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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

2017-18 MEETING #6 Minutes

January 22, 2018, 3:00 p.m., Moccasin Flower Room

Members Present: Janet Ericksen (chair), Arne Kildegaard, Stacey Aronson, Peh Ng, Gwen Rudney, Tracey Anderson, Denise Odello, Stephen Crabtree, Jennifer Deane, Kellie Meehlhause, Mitchell Scanlan, Sarah Severson, and Judy Korn

Members Absent: Annika Nelson and Stephanie Ferrian

Visitors: Margaret Kuchenreuther, Nancy Helsper, and Jeri Squier

In these minutes: Course proposals; EDP Review Committee report

Announcements

Ericksen announced that there are probably more meetings scheduled for spring semester than necessary, but they are on the calendar in case they are needed. Some of the items coming up this semester will be possibly hearing from the three disciplines that are currently in the program review process (elementary education, economics, and studio art). Today we will hear a report from environmental studies.

At the next meeting the committee will hear an update on the Gen Ed Task Force. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) wants us to assess general education as a program. They want outcomes and to be able to say that we can show that students know something from taking these classes, rather than just saying that they must know something because they took the classes. The task force, consisting of Tracey Anderson, Rebecca Dean, Sara Carman, Josh Johnson, Kristin Lamberty, and Janet Ericksen as convener, met twice in the fall. They talked about how to obtain information on what our program is doing now that is assessable. They designed a two-question survey that is going out to every faculty member who taught one or more Gen Ed classes in the last 1-2 years. Rebecca Dean will come to this committee on February [12] to talk about the survey results.

Historically, the campus had a General Education Committee that reported to the Curriculum Committee. The Gen Ed committee went away. The Curriculum Committee is now responsible entirely for Gen Ed. We don't really have clear, concrete Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for our Gen Ed program. Some are quite vague. One example is the FL requirement that basically says that the outcome is that you've completed the FL requirement. The chancellor would like to tie Gen Ed to larger discussions about the Strategic Plan. The chancellor is not asking this committee to take on Gen Ed revision at this time, but in the future, who should take responsibility for assessing Gen Ed?

Deane stated that there have been ongoing discussions in this committee on revising Gen Ed. Last year the committee worked on global village. Ng noted that the committee also approved WLA. Helsper added that the committee addressed the World Languages proposal as well. Ericksen added that we haven't answered the question of what we want our Gen Ed program to look like. The recent revisions so far were predicated on the Gen Ed program staying as it is. The first question to answer is whether we want to scrap it or work in those bounds. If we choose the latter, then we need to look at potential models. This hasn't been done since the Gen Ed Assessment subcommittee of 2008-09.

Korn stated that we have some requirements for the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC), and the Twin Cities campus is also looking at their Gen Ed program. We have to look at how the MTC package of courses fits us. Ericksen noted that she would like to have a very distinctive Gen Ed program. Korn noted that the conversation about MTC has to take place before we go further down the road. There are already complaints because we offer four-credit courses. Ericksen stated that for now there is a short-term goal that somebody is going to have to write a report this year on our Gen Ed program and this committee should have some role in it.

The last question in terms of announcements, is that next fall is a catalog year. Last time we started approval of some single courses in the spring. Should we wait until fall to do all single courses or divide it up? Squier noted that the majority came through in the fall. Dividing it piecemeal takes more time. Helsper added that it also causes confusion when the same course is often brought back in the fall with more revisions. Faculty change their mind in the fall or over the summer. Anderson noted that the divisions can act on their revisions in the spring and hold them for Curriculum Committee until fall. Ng noted that the large part are brought forward in the fall. Science and Math always presents their courses to the committee early in fall anyway.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting #5, November 20, 2017

Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Environmental Studies Program Review

Ericksen explained that academic programs are required to conduct program reviews. They prepare a Self-Study Report which is then reviewed by a review committee, which shares its comments with the discipline. The discipline coordinator meets with the dean and the division chair to review and discuss the comments made by the review committee. Finally, the coordinator is invited to a meeting of the Curriculum Committee to talk about the program review, its strengths, challenges, and future plans. Environmental Studies (EnSt) finished their review last spring. Ericksen welcomed Margaret Kuchenreuther, Associate Professor of Biology, to the meeting.

Distinctiveness of the Program

Kuchenreuther stated that the program's coordinator, Ed Brands, the only full-time tenure-track faculty person specifically in EnSt, is currently on sabbatical. The distinctiveness of the program is that it is the only truly interdisciplinary program on campus, with faculty and courses offered in 3 of the 4 divisions. In the past, the program's steering committee included someone from Education, and they would welcome anyone from Education on the steering committee. Many majors are interested in environmental education.

This faculty-driven program originated in 2008 and graduated their first major in spring 2009. As early as 2000, students were choosing to create their own majors in EnSt. The faculty in the program are interested in environmental problems in a highly interdisciplinary way and have an exceptional level of community engagement and outreach. The program has attracted external funding, allowing them to plan for the major and develop a visiting speakers bureau. With the

exception of Brands in a tenured position in EnSt, and Clement Loo, who is a short-term instructor in the program, the faculty members in the program are participating on a voluntary basis in addition to their work in their own disciplines. Everybody shows a high level of engagement including monthly discipline meetings. The faculty are not only very actively engaged across campus, but go above and beyond to keep the discipline functioning. They show an exceptionally high level of community engagement and outreach in local government, arts organizations, development organizations, and energy policy.

The program has graduated an average of 10 students per year. It is an extremely lean major with an FTE between 1.33 and 1.86 over the last five years. The program is steered by the goodwill of faculty who devote time and come to meetings and ensure that a coherent package is offered. Very few of the courses are listed as EnSt courses; there is the intro course, an environmental biology course, and a few electives. Otherwise, they rely on courses across campus and invite faculty to suggest appropriate courses for the major. They currently offer courses in Philosophy, English, Political Science, Geology, and others. Enrollment in such courses might be significantly lower in the absence of the EnSt major. With an average enrollment of 152, the total student credit hours average 588 per year, so they offer the intro course, Environmental Problems and Policy, often.

Curriculum link/relationship to other programs, including Gen Ed

Kuchenreuther stated that the major supports green initiatives of the campus. Because environmental problems are local and global, the program contributes to a student's ability to have a global perspective, while at the same time emphasizing a sense of place. The program provides a number of courses meeting the ENVT Gen Ed requirement. The Environmental Biology course meets the Sci-L GER. Disciplines most actively involved are Biology, Political Science, Economics, Anthropology, and English, with contributions from Geology and others as well. Students in the program are widely engaged in and in some cases spearhead extracurricular activities such as composting, Farmer's Market, MPIRG, etc.

Innovation in the last few years

The whole program is innovative, only just completing its first decade of existence. The hiring of Ed Brands was the biggest thing to happen to the program. They tried to get somebody who had experience in EnSt. He has worked to increase the robustness and intentionality of the internship program, offering a pre-internship seminar, with resume writing and mock interviewing. Kildegaard added that Brands has also kept in touch with graduates and arranges for them to return and talk with the current students. Kuchenreuther added that post-internship students come back to talk with current students and reflect on their internship experiences. Brands has developed an extremely robust Moodle site. Also, through grant funding, the program has been able to hire Clement Loo, who offers a philosophy course, ENST 3112 Climate Change and Moral Responsibility.

Program Goals or where we hope to improve in the coming years

1. Kuchenreuther stated that they are aware of the need for the program to get a sense of cohesiveness among the majors. There is one single course when all of the students in the major come together—the capstone. It's the only guarantee that a cohort of students will be together and it's their last semester. They need to find a way to get the students together at the beginning of the program. It's hard to find extra energy when the faculty have their own majors to devote their time and energy to.
2. They would like to do a better job of helping students understand the differences between the EnSt major and the Environmental Science (ESci) major so they can intelligently choose the right path for themselves. There is confusion on the part of students as well as Admissions staff.
3. They would like to survey the alums to see how well the program served them. They would also like to figure out how to better network them with our current majors, inviting them to be a resource for our current majors.
4. They would like to maintain a continuing funding stream of support beyond the next 5-10 years, to support the visiting professional program. When Loo's position funding ends, they won't be able to offer the Environmental Problems and Policy course in more than one section. There are philosophical underpinnings in EnSt. They currently have a Philosophy faculty member offering Environmental Ethics as a favor to the program, but it's not his area of expertise. They value the Humanities. It is a huge piece of EnSt. Athena Kildegaard teaches one course and they really value her contribution and input. They would like to have a tenure-track faculty member who can teach Environmental Ethics.

Discussion

Ericksen stated that she saw a list of recent internship topics and found commendable the connection to local offices as well as those further away. It's nice to have a major that connects to some of the places around the area, such as MN DNR, WCROC, etc. Kuchenreuther noted that part of that is due to Brands's stewardship of the major. He found partnering organizations. Ericksen added that there are system-wide efforts showing the University is outside of Minneapolis/St. Paul and is fostered by the EnSt major students and faculty.

Kildegaard stated that from his viewpoint as division chair, he sees that Brands has done the most comprehensive job of keeping track of grads. Ericksen asked how he manages it. Kuchenreuther answered that Brands encourages graduates to get involved in LinkedIn. Kildegaard added that it's important to understand that it is structured into his workload. He receives a 4-credit course release to work on internships. Kuchenreuther added that she was asked by the division chairs how the program can devote so much time to internships. Her reply is that they feel it is valuable. There is no reason it has to be proprietary. Kuchenreuther stated that she spends at least a half-hour of her time adding internships to the website. Ericksen agreed

that it requires a real investment of time and attention. Anderson stated that you can't expect those things and not include it as part of a person's workload. The number of students in the Biology program make it untenable. That information would serve the campus well if it was done correctly across disciplines. Kildegaard stated that in the non-profit world they have a founder's syndrome. The question is how do you transition? What becomes of the organization? It's a challenge for all of our interdisciplinary programs. Brands is on sabbatical and others are stressed with picking up his work. Ericksen stated that there are other faculty who have to buy-in to make it work. Kuchenreuther added that it's hard to advocate for a new tenure-track faculty member just for EnSt, but perhaps there should be one with a link to EnSt.

Korn asked what Kuchenreuther would say to a student trying to decide between the EnSt and ESci majors. Kuchenreuther answered that she made a handout that explains the difference. ESci is strictly housed within the Division of Science and Mathematics. One course is outside, but otherwise it is completely in the division. EnSt is intentionally distributed around the campus because it understands as a core principle that if we want to solve environmental problems we have to engage in the human dimension of those problems. If the economics, politics, and values don't line up with the change that's needed, you can talk yourself blue and it won't make a difference. The students need to understand the environmental literature perspective, the ethics, etc. If you are just interested in the technical science of the environment, then ESci is the major for you. Crabtree agreed that ESci is much more technical. If you want to understand the broader policy pertaining to the environment, you need to talk with people outside of science. Kuchenreuther stated that she has been asked if these majors would be better if they were combined into one major. She recalls that those who proposed the ESci major were very strongly in favor of just looking at the science. Ericksen asked if it could be one major with two tracks. Kuchenreuther answered that it was considered. EnSt is actually a great double-major for almost any other major on campus. Kildegaard stated that they considered only crediting it as a second major, but it was too complicated.

Submitted by Darla Peterson