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Curriculum Committee Minutes

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UMN Morris Curriculum Committee

April 8, 2021, 11:40 a.m. Meeting #17

Zoom

Members Present: Janet Ericksen (Chair), Stacey Aronson, John Barber, Cameron Berthiaume, Barbara Burke, Rebecca Dean, Jennifer Deane, Stephanie Ferrian, Simón Franco, Stephen Gross, Nic McPhee, Marcus Muller, Ben Narvaez, Peh Ng, Michelle Page, Shanda Pittman, Emily Wittkop

Members Absent:

Others present: Bryan Nell, Jeri Squier, Robyn VanEps

In these minutes: Chemistry Program Review, Psychology Program Review

#1 Welcome and announcements

Welcome to all. The scheduled preliminary discussions about the GenEd framework options have all been completed at this point: one for students, two for staff, and four for faculty (with the additional option of April 13 Division meeting discussions). Work by the subcommittees will continue as long as possible this spring; it's unlikely that the subcommittees will finish refining proposals with the feedback we've had, and a summer working group may be possible. Some confusion may have occurred at the MCSA discussion. Barber offered to follow up with liz thompson to clear up confusion.

#2 Approval of minutes

Motion and second (Ng, Franco) to approve minutes from Meeting #16 - March 25, 2021. Motion passed (10-0-1).

#3 Academic Program Review: Chemistry

Bryan Nell, as Chemistry discipline coordinator, joined the meeting to discuss the Chemistry program review. The discipline's recent successes include: 1. Work in inclusive learning and work with marginalized students (ELSAP, Gateway, McNair, other) and 2. Incorporation of sustainability into major and adding a subplan for Green and Sustainable Chemistry. The Chemistry discipline has pledged to be as green as possible in courses and research. They also strive to keep enrollment strong, and the new green chemistry subplan is part of doing so. The discipline believes, based on student projects, involvement with faculty research, enrollments, and the campus identity, that this line of study will both attract students and position well for careers after graduation. Faculty are discussing changing the capstone experience from a senior seminar to another format. McPhee asked about reaching marginalized students early in introductory years. Chemistry is actively engaged in the PAL program. They are now offering Gen Chem I in both fall and spring semesters, as well as offering a course that prepares students for Gen Chem. Ericksen asked what chemistry majors do after graduation and if students hear about those options early on. Nell stated that some faculty encourage research at the entry level. Chem Club helps get students interested and provide information about future options.

The Green Chemistry commitment is a way to bring schools together that make the same commitment. Ericksen asked what differentiates a chemistry major here in Morris from other schools. The major offers many subplans if the student is interested. Sustainability is a focus for Nell in his Organic Chemistry courses. Nationally there are only 2-3 similar subplans to the Green and Sustainable Chemistry. The discipline wants to expand how they promote the major. Narvaez made

the distinction that Chemistry at Morris (as well as other majors) follows the Liberal Arts. Dean noted that Chemistry has always done excellent assessment. Wittkop responded as a chemistry student that working directly with faculty is a huge advantage. Wittkop does share that in her role in Admissions. Ng noted that in the lab, Chemistry takes many efforts to reduce carbon footprint and toxins. Ericksen asked about students who don't come in with Chemistry as a chosen major. Nell responded that it is possible to complete the major in 3 years, but it is more difficult. McPhee noted that there is a perception that the major is more rigid. Nell agreed that the credit requirement for the major is high and it is structured sequentially, especially in the first two years. Narvaez suggested the discipline think about how to create more flexibility, especially to eliminate it requiring summer courses (in the 3-yr plan). This is not an issue unique to Morris. Dean commented that some of the comparison might need to acknowledge the B.A. vs. B.S. curriculum. Nell asked about program development previously funded by EDP or outside funding. The discipline wants to know how to make changes now. Ericksen commented that it is in the regular responsibilities of faculty to continue with program development without additional funding, but for more major initiative or special needs, funding may be requested by discussing with the Division Chair and the Dean. Ericksen thanked Nell and his colleagues for their work.

#3 Academic Program Review: Psychology

Dennis Stewart, as coordinator of the Psychology discipline, joined the meeting to discuss their program review. Psychology has graduated the second most majors over the last 5 years. Cultural diversity is incorporated into every course, and they are purposeful about teaching from an interdisciplinary approach. Psychology also works with many community partners and has overall a wide variety of enrichment opportunities for students. Psychology in addition provides courses for many other majors. Three tenure-track positions have been lost over the past 3 years, although Ericksen noted that tenure-track searches were approved for them, but the searches have been unsuccessful. The discipline has excellent non-tenure-track faculty, but some instability in faculty at the same time--and enrollments make clear that faculty are needed. Many courses fill up and have waitlists. Students sometimes have to take classes from other campuses.

Stewart shared two program goals: address faculty size and stability and address curriculum challenges. Narvaez asked about the hiring in psychology, in light of the hiring freeze. Ericksen noted that hiring requests have to be approved by President Gabel during the freeze, and there has been limited communication about future hiring in the system. Burke asked about the major's five topic areas and how that requirements is handled by transfer students. Stewart responded that the topic areas haven't caused significant bottlenecks and seem to function effectively. Occasionally when a majority of courses are from transfer, there may be a deficit due to 3 credit courses vs 4 credit courses. Still, the discipline will continue discussion of the major requirements, and staffing continues to be discussed as well. Stewart noted that class size could be increased when demand exceeds supply. Dean asked if the methods class could be modified to allow more students in each section. Intro to Psych could be larger to accommodate students (although he's not advocating for that) but methods would be harder to enlarge. Ericksen noted that the Psychology discipline works a lot with other disciplines, and thanked Stewart and his colleagues for their work.