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University of Minnesota, Morris
Morris, Minnesota

MINUTES-1997-98 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MEETING #03

November 04, 1998; 8:00 a.m.; Moccasin Flower Room

Present: Busch, Cerar, Farrell, Frenier, Haugen, Kissock, Korth, Leroux, McIntosh, Neuharth, Taylor, Thielke, Utoft.

Guests: Borden, Mooney, Senior, VanEps, Wojtanowicz.

Absent: Woll

[In these minutes: Approval of prior minutes, continuation of discussion regarding adjunct committee for Honors.]

MISCELLANEOUS: Veenendaal distributed information on the UROP grants and the Honors Program participation, and mapping of 2xxx semester courses to quarter courses.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Korth asked for additions or corrections to the previous minutes. There were none, so minutes were approved by a voice vote.

VOTE: Unanimous in favor (10-0-0)

ADJUNCT COMMITTEE FOR HONORS (CONTINUED): Korth introduced Matt Senior, Andrea Wojtanowicz, Sharon VanEps, and Christian Borden who were in attendance to give historical information regarding the Honors Program. Korth requested that each guest make a brief comment regarding their experience with the Honors Program; what do they see as its successes and what needs alteration.

Senior spoke about the upper 10-15% of the UMM student body as seeking high GPA's and in need of challenges. In their junior and senior years, they have looked to the UROP and MAP programs to offer those extra challenges. Historically the UMM Honors Program has also been a way to offer that challenge. Senior said UMM needs to look at how that challenge is rewarded. It has been rewarded with dollars, grades, and graduating with distinction. Senior also stated that he is anxious to add new courses to the Honors Program. He said that under the quarter system UMM had 23 honors courses. This figure has dropped to 16 honors courses under the semester system. Some students have complained that there are not enough course offerings in each discipline. Senior feels that the Science and Math Division is a good example of an area that needs to increase the honors course offerings.

Senior stated that another area of the Honors Program he would like considered is the mentor/mentee portion of the program. Honors students must attend four honors events per year and submit a written reaction paper to their mentor regarding each event. The mentor is then to respond to and discuss the reaction paper with the mentee. The goal in this arrangement is to establish a relationship between talented students and equally talented seniors who would be able to steer the mentee toward appropriate course work and activities.

Senior would like to stabilize this mentor/mentee relationship. He feels there needs to be a carrot for motivation. One possibility Senior mentioned was to have an electronic journal as a means of publishing some of the reaction papers submitted. He also questioned whether we should honor the mentors for their effort. Senior mentioned credit and recognition as potential methods of rewarding the mentor. Senior would like to see the Honors Program used as a grooming camp to assist the students in achieving their goals of admission to the best graduate schools or of acquiring the best jobs.

VanEps felt that the insufficient number of honors courses was part of the reason for problems with the program. VanEps feels that students also drop honors because they are unable to maintain 50% of their honors courses with an A grade. VanEps stated that there have been some problems in the past partly due to the limitations of staff time to track the activities of the honors students. Wojtanowicz in her position as MAI has provided the assistance VanEps needed to maintain tracking of the mentors and mentees and to keep in contact with all the students involved.

VanEps feels that a committee is needed, especially as more courses are submitted for approval as honors courses. Also, the committee would need to oversee the petitions students submit regarding study abroad and counting these experiences as honors activities. The committee would also need to review all the senior projects submitted to give the approval for the student to graduate with honors.

Wojtanowicz spoke first regarding her experience with the Honors Program from the perspective of the current MAI. In this position last year, Wojtanowicz organized the honors students into the mentor/mentee arrangement. She established a method of tracking students to be certain they were fulfilling their responsibilities. Wojtanowicz established an advisory board of students that gave support to her in problems associated with the Honors Program. The advisory board currently consists of all juniors and seniors. She hopes to have representation of one to two from each class

next year. Wojtanowicz also arranged a number of gatherings for the honors students, including a well attended banquet held at the end of the year.

Wojtanowicz then spoke from the perspective of an honors student. She never knew who her mentor was in either her freshman or sophomore year. No one in the program kept track of who was in charge of whom, so the quality of the experience was quite variable. She believes that many honors students had a similar experience. Wojtanowicz feels that with accountability for the students involved, the experience is better.

Borden informed the CC that this was his 4th year in the Honors Program. He stated that his first two years in the program were chaotic since he had six different mentors but never met any of them. He does feel that his experience was worse than most. Borden feels that his past two years have been an improvement. He is now a mentor to a number of students and meets with them all or would face being booted out of the program. He stated that mentoring is a very rewarding experience for him.

Borden said his first two years in the program were also rewarding for him even without the mentor relationship. He is very excited about the direction the program is going. He feels the accountability is a great improvement.

Frenier wondered what the students wanted the mentor relationship to do for them. Wojtanowicz hoped that the mentor would be helpful as an ongoing person to advise the student. She felt that it could be more comfortable for a new student to seek advice from another student rather than a faculty member or even an advisor. Wojtanowicz said the mentor could give advice regarding the classes the mentee should take and also advice regarding the events the student should attend. She feels that discussion between the mentor and mentee regarding the importance and purpose of the events would be beneficial.

McIntosh remarked that in reading the consultant's report on the Honors Program he did not see a statement regarding the mission or primary function of the Honors Program. He requested a statement describing the mission.

Senior said the mission was to promote academic excellence and to challenge ambitious students as well as to provide the students with an academic mentorship. Senior said the mission or purpose was two pronged.

Taylor wondered what he as a student would be missing if he worked on a research project and attended the events on his own without being a part of the Honors Program. Senior said he would miss out on the opportunity of submitting a reaction paper and receiving reactions to that paper. The student would be missing out on feedback and on being part of a community of ambitious students. Senior also stated that hopefully the electronic journal would be a motivator for a student. Senior also feels the student would miss out on the extra attention from a professor when the student's personalized project was topped off with a research project in his junior or senior year.

Senior mentioned one thing he would like to see corrected immediately is to count either a Senior Honors Project or a MAP or UROP as the final senior project. Senior feels it is too much to ask a student to do them all. Senior said with the approval of the honors committee, a MAP or a UROP in the student's senior year could count as the Senior Honors Project. Urop and MAP projects are attractive to a student since they are financially rewarded.

Frenier questioned how many students start out with double majors but don't graduate with double majors. Senior said, in speaking for French, there are many double majors. He is concerned that students take on too much. Senior stated that UMM students are motivated. He said they could be a double major and honors; it doesn't have to be conflicting. Senior said if a student starts with a double major they may end with a major and a minor.

Frenier wondered if the Honors Program would diffuse the student or narrow their education. VanEps reminded the CC that the Senior Honors Project is not necessarily connected with the student's majors. The Senior Honors Project could be something of interest to the student.

Frenier asked if the problem the students were having with the honors courses was that there were not enough courses or that the students did not like the courses that were offered. VanEps said the problem was that there were not enough courses offered.

Senior said he has a firm commitment from four faculty members willing to offer a new honors course, with more faculty considering creating an honors course. Senior thought honors might have been the last hurdle for the semester conversion and so some courses were lost in the transition. He intends to contact all discipline coordinators and ask them to follow up on this.

VanEps said the creation of semester courses occurred at the same time that the honors committee began to fall apart. Korth wondered if the honors committee felt they had nothing to do. He said the CC needs to determine, what oversight of the honors program is needed. Wojtanowicz said in talking with Dwight Purdy, she learned the honors committee dissolved themselves. They didn't feel they were getting anything meaningful done. Korth stated that the CC had received a recommendation from the Honors Committee on October 24, 1997 to dissolve the honors committee. The CC approved this recommendation and forwarded it to the Campus Assembly. Senior said that now the Campus Assembly recommendation is to consolidate the honors committee with oversight of the MAP and UROP programs.

Kissock commented that he hates to add committees, but he would love to keep the Honors Program going. He said he sees a need for a committee

to form policy, not to deal with administrative issues. He feels the administration of the program is being dealt with and is being improved. Kissock stated he had not heard any policy questions. He believes the program construction has been well thought through and there are no requests for fundamental changes. This keeps Kissock from wanting a committee. Kissock suggested that the CC should be the hearing body for petitions. The faculty or students that have policy change requests should bring those requests to the CC. If CC feels they need to be considered, CC should set up an ad hoc committee for a short term to deal with the request and then the ad hoc committee would go away.

Frenier thought there were really two questions: should we have an Honors Program and should we have an honors committee? Some students say there are no rewards to the current Honors Program. Senior said we would need to ask the students. How do the students look at the academic rewards here at UMM? Borden said the experience within the program was important, not the product of the involvement. He stated that he would have attended the honors events even if it wasn't required of him, but he did write about and discuss the events with his mentors. He learned a lot from the experience and continues to learn a lot from his mentees. Senior stated that this leadership experience has been valuable for Borden. Senior feels it has enhanced Borden's education and should be reflected on his transcript. Senior recognized that being a mentor is a lot of work.

Thielke commented that the Honors Program Committee was formed to develop procedures, recommend courses to the divisions, and to approve project proposals. Since there is no administrative office in charge, the Honors Program Committee is a "working committee." The MAI position helps, but the staffing is done on a shoestring.

Farrell encouraged Senior to speak to division chairs regarding the honors courses. He stated that this is not the discipline coordinator's responsibility, that ultimately it is the division chair's responsibility. If the honors program is faltering within a chair's division, the chair would need to be aware that it is happening. Senior agreed that the operation is run on a shoestring, but there are offices in charge - his and VanEps.

Thielke said a committee might be helpful to them. VanEps said in the past the director did not include the committee in the decisions, so maybe this is why the committee began to dissolve. Senior said the committee would need one professor to be the director. Sometimes a committee can slow down a procedure, but he would like contact with a faculty member from each discipline who really cares. Farrell stated again that it should be the chairs involved, not the discipline coordinators. Wojtanowicz added that it is important that the MAI position be open every year. She felt lucky to get the job again this year, since she was able to compound her previous year's experience. Wojtanowicz stated that this is not always the case; generally a student receives the MAI for one year and then is done. She can see the value of having a person in this position year after year. Currently, she spends about ten hours per week on Honors.

Korth reminded the committee that the CC has the responsibility to approve any course selected as an honors course. The mentor portion of the program seems to be extra curricular. Korth questioned how this fit with this committee. He stated that in some ways the Honors Program should be overseen by the Function and Awards Committee. Korth feels there is a line between a policy committee and a management committee, with some overlap inevitable. Korth asked Senior to what extent Senior felt a need for a permanent committee to be available on a regular basis. He wondered if a program director, the MAI, and the part-time staff member were enough. Senior recommended a small committee of about three people with Purdy as one member for continuity. Senior feels that honors has been undersupported in the past. He is encouraged with the support from Schuman and anticipates increased support in the future. He expects to go to the Function and Awards Committee about graduation with distinction and its relationship to honors.

Frenier stated that faculty had hoped the Honors Program would appeal to students as learning for learning's sake, but faculty (possibly disgruntled faculty) say this is not the case. Kissock responded that he had supervised a student in a senior project and found it to be a lot of fun.

Kissock said he hopes the CC is hearing that Senior would like a support group, but not a policy group. Kissock recommends that the CC help Senior find this support group and see how that goes.

Senior said he had to present CC with a practical issue. There are two innovations he would like to introduce. One is the idea of MAP and UROP counting as a Senior Honors Project. The second would be to add the honors experience abroad for ELTAP, etc., and count that as an honors course. Kissock stated he would answer yes, but he wonders what it would mean to be ELTAP honors. He would like to have a conversation with Senior and then have a formal proposal presented to the CC.

VanEps added that she would like to present the need for a small committee for UROP. UROPs are awarded in two rounds. Four faculty members are needed to rank the UROPs before they are sent to Minneapolis. VanEps feels this needs to be addressed. She questioned if this should be addressed by Functions and Awards Committee or by CC.

Korth said the discussion will need to be continued at the next meeting. He hopes there will be proposals to consider next time. Korth reminded the committee of agenda item number 3 that will also need to be addressed next time, and directed them to the table which was distributed at the beginning of the meeting.

Meeting adjourned 8:53 a.m.
Submitted by Melody Veenendaal

