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Curriculum Committee

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2018-19 MEETING #2 Minutes
September 13, 11:40 a.m., Moccasin Flower Room

Members Present: Janet Ericksen (chair), Julia Dabbs (for Stacey Aronson), Arne Kildegaard, Peh Ng, Michelle Page, Stephen Crabtree, Stephen Gross, Benjamin Narvaez, Denise Odello, Simon Franco, Stephanie Ferrian, Christina Munoz, Annika Nelson, Josh Westfield, Kellie Meehlhause, and Judy Korn
Members Absent: Student TBN
Visitors: Nancy Helsper, Jeri Squier, Rebecca Dean, and Peter Dolan

In these minutes: Approval of new free-standing minor in Data Science

Introductions and Announcements

Ericksen stated that at the last meeting we learned that there might be other new programs (besides Data Science) or program changes that will be brought to the committee that also require Board of Regents (BOR) approval. Since the last meeting, we learned from the Office of the Vice President and Provost the timeline for programs to be considered by the Board of Regents (BOR): Any programmatic changes that require BOR approval must be approved by this committee no later than the November 8 meeting. Proposals must have discipline and divisional approval before this committee can review them. All of our catalog changes will be on the agenda of the BOR at its February 8 meeting. If you know there is a program that is ready to go earlier than the division's scheduled date, send it through and let us know so we can make it available for committee review in case there is time at an earlier meeting than the one scheduled for the division. Helsper added that this would include the LAAS title change.

Approval of Minutes from September 6, 2018 Meeting

Narvaez stated that in the second paragraph of page 2, he is quoted as saying: "Narvaez stated that there is an IS program that will be proposing moving some courses from lower level courses to 3xxx-level courses." Actually, it's the opposite, because Spanish has some courses that are listed at the 3xxx level but are not really the same as the rest of the 3xxx-level courses. They are 2-credit courses that everyone has to take (reading skills and grammar) so they shouldn't count at the seminar 3xxx level. The proposal includes moving those courses from the current grouping at an upper level to a grouping at a lower level.

Minutes were approved with correction by unanimous voice vote.

Division of Science and Mathematics

Approval of new free-standing minor in Data Science

Ericksen stated that the Data Science minor has been under discussion for several years and is now ready to be brought forward. She asked Ng and guest Peter Dolan to present the proposal. Ng stated that the Data Science minor was approved by the Division of Science and Mathematics in April. Dolan explained that it is a proposed minor that will help students get started in the field of data science and give students the skills to interact with other data scientists. Ericksen pointed out that the goal of this committee is to determine whether the rationale for the minor is persuasive, fits our campus mission, matches the student learning outcomes, and provides convincing evidence to believe the proposal will be approved at higher levels.

Page asked if there had been a discussion about the sustainability of the program if the required course IS 1091 (Ethical and Social Implications of Technology) is full, as is frequently the case, and new sections need to be added. Dolan answered that when demand for the course has required additional sections, computer science (which manages the course) has historically managed to staff those sections. He also stated that they had consulted with the philosophy discipline, and were told that this course was the best fit and would be preferred over Phil 2112 Professional Ethics, which is also historically full. Ng added that it's a 2-credit course, so it has minimal impact. Page noted that she was concerned about having people to staff the required course so students get what they need. Dolan responded that historically they have been able to find additional resources.

Dean stated that she would suggest a couple of minor changes in the language used to describe the learning outcomes and program assessment. The first Program Student Learning Outcome (PSLO) could be restated to fit the usual language. Secondly, instead of the word "data acumen," she suggested changing it to something like "students will be able to apply mathematical maturity to real life questions." Dolan answered that data acumen is becoming well-defined. Data Science is such a nascent field that the kinds of activities are changing and may not be applicable to assess in five years. Dean stated that she just wanted to have a better understanding of what we are assessing.

Ericksen stated that her inclination is to limit the required credits for majors or minors to assure the students receive a viable liberal arts education. She asked how many students come to Morris having already satisfied the 4-credit required course STAT 1601 Introduction to Statistics. Korn answered that is the case in AP and IB, with students arriving at Morris having an understanding of statistics. Ericksen noted that, for the most part, 26 credits will be the minimum for the minor, unless they come in having taken Statistics, which brings the total required credits down to 23. Helsper noted that we have students who get as many as four majors, so it would not seem to be a problem if they have one major and this minor.

Narvaez asked why one of the two subplans requires one 4-credit course, and the other requires two 5-credit courses. Dolan explained that the subplans are created to allow room for growth in the future. Four or five major subdivisions are evolving in Data Science. A computer science background that allows you to interact requires logarithms and a class that requires data structures. We really want to have a subplan in logarithms but we don't want to require that without data structures as well. The idea is to make the future intent visible. Narvaez asked if that kind of variation was considered normal or acceptable. Dolan answered that you typically tend to see more developed programs. At this time we can't dedicate resources to do that. Ng noted that another subplan in fine arts and visual arts is a big field in data arts. The key thing is that variable subplans are plausible. We should be able to add more. Ericksen asked if we had any other minors with subplans. Dolan answered no, this is the first.

Ericksen noted that in the Brief Summary section the word "Art" appears, but it isn't anywhere else. Kildegaard added that six fields are mentioned, statistics, computer science, mathematics, biology, economics, and art, but only two fields are represented in the courses offered. Dolan explained that the plan is to focus on what we have right now in front of us, with a goal to expand in the subplans.

Ericksen noted that in the Comparative Advantage section, not a single liberal arts college is mentioned. Are we trailblazing? If not, we need to include other liberal arts colleges offering this programming. If we are trailblazing, we need to say we are doing so and that there is a need. This proposal is going to Campus Assembly and to the BOR so we want to stress the liberal arts aspect. Dolan answered that was an oversite on his part, and he will correct that.

Ericksen asked if students have declared areas of emphasis in Data Science. Dolan answered that mostly students have expressed interest in doing projects that branch in the direction of Data Science. Ericksen stated that we would need something more direct to get it through Campus Assembly. Dolan answered that Brook Miller is working on a project. Ericksen noted that "our students are interested in this" does not say there is an external demand as well. Ng stated that we have both an external and internal demand. Ericksen stated that the proposal needs to include that.

Kildegaard stated that there are majors with fewer than 40 credits. A minor that requires 32 credits takes up a lot of real estate. Dolan answered that the only way to fit the program into existing resources was to offer courses broadly. In order to offer a product worthy of the name, it has to have the number of classes in the proposal.

Dolan stated that at every conference and professional meeting he attends they have talked about how important it is to offer courses from a broad variety of areas, including a communication course and more domain-specific content from different majors. It hits the core essence of Data Science. The major would be more liberal arts than the minor because the minor has to cover the basics. One of the future goals would be to take classes across majors.

Ng stated that the Division of Science and Mathematics has thought about a major but is not proposing it now because it couldn't be done with the current resources. Dolan added that someone will have to teach the one course in the minor that doesn't exist CSci/Stat 3701 (Intermediate Data Science). They can make it work without additional hiring. The one pinch point is the IS course mentioned earlier. No matter what the demand, we have always found a way to satisfy it without additional resources. Ng agreed that it can work for the minor.

Kildegaard commented that in the interest of consistency a year ago this committee evaluated a new major and minor in Medieval Studies and he made the following argument at that time: It doesn't make sense institutionally to develop a program around an untenured faculty member who is the core. Untenured faculty are more mobile than tenured faculty. It paints us into a corner during tenure decisions to know that not granting tenure also means the end of the program. Ng answered that even though she picked Peter Dolan to be the spokesperson, there are other people who can teach these courses. Dolan is a mathematician by training. This is a Science and Math program, not a Peter Dolan program. If approved, regardless of what happens to him, the program stays. Ericksen stated that four of the five Medievalists are tenured. Kildegaard responded that no one who teaches Latin is tenured. Ericksen responded that if the position in French and Latin were gone, we would have to consider whether to continue the Medieval Studies program. The question is "What happens to the program if one faculty leaves?" Dolan answered that professors Sungur and Anderson have both taught Data Science online. If you do your job right you don't make yourself irreplaceable, but it's a good concern. Kildegaard thanked Dolan for standing up for the whole program but stated that he did not think the minor is viable without Dolan's position.

Ng asked if the minor can be approved before the new course comes before the committee. Courses will be reviewed at next week's meeting. Squier answered that it can be approved. Helsper added that PCAS lists the course as pending.

Ericksen asked if the revisions need to be seen by the committee again. Helsper answered that the committee's vote will mention revisions, and Ericksen can approve the changes as editorial. She will share the changes with the committee before they go forward.

MOTION (Page/Crabtree): To approve the new Data Science minor with revisions that include: 1) PSLO1 revision of assessment language; 2) Increased comparison of liberal arts colleges; 3) and the inclusion of a statement on internal and external demand.

VOTE: (12-0-1)

Submitted by Darla Peterson