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Curriculum minutes 03/05/2012

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2011-12 MEETING #14 Minutes
March 5, 2012, 12:00 p.m., BCR**

Present: Bart Finzel (chair), Joe Alia, Clare Dingley, Caitlin Drayna, Janet Ericksen, Hazen Fairbanks, Sara Haugen, Leslie Meek, Peh Ng, Ian Patterson, Gwen Rudney, Jeri Squier, Tisha Turk

Absent: Bryce Blankenfeld, Carol Cook, Heather James, Paula O'Loughlin

Visiting: Nancy Helsper

In these minutes: General Education Packaging (continued discussion); Information Literacy; General Education Designators (preliminary discussion)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Finzel announced that the committee will not meet on March 12 due to Spring Break. The next meeting will be March 19, at which time courses will be on the agenda. The committee will meet on March 26 to consider the EDP subcommittee's recommendation. EDP proposals are due March 20. Geology and Computer Science discipline coordinators will be asked to speak to the committee about their recent program reviews at those meetings as well.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: (Ericksen/Ng) to approve the February 20, 2012 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. GENERAL EDUCATION PACKAGING (continued discussion)

Ericksen explained the revisions that she and Patterson had made to the advising worksheet. She explained that they had tried to incorporate the learning outcomes by using several different formats and page sizes, but they concluded that adding the learning outcomes would result in too large a worksheet. Learning outcomes were removed with the hopes that they could be handed to students separately. The advising worksheet remains a one-page, back-to-back document in order to maintain its usefulness. They had also looked at the Gen Ed goals, and included the full catalog text, putting in bold the statement "Students are required to complete a minimum of 60 credits of general education coursework outside the discipline of the major and must meet the requirements listed below." On the other side of the worksheet, in the bottom left corner, they have added a note that reads "A total of 60 credits is required outside the major. Taking only one course in each General Education category will not meet this requirement." An asterisk was added to the equation at the top of the page, with a note at the bottom that states: "See APAS for complete degree requirements." They tried to address the other aspects of the total degree, as well as the learning outcomes, but their priority was to keep it to a single page. Patterson added that it is important to recognize the scope of this particular worksheet. The difficulty and confusion lies in what the Gen Ed program is, its purpose, and how it works. He and Ericksen had set out to revise the

worksheet to show that a student can work their way through the complexity and pseudo-abstraction of the Gen Ed program.

Many small changes and corrections were noted. Finzel stated that, rather than edit this document as a committee, the subcommittee should be empowered to come up with a final draft. Patterson stated that, all of the points raised have been valid, but the committee has been trying to figure out what to do with the Gen Ed program for six months and it is familiar to us. The point is to streamline it and make it as coherent as possible for people who are not familiar with it. Trying to encapsulate every single aspect of Gen Ed on paper is helpful from a student perspective, but additional lines or boxes are not necessary. It is important to understand what this worksheet is trying to do.

Other small changes/corrections were suggested. Finzel thanked Ericksen and Patterson for their work in revising the worksheet. He asked that a final version be presented to the committee at its next meeting.

3. INFORMATION LITERACY

Finzel stated that three of the Gen Ed themes the committee had identified to address this semester were: 1) writing requirement; 2) Gen Ed packaging; and 3) information literacy. The issue regarding information literacy is where it belongs in the curriculum. At one time there was a discussion to include it in the IC courses. It was later included in the writing requirement discussion. It makes sense and would be an easy fix to include it in the course proposal for a new course that will satisfy the writing requirement. Turk agreed that it makes sense to include it in the writing requirement. It would be an awkward addition to the IC courses. The IC courses are so varied that information literacy wouldn't fit many of them. Putting it in the context of "you will need it to complete the assignment" makes more sense. Integrating research and library information into a course divorced from actual research wouldn't stick with a student. It would be a great addition to the writing course, and it makes sense that all college writing do some form of research paper.

4. GENERAL EDUCATION DESIGNATORS (Preliminary Discussion)

Finzel stated that the fourth issue that came out of Gen Ed discussions is a general concern about having every course we offer carry a Gen Ed designation. In some ways it makes it hard to talk about our Gen Ed. It also makes it difficult to assess the program. We are unusual in this regard having virtually every class with a Gen Ed designator. Some changes that have been suggested include a policy that 4xxx-level courses could not carry a Gen Ed unless the faculty member makes a case for it. The same logic could be applied to 2xxx- or 3xxx-level classes. We would need a process in place by which Gen Ed designators are approved. Years ago we had a General Education Committee. Ng stated that a committee would not be needed if the process is simple. The Curriculum Committee could make suggestions and move forward. Finzel noted that a process would need to be in place for those faculty members who wish to have a Gen Ed designator on their courses. Squier stated that the current practice requires a Gen Ed designator, and if it doesn't have one, a rationale must be given. Rudney asked if the process could be flipped. Ng added that it could be flipped with the notation that a justification is needed

for giving a Gen Ed designator to a course at the level of 4xxx or above. Squier replied that it could be done in a Word document, but to get the ECAS system changed would not be easy. The Twin Cities would probably put that requested change on the back burner. Finzel stated that he is prepared to draft something to bring to the committee for discussion.

Rudney stated that some courses have a prereq with the same Gen Ed designator. Any courses with prereqs should be ineligible from having a Gen Ed designator. Helsper noted that it might be OK to have the designator on a course if the faculty member allows a student who has not taken the prereq into a course. Rudney replied that in that case, they could argue to keep it, following the process. Turk stated that she did not think upper level courses should have a Gen Ed designator, even if they don't have the same Gen Ed designator as the prereq, because upper level courses are specialized and not Gen Ed. Finzel stated that 3xxx- and 4xxx-level courses can follow a process by which courses can selectively be given a Gen Ed designator. Squier stated that there are some disciplines that do not have 2xxx-level courses and don't have enough 1xxx-level courses to cover all the GERs. Finzel stated that transfer students could have a problem. Squier replied that most transfer students would have met the prereqs somewhere else.

Dingley asked what the negative perception is that we would like to fix. Finzel answered that there is a lack of coherence to our Gen Ed program because everything is Gen Ed. That makes it hard to identify what is Gen Ed. Alia noted that what is Gen Ed to one student isn't Gen Ed to another student. For example, general chemistry is a course for chemistry and biology majors, but it is also a course that fulfills the science with lab GER. A more extreme case would be an upper level course with a lot of math in it. He has friends who were mathematicians who had never had chemistry and the course opened up the world of chemistry for them. A reason for having Gen Ed designators is that not every student would be coming from the same perspective. Patterson agreed. Having Gen Ed designators on upper level courses allows students to take Gen Ed courses throughout their college careers. It makes sense for freshmen to take the more general courses.

Finzel asked if the committee would favor no change to the assignment of Gen Ed designators. Alia answered that there is a perceived problem, but chemistry is not experiencing the problem of students taking upper level chemistry courses to fulfill GERs. Helsper read the following statement from the catalog: "In order to lay the foundation for learning early, students are expected to complete a significant part of the Skills component during their first and second years of college. The emphasis is on establishing an intellectual framework for future work-a framework consisting of writing, linguistic reasoning, and artistic skills. Students continue to develop these skills in advanced courses."

Finzel stated that his intent is to address concerns about General Education that are widely shared across campus. Patterson and Alia prefer the current status. Is this worth pursuing further? Turk stated that, in advising conversations with students, they go into the course listing and do a search of all courses. Many courses are either upper level or have prereqs. It can be frustrating that the list looks like there are so many choices

available, but it is misleading. Designators should be more focused in their hits. Rudney added that when every course has a Gen Ed designator, the Gen Ed is not necessarily the focus for upper level courses. There are higher level courses that make sense as Gen Ed courses, so doing a blanket elimination of upper level Gen Ed course doesn't make sense. She would support reducing the number and putting forward a case for analyzing and focusing on GERs. It could also be approached backwards by asking what courses are filled with students who do not need the Gen Ed. Helsper read from the catalog "Students gradually fulfill the Expanding Perspectives requirements throughout their college career."

Ericksen suggested asking faculty to look at their 4xxx-level courses to see if it would make sense for any of the courses to not have a Gen Ed designator. Then there may be petitions from time to time to assign a Gen Ed designator to a course that has none. It wouldn't be a big number. Ng stated that she teaches a lot of 3xxx- and 4xxx-level math courses. Her courses with the M/SR Gen Ed designator do satisfy the description of the M/SR. Unless the definition is changed to "introductory," she couldn't pick one that didn't satisfy the definition. Rudney asked if they are all populated by students who need it for the GER. Ng stated that students who wait until their junior or senior year to fulfill the M/SR requirement take them to satisfy the GER. When Gen Ed was revised for semesters, the reason for every course to carry a Gen Ed was to avoid the rush on courses that everybody wanted to take because they met multiple GERs. There were not enough courses to satisfy the GERs. Finzel stated that it was a practical application to give everything a Gen Ed designator. Dingley added that it contributed to the concept of breadth in Gen Ed. Students are encouraged to take courses from faculty outside their major because there would be a lot of choices. Turk stated that, looking at the worksheet discussed earlier, it makes a distinction between Gen Ed courses and in-depth study. The current Gen Ed designators don't make that distinction. What courses in a discipline are meant to encourage students to think broadly about an issue, and what courses are in-depth and appropriate for specialization in a particular field? The answer may vary across disciplines. The current system is practical, but not intellectually helpful. Patterson asked if the solution to that is to either change the way we construct the requirements or to educate people about what the requirements are and have people come to a better understanding of Gen Ed. Turk replied that both would be preferable goals. Ng stated that the current system allows instructors to remove the GER from the course or to ask for an exemption. If you have a specialized upper level English course, there is a way to remove the GER. Turk replied that it is technically true, but there is a culture that discourages it and an expectation that all courses must satisfy a GER. Dingley noted that there needs to be clear guidelines about when there should not be a GER or when it can be removed. Finzel stated that this was the preliminary discussion and further discussion will take place.

Adjourned 12:53 p.m.
Submitted by Darla Peterson