as we would for the 2-credit course. It would be difficult to find that many faculty willing to teach the course. Another question is when to offer the course. Why not offer it in the first semester unless there are insufficient faculty to staff it and then go to a second term? Lee agreed that there could be trailer sections in the spring semester. Schuman suggested, if many faculty wanted to teach the course, then some could teach only one section two years in a row. Farrell noted that there were Inquiry faculty who taught only one section.

Hansen said he was in the Summer Scholars Program. It was worth 5 credits. If 15-18 faculty could be available in the fall semester, wouldn't 15-18 also be available in the next semester? Lee said that wasn't the issue. The issue is whether we can afford to commit that number of faculty to this course. Hansen said he had also heard concerns about not being able to find enough faculty.

Schuman said, if he had to choose, he would prefer the 2-credit option in the first semester over the 4-credit course offered both semesters. It is important that students get this kind of experience in the first semester.

Lee was concerned about teaching load. Schuman said the average teaching load under semesters will be 3 courses one semester and two the next. He reminded the group that the discussion should be on policy, not implementation.

Schuman suggested a straw vote. He asked if there was further discussion first. There was none.

STRAW VOTE:

In favor of a 2-credit course--5

In favor of a 4-credit course--1 (plus 1 non-voting member)

Hansen commented that Lee had said earlier that the course should not be offered if it is degraded too much. Making it a 2-credit course does more harm than good. The course should be dropped.

MOTION (Imholte, Farrell): To approve the Common Experience Proposal.

VOTE: In favor--5; opposed--1; abstentions--0 (5-1-0).

Schuman said that the Common Experience Proposal and the General Education Program Proposal will be put together in a unified proposal for Campus Assembly. He will work with Mooney and Lee to do that. The combined proposal will go to Assembly early in May. He hopes any amendments will be submitted in writing before that meeting. Our next task is the Divisional semester proposals. We begin with Science and Math proposals. The order for the Divisions is (1) Science and Math, (2) Humanities, (3) Social Sciences, and (4) Education.

Schuman noted that the discussion about the common experience had been substantive and civil. He thanked members for that. We will try to get the S&M materials out early. Members will be sent the bulletin copy, mapping form, and Forms A and B for each discipline. If members want to see any of the Form C's, they should ask for them. The only reason the Form C's are not being sent out is because there are so many of them.

REPORT ON THE FORD GRANT:

Payne distributed a handout on the Ford Global Scholar Awards. The intent is similar to the EDP grants and the International Program Committee's grants. The idea is to create a situation where faculty will be writing or revising courses to improve the international dimension of the curriculum. Proposals were solicited in February and 13 were

received. Of the 13, the committee has funded 6, with an alternate if the funds can be found. There is an error on the back of the handout. The amount for international travel should be \$7,500 each, so the total amount is \$1,200 less. There will be a second call in the fall. He would like to have the CC's endorsement.

Schuman assumed that the CC would be endorsing the Ford Grant activity, not the selection of grants, since CC members had not seen the proposals. Payne thought this was similar to the procedure for EDP grants where not all CC members see all of the EDP proposals. He did not want to circumvent campus procedures. He had suggested at the beginning of the year that the CC select the grant awardees.

Farrell noted that virtually all of the funded proposals were from the Humanities Division. Payne said the preponderance of applications came from the Humanities Division. The selection of awardees was based on the merit of the proposal, not on the Division.

MOTION (Imholte, Hansen): To affirm the activities of the Ford Grant Committee.

VOTE: In favor--6; opposed--0; abstentions--0 (6-0-0).

Schuman thanked Payne for keeping the Curriculum Committee abreast of the Ford Grant activities. Payne said he had a list of all of the proposals if CC members wished to see it. Copies were distributed.

NEXT MEETING:

Schuman canceled the meeting scheduled for Friday, April 25, at 9:00 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 30, 3:00 p.m., Behmler Conference Room, to discuss Science and Mathematics semester proposals.

Meeting adjourned 3:55 p.m.

Submitted by Nancy Mooney

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