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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMN Morris Curriculum Committee

October 1, 2020, 1:00 p.m. Meeting #5

Zoom

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

Members Absent: John Barber, Rebecca Dean, Stephen Gross, Shanda Pittman

Others present (including members of the cross-division writing requirement revision working group from last spring and members of the English discipline): Stephen Burks, Bradley Deane, Julie Eckerle, Wes Flinn, Jeri Squier, Robyn VanEps

In these minutes: Writing requirement discussion

#1 Welcome and announcements

Ericksen reviewed the WLA GenEd revision proposal that came from English last year. Part 1 (transfer credit for WLA) of the proposal is already happening. Items 3 and 4 in the proposal are not possible at this point. The focus of today's discussion will be about item 2 without the option of additional resources. The committee raised no objections to continuing with part 2, even without items 3 and 4 in this year's revision.

#2 Writing Requirement discussion

The courses that disciplines provided from the preliminary call are in the Committee's shared Drive folder ([here](#)). Ericksen shared the UMN TC writing requirements and their process for determining when a course meets the requirements to be a Writing Intensive course (indicated by a W following the course number, e.g., HIST 1200W). Burke asked if Morris students would have difficulty finding an upper level writing course outside of a major if we implemented a version of the TC WI requirement. Ericksen clarified that for the TC campus, no course outside of the major is required, just at least one in the major, and at Morris for now we're talking only about requiring one or possibly two WI courses.

Discussion included the fact that once a course has a W designator, it cannot be removed when the instructor changes, but we might have situations in which a course has two versions that stay on the books, one with a W and one without. We are distinctly not planning to have situations in which both versions would be simultaneously taught and students could select their preference. The instructor would determine at the time of scheduling whether or not to offer a W course. Leaving a non-W version on the books might be helpful for transfer courses.

McPhee commented that he would like Morris to have at least as stringent, if not more stringent, requirements than the Twin Cities. He suggested that the capstone could be an additional writing course. Ng commented that first year students should have many opportunities to write, especially in the IC course. Both a writing component in the IC and a writing and/or speaking component in the capstone were discussed a little last year and could be revisited as part of the

GenEd program revisions. Eckerle shared that English has discussed a third level writing intensive course within the major, she and other English faculty would love to see more writing in the IC course.

Burks noted that Rebecca Dean has mentioned that doing an integrated first year course is still in consideration. He also raised a question about ESL students and how they would be supported if we require more, and more advanced, writing. Specifically, we recruit students from SUFE who would struggle to meet the standards of an upper level writing intensive course. Ericksen wondered if TAs might be able to help with tutoring and preliminary grading. It would require a structured training, but could alleviate some of the workload when a course has a fairly high number of students whose first language is other than English. McPhee commented that some conversations have already happened in Computer Science discussing if students could help with feedback on assignments. Although they got stuck on how it would look, they are interested in pursuing it.

Ng asked to review the courses that faculty identified as potentially Writing Intensive. Ericksen screen-shared the spreadsheet (sent out in advance of the meeting) with that information. Ericksen asked about how people felt about courses where the writing would be in languages other than English. Aronson assured the committee that she supports these courses as eligible to meet the intensive writing requirements. Students all write in the target language. They are developmental and do intensive training in writing. The review process would show (especially to HLC) that the criteria were met for any course designated with a W. Ng asked about sequential courses that together meet the 2-credit minimum requirement, and people supported that idea.

There was discussion about a sub-committee to establish a review process.

Narvaez stated that lower-level WI courses should be at least 2-credits, as he does not see how one could cover both sufficient writing instruction and other content in less than that. Burke shared that senior seminars are sometimes 1-credit courses. B. Deane clarified that the proposal for now is not to include senior seminars in the requirement. Early writing experiences would benefit students throughout their time in college. Aronson clarified that in Spanish, intensive writing begins at level three.

Ericksen asked: if this current slate of courses were mostly offered as writing intensive, would that be enough for the proposal to be viable? In other words, do we have enough information now to move forward, fairly confident that the program could work if it were approved? B. Deane commented that even without significant change, English could handle about half of the incoming students with intensive writing course options. CEI and the Writing Across the Curriculum program (Office of Undergraduate Education, Twin Cities) offer a number of relevant resources regarding teaching writing and effectively incorporating writing into classes. Ericksen suggested that if this is approved, we could seek out some Morris-specific sessions. J. Deane agreed that professional development is a great idea, and that writing instruction support should be framed that way, not as a required step for offering a W course. It will be important to have

support for faculty, even those who already have writing intensive courses. Aronson suggested that the spreadsheet of courses could be sorted by division and discipline to help ascertain the representation.

What is next? Ericksen asked again if those present feel the list is sufficient basis for moving ahead; does it provide enough evidence that we would have a sufficient number of courses available to meet a lower-level writing intensive requirement next year and possibly an upper-level one as well? Squier feels that enrollment must be considered before being able to decide if it's enough courses. McPhee commented that Science and Math doesn't have many courses on the list and many of the upper level courses on the list have prerequisites. Eckerle noted that a lower-level W class does not have to be taken in a student's first year, so it is not imperative to have complete access in year one. CMR has put courses on the list that are not offered each semester, and such scheduling will affect how many courses are offered each year. Ericksen noted that the list of courses is likely to change when the criteria are finalized and the proposal is approved--probably not everyone who could have responded did respond to the recent query.

Ng commented that it is hard to vote on supporting the proposal at this point since information is still preliminary. Narvaez pointed out that only incoming students will be subject to the new requirements. J. Deane commented that each division should not feel like they need to have equal offerings. She suggests moving ahead with seeking approval of the proposal, and then divisions can be consulted about additional courses. Burks and McPhee reiterated concern about junior faculty being burdened by having to carry most of the weight of offering WI courses. Is there some way to avoid this?

Ericksen asked if based on the responses, the committee may move forward with the proposal. Ericksen stated that ESL instruction will be considered as the committee and proposal move forward. The majority of the group agreed to continue working on part two of the proposal and to continue to try to address the many remaining questions. A campus conversation will be one of the next steps in October, at which Ericksen hopes committee members and English faculty can be present to help answer questions. Ericksen proposes to write up, with input from English faculty, a clarified version of the proposal as it now stands, so that it can be shared prior to the campus conversation.