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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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9-17-2020

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UMN Morris Curriculum Committee

September 17, 2020, 1:00 p.m. Meeting #3

Zoom

Members Present: Janet Ericksen (Chair), John Barber, Barbara Burke, Jennifer Deane, Simón Franco, Nic McPhee, Marcus Muller, Peh Ng, Ben Narvaez, Michelle Page, Shanda Pittman

Members Absent: Stacey Aronson, Stephen Gross

Others present: Steve Burks, Bradley Deane, Wes Flinn, Kiel Harell, Joshua Johnson, Athena Kildegaard, Jeri Squier, Robyn VanEps

In these minutes: Discussion of Writing Requirement

#1 Welcome and announcements

This is an expanded and extra meeting because we are trying to do non-catalog business in a catalog year. Shanda Pittman has joined the committee and will be introduced at the regular scheduled meeting next week.

#2 Writing requirement revision discussion

Ericksen presented the writing requirement conundrum. A critical issue at this point is will there be enough offering of “this” but “this” hasn’t been solidified yet. English has presented a proposal and a small group spent time working on it this past summer. What are the parameters? Who will decide if a course meets it?

Discussion first addressed what requirements must be met before getting a W designation. McPhee stated that 25 students is too many to have in a course that addresses its own requirements as well as the writing component. Deane commented that it looks flexible. We do have courses already meeting this requirement. Could those courses be audited to determine the number of courses that are already available. The feedback is that divisions want the criteria to be clearer. Burks commented that there is extreme variability in courses. He experienced great lack of writing ability in his upper level courses. Narvaez commented that the criteria is clear to him, but raises issues of practicality and desire to offer a W course. Students also need to read more. He further commented that these seem to be more likely to occur at the 3xxx level. Franco spoke to support the parameters as is. These parameters do align with the Twin Cities model.

Ericksen asked the group not to use the Zoom chat feature. Comments there become sidebar conversations, and she cannot both lead the meeting and read the chat (she cannot even see the chat while screen-sharing).

Ericksen stated that the committee needs to define, at least for the beginning of, how much class time will need to be focused on the W requirements.

Burke asked if there is any anticipated distribution of courses. Ericksen said that the original request is for two courses from each division. The hope is that more will follow. Ericksen clarified that this discussion is to clarify the second part of a two-level writing requirement proposal. One issue has been that 60 students came in with a writing course completed. What happens is that the requirement isn't fairly applied then. The new proposal is for two courses - one of which could be a previously taken course. Every student would be required to take a writing extensive course. Page shared that the future could contain even an additional tier of a writing requirement.

One fundamental question is whether or not and how we can graduate better writers. Does the W designator provide that?

Ng commented that she anticipates questions about the credit-level of the course. Could it be a 2 or 3 credit course? It was previously discussed to keep it as a two course requirement rather than a credit-based requirement, so it would have greater flexibility. Burks suggested resourcing the writing intensive part of courses. Our current budget doesn't allow adding any resources. Writing instructors currently create their own courses and would lose autonomy if they were paired with other courses to serve as the writing instructor attached to courses other faculty teach. Burks is concerned that students with deficits in writing won't get the additional support that they need without such an arrangement.

J. Deane suggested beginning with this as a pilot course to be able to get started. Ericksen explained that a pilot would mean not changing the existing writing general education requirement, so we would not really be able to address a motivating problem to this proposal. Franco shared that a "pilot" perspective would still need the GenEd change to be approved, which then wouldn't really make it a pilot. We can try this and assess it, and if it doesn't work, we can change it again. B. Deane noted that this proposal came out of a lot of study of other institutions. English purposely kept the requirements a bit lower to allow flexibility to get the program started.

Johnson shared an idea to offer a version of his Understanding Writing course to faculty to help coordinate their current content material with writing requirements. Faculty can work with the Writing Center to define coursework but could also take a mini-course that would help them better understand and teach writing. English will also provide many courses that will meet the requirements.

Ericksen summarized that the six bullet points are apparently enough information to reach out and ask if faculty already have courses that meet these requirements or could easily adapt courses and would be willing to do so for next year.

Narvaez shared that his IC course and Cuba class already meet these requirements. McPhee also wants to see the class size lowered. He is concerned that junior faculty will push forward

with a higher number because they don't feel empowered to negotiate. Currently, the recommendation is for ideally 25 students. Narvaez suggested a range of enrollment.

Ericksen asked to hear from the student committee members because this proposal does add an additional course to the Gen Ed requirements. However, it can also fulfill another GenEd area so potentially doesn't add a course. Barber strongly supports the additional writing requirement. He believes graduates can only benefit from it. Pittman agreed that the smaller enrollment in courses would be beneficial.

Burks proposed changing the ideal enrollment to no more than 20. Squier commented that they would have to add a GenEd designator to the system. This could potentially cause a problem if the system resources are too limited to make the change to ECAS. Muller commented that OTR can probably accommodate. He will follow up with TC staff.

Ericksen asked for endorsement to proceed with requesting possible W courses from faculty. In order to make the full program revision to Campus Assembly, we need to create a list of courses that would be able to meet the new requirements. Vote was in favor of the next step (8-0-0).

Still at question is how transfer students would meet the requirements.

Chat Discussion:

13:12:20 From Jennifer K Deane : Of course there is variability across disciplines and divisions-- not everyone will need to teach a W course.

13:12:20 From Nic McPhee : And I think we need to expect to find classes that do *much* of this, but not *all* of it, and have mechanisms to help some of those courses satisfy all/more of these criteria.

13:13:04 From Jennifer K Deane : I agree, Nic

13:13:14 From Barbara R Burke : Writing in an academic field has defined constraints and styles, is page limit the real measure used in the TC?

13:13:57 From Nic McPhee : How do "multiple chances" interact with the expectation for "thoughtful revision"?

13:14:36 From Jeri L Squier : <http://archive.undergrad.umn.edu/cwb/definition.html>

13:15:01 From John Barber (He/Him) : Thank you Jeri

13:17:06 From Bradley Deane : Nic, the revision provision is one of the ways that we provide students with multiple chances to learn about writing. As opposed to just one bolus of writing instruction.

13:17:43 From Nic McPhee : My question wasn't clear. I'm wondering how/if revisions count as multiple chances.

13:18:16 From Nic McPhee : I share Ben's concerns – it seems to me that as a 2xxx course it will need to be smaller, and that has consequences.

13:18:38 From Nic McPhee : Hee, hee, hee :)

13:21:23 From Nic McPhee : Actually, Brad, I think I didn't really read your answer as carefully as I should. Are you saying there could be one assignment, with multiple revisions providing the multiple chances? (To abuse chat since we started here.)

13:43:52 From Jennifer K Deane : I think there are faculty in social science who would appreciate and enjoy that, Josh (myself included)

13:45:19 From Josh (he/him/his) : I would enjoy it, too! :-)

13:47:18 From Jennifer K Deane : And it's opt-in... division chairs are not going to be telling folks they have to do it

13:48:00 From Jennifer K Deane : Yep -- Ben, you're one of those who actually does a lot of this already!

13:58:20 From Jennifer K Deane : I like the idea of a smaller class, too... glad for that discussion