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Curriculum Minutes 03/19/2018

Curriculum Committee

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

2017-18 MEETING #8 Minutes

March 19, 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, Annika Nelson, Mitchell Scanlan, and Judy Korn

Members Absent: Kellie Meehlhause, Sarah Severson, Stephanie Ferrian, and Jeri Squier

Visitors: Nancy Helsper

In these minutes: Science and Math Course Revisions; and discussion of Mellon Planning Grant Proposal and Related Gen Ed Revision Discussion

Approval of Minutes from Meeting #7, February 12, 2018

Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Course Revision Approvals – Division of Science and Mathematics

Ng stated that the course changes received divisional approval on March 1. The courses are coming forward in order to allow the changes to be in effect in the summer as well as the 2018-19 academic year.

Chemistry

Chem 3801. History of Chemistry (course reactivation and revision)

Ng stated that the faculty member who taught the course in the past has since retired and the course is being reactivated, reduced from a 4-credit course to a 2-credit half-semester course to provide students with greater flexibility in scheduling. The prereq has changed and the course description and content is revised to fit the credits and reflect faculty expertise. Deane asked if it is a Hist Gen Ed course. Ng answered that it doesn't fit the current Gen Ed definition of Hist.

Chem 4351. Bioorganic Chemistry (course revision)

Ng stated that this half-semester course is being changed to 2 credits, and another new 2-credit elective course in biochemistry will be offered the other half-semester. Students don't have to take both courses. The electives aren't paired. It gives students more elective choice and flexibility.

Geology

Geol 3601. Introduction to Geochemistry (course prereq revision)

Ng explained that the only revision is a change to the prereq. The original prereq was Physical Geology or Gen Chem 1. It has changed to co-req Physical Geology or Gen Chem 1102. Crabtree stated that if a student hasn't taken both mineralogy and Gen Chem 2, they would struggle. If taken concurrently, the student would succeed in both courses. Ng added that the prereq for Geol 2101 is Gen Chem 1 (1101). Crabtree stated that they will need to

have taken Gen Chem 2 (1102). Rudney asked if they could have taken Geol 2101 in earlier, or does it have to be a co-req. After further discussion it was agreed that the wording will be revised to allow a prereq or co-requisite of Geol 2101 or prereq Chem 1102. Kildegaard asked if it is required for the Environmental Science major. Crabtree answered that it counts toward the Geology minor as a 3xxx-level elective.

Anderson asked why another course that was approved at the division level was not on the agenda. Ng replied that it was given provisional approval to be offered next year and it will be considered for regular approval in the fall during the catalog process.

MOTION (Ng/Kildegaard) to approve the proposed course changes as presented (and revised). Motion was approved by a vote of 10-0-0.

Mellon Planning Grant Proposal and Related Gen Ed Revision Discussion

Ericksen explained that the Mellon Foundation has invited us to submit a planning grant proposal. They are interested in funding Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) institutions in ways that support the humanities. The proposal process includes the following steps: 1) a first conversation; 2) submit draft plan; 3) feedback and work on the planning draft; 4) feedback; and 5) submit grant proposal.

There are three parts to the plan:

- 1) A convocation series, consisting of one talk per semester, for three semesters. The speaker would not be an academic and would talk about the humanities usefulness outside of higher education. An example would be Tracy Chou, a software engineer in Silicon Valley. Chou regrets not having taken courses in the humanities and is an advocate for scientists needing the humanities. A convocation speaker would explain the range and role of the humanities beyond the campus.
- 2) Funding for faculty/student research projects with a focus away from research papers and toward applied humanities. Things like creating data bases or making resources in archives accessible to a broader audience, including our tribal history, boarding school documents, and digital humanities to make it available. Other examples might be creating something about student organizations like second language instruction in the form of a developmental online piece or booklet piece. Michael Eble's project for doing murals in the town (art in the community) is an example of something we've already done. Funded research projects that make something besides a conventional research paper is what we are trying to accomplish.
- 3) This is a planning grant. The idea is that we could apply for a larger grant after we receive this grant. Faculty in the Humanities say that the challenge is that we don't have enough time to do new risky things. Grant funding could allow us to buy out faculty time to organize and teach an experimental course that broadens the discussion of what the humanities means. Margaret Kuchenreuther talked about her bread course idea. We could have a course on bread that fulfilled Gen Ed requirements, co-taught by three faculty members, with components of art, science, and the social sciences. There could be two trial courses that are co-taught, truly interdisciplinary, and that satisfy Gen Eds. Approval of the courses would go through the regular process. What is needed at this point is feedback on whether it's a dumb idea.

Ng asked if the courses would be IS, and if so, how would they differ from the current Honors courses? Ericksen answered that she was concerned about overlapping too much. The difference is that these courses would be 4-credit Gen Ed courses, while Honors courses are 2-credit upper-level courses. These would not be as exploratory as Honors courses. Scanlon asked if the course would be like an IC course. Ericksen answered that it wouldn't be required of everyone. There would be options. It's not possible at present to have a single class fulfill multiple Gen Eds. Anderson noted that it would be hard for an interdisciplinary course to have one Gen Ed category.

Deane stated that it is a great idea. Faculty chomp the bit for a chance to do something creative. For instance, she would like to do a course on the plague. Nelson added that the bread course sounded amazing. It can be an incredibly interdisciplinary course across cultures. Morris has a unique history and we could emphasize it by offering an IC or IS course that would emphasize the unique history that Morris has, involving the boarding school or Native American culture. She added that she hears a lot of concerns from students about their dissatisfaction with the Gen Ed Requirements. Anderson stated that she is reminded of Evergreen State where they take programs like Psychology and Art or Political Science and Economics to combine Gen Eds. There are existing templates for doing IS things in rigorous and creative ways.

Ericksen stated that our Gen Ed program hasn't been hugely examined as a whole for a long time. Is there an appetite for looking at it all and going forward as a broad-based review? How would a comprehensive review happen? If you read the Chronicle of Higher Education lately, there are depressing articles on how hard it is to do a Gen Ed review. This committee would have to decide how to make it happen.

Helsper stated that for years she has wanted to do a study on how our grads have fulfilled their Gen Eds. How many took which pieces of Global Village, and even in majors, what electives are being taken? Anderson asked if we have looked at which of our Gen Eds are met before students step foot on campus. If 60% have AP or PSEO classes already, do we need to continue to offer some of the Gen Eds? Ericksen replied that if they have those Gen Eds, why are they coming here? How is the experience at Morris really different?

Rudney stated that if the first semester started out with a collection of courses around a theme, students couldn't start a major in the fall. Nelson noted that there would be a potential for students to knock off several Gen Eds by taking interesting IS course in their first semester.

Ericksen asked how, where, and when would we start a Gen Ed Review? She imagined it as a five-year process. Deane stated that the data piece is where it has to start. We can't decide a model until we know what we have to work with. The Gen Ed Assessment report should shine a light on that. Ericksen noted the program as a whole doesn't speak to why we think it's good and why students should take the courses. Helsper stated that there is a 2-page introduction on Gen Ed in the catalog. Ericksen stated that she assumed that it's easy to devolve into a checklist without reading that 2-page intro. It would be fun to make a Gen Ed program students look forward to taking.

Crabtree stated that he liked the idea of an IS topical course around bread or the plague, but there is one problem with doing that: it would prevent students from starting a major like Chemistry until fall of their sophomore year when Chem I is offered. That's an entire year to wait to start a

major. Nelson stated that not starting a major in the first year allows a student the option to put their entire attention on Gen Eds. Anderson stated that students in science view Gen Eds as something you want to get done with. Many majors force prerequisites that require rigorous order to occur. If you start late, you can't win that back and graduate in four years.

Rudney noted that it is also the ability of a discipline to set its structure. All disciplines would love to have its students immerse themselves fully in the major for four years. There's something to be said about having a discipline allow a 3.5-year or 3-year cycle of major work.

Ericksen noted that if we want to send people off to visit other institutions we would want to plan that in the fall for spring visits. Ng stated that we should not just reinvent what we've already done. A previous Gen Ed subgroup collected data from institutions. It behooves this committee to be up to date about what those things said. Ericksen noted that while waiting for things to happen we should see that this committee has the reports from the past to review. AAC&U has different models to review, and we have an aspirational group. Professor Bezanson shared a folder of information with the committee in the past that she had collected. Helsper stated that there must be some cutting edge businesses that prefer to hire liberal arts graduates. We could consider sending subcommittees to talk with them and find out what employees want. Ericksen noted that there are two things the AAC&U says that employers are especially looking for: communication (writing/speaking skills) and collaboration skills. We can say you come here and we provide those things.

Kildegaard stated that we should put a billboard in Sauk Centre that says "Exit here for the plague." A thematic approach to Gen Ed is a delicious idea. We haven't had success with delivering something broadly. We can have brilliant individual classes on the plague, but that approach is contrary to our learning outcomes approach. Our institution has become cowardly. It would take courage to talk of processes and trust the process rather than have a list of things that we can measure in the end. What's delicious about a thematic approach to Gen Ed is that you have the potential to get people excited and become self-engaged learners.

Ericksen stated that we could have learning outcomes on a course on bread. Kildegaard replied that it then directly results in a checklist. Rudney recalled that when No Child Left Behind was put in place for K12, instruction shifted to a focus on what was tested on standardized tests. It took a brave teacher to continue to teach thematic lessons and units with engaging, interdisciplinary tasks—knowing that if they taught that way, the test scores would take care of themselves. It would be courageous for us to look at this thematic organizational structure, do it well, and know that the learning would be there. More discussion to come at future meetings.

Submitted by Darla Peterson