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Curriculum minutes 04/30/2012

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**UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2011-12 MEETING #18 Minutes
April 30, 2012, 12:00 p.m., BCR**

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

Absent: Heather James

Visiting: Nancy Helsper

In these minutes: Directed Study Request, Catalog Changes, Topics Courses Discussion

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Finzel welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the academic year. It has been a productive year. He thanked everyone and expressed his appreciation for the efforts and contributions of the members this year.

Minutes from this meeting will be distributed electronically this week for approval. He was hoping that program reviews currently underway would present something this spring, but we will make time next fall for presentations on the status of those programs.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: (Cook/Ericksen) to approve the April 9, 2012 minutes. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. DIRECTED STUDY REQUEST FOR GEN ED DESIGNATOR OF FA

Motion: (O'Loughlin/Patterson) to approve the request for FA for ArtH 4993.

Discussion: Ericksen stated that the student is going abroad and since classes with the FA Gen Ed are often full, this student has arranged to do an onsite study in art and architecture working with an art history instructor. Finzel noted that it seemed strange for it to be a 4xxx-level course. Ericksen stated that the level of specificity is what pushed the course number to the 4xxx level. However, a 3xxx-level course would make more sense.

Ericksen made a friendly amendment to change the course number from ArtH 4993 to ArtH 3993. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. CATALOG CHANGES (Timeline)

Finzel asked if the divisions would like to present their changes in the fall in the same order in which they presented last year. Science and Math went first. Education was last. The logic in having Education go last is that a lot of their curriculum depends on the

curricular changes in the other divisions. It was noted that divisions have rotated their order in the past, with the exception of Education.

Dingley proposed that the process be changed for the upcoming catalog cycle. She asked that all of the course changes be presented from the divisions first, with proposed changes in majors and minors presented after the course changes have made their way through Campus Assembly. The reason for her proposal is that the PCAS system does not work as well with the process we have been using. Course changes such as term and year offered must have full approval before the major can be updated. It might also be helpful for faculty in other majors to see what course changes have been made that might affect their major. Finzel asked if anyone could see a drawback to the proposal. Squier answered that it would probably stretch out the timeline by 2-3 weeks.

Helsper stated that if the timeline is delayed by 2-3 weeks, it might not work with the Twin Cities deadline for the catalog. We used to have a deadline of having the new catalog active by March 1. For the last catalog, we were 2-3 weeks later than that. If we add another 2-3 weeks, the catalog will go active after Annual Planning has started. Dingley noted that catalog production this summer is migrating to the people who manage the PCAS system. They will probably have a PDF catalog and it won't be quite as fancy as the previous version of the printed catalog. It's a big unknown since they are doing it for the first time, and we would be one of the first campuses they work with.

Finzel stated that in terms of work, divisions would be doing the same thing as before, but presenting the changes in two stages. Dingley added that disciplines will be better able to update their majors, minors, and licensure when they have seen the course changes in other disciplines. Patterson asked how we have dealt with those majors affected by interdisciplinary crossing in the past. Helsper answered that we have allowed those changes to come forward at the end in a wrap-up meeting. O'Loughlin noted that what the change is basically doing is relieving some of the pressure on individual interdisciplinary studies folk so they are on a more even playing field.

O'Loughlin asked if we want to have the discussion of course changes separate from catalog changes. They are two separate discussions: changes in courses, and then overall majors/minors. In doing that, when the course changes are approved, the outcomes for the discussions of the majors have been predetermined. What will be missing is the philosophical discussion about the major and how the course changes affect it. It does not leave much room for a reflective, intentional discussion. Rudney stated that she would support the change but that it would take a little more conversation. For this committee's work, there has to be some explanation as to why these course changes are being made in the big picture. Ng noted that she would agree to try it as long as divisions can have the prerogative to hold one meeting to deal with courses and programs at the same time. Dingley stated that what comes to the Curriculum Committee are PDFs of ECAS and PCAS. Some of the changes have not been highlighted, so she hasn't caught them all to get them in the system, resulting in the online catalog not matching what was approved at Campus Assembly.

Patterson stated that the proposal has virtues, but the potential vice is that it would necessitate moving quickly. Questions like how will this affect the major will come up when we are discussing courses.

Finzel stated that last year we met an early November Campus Assembly deadline. Dingley stated that the Twin Cities deadline is unknown at this time. Helsper stated that in the past her catalog deadline has always been December 1. Finzel stated that we could take two to three weeks to cover course changes and go to Campus Assembly in October. He suggested a two-week delay before the committee would look at majors and minors.

Rudney suggested that the “Form A” be brought back and used to show the major/minor overview when the courses changes are considered. The form provides a brief way to explain what is different in the major. Dingley noted that some Form As have come through lacking sufficient information in the past.

Finzel stated that the committee will try the process and see how it works. Divisions will present course changes as early as possible in September, hopefully starting with the second meeting of this body. Course changes and the Form A summary sheet will be submitted at the same time.

4. TOPICS COURSES (Preliminary Discussion)

Finzel stated that today’s discussion is a preliminary look at topics courses. This agenda item was suggested by Ericksen and Turk on behalf of the English discipline. The campus did away with topics courses nearly a decade ago. With the use of topics courses, instructors could teach a course under a topics rubric without bringing the course forward for approval. He asked Helsper to share some history of topics courses.

Helsper stated that she had done a little research and found that topics courses existed from early in UMM’s existence until the fall of 2005. The way topics courses worked was that there was an “umbrella” course with general attributes that carried through for each “specific topic” under it. For instance, the topic umbrella specified the general topic area, the credits or credit range, the GER, and so on. Once an umbrella course was approved, then specific topics courses under it would not need approval at the Curriculum Committee level or beyond. On some campuses, the course number for a specific topics course was automatically generated, depending upon the term in which the course was offered. This method made it very difficult to know the title of the topics course because the numbers were repeated each year. So UMM devised an alternate method by which we manually chose new course numbers for the specific topics that were used throughout the life of that topic.

In fall 2003, during the Division Chairs Retreat, concern was expressed about the topics courses. Topics courses here and at other institutions have been used as a venue for experimental courses. Topic courses, *per se*, were not intended to be ongoing courses. The problem is the use of the rubric of large topic course umbrellas. The courses under the umbrella require approval only if they differ from the umbrella requirements, GER, etc. Courses have become a permanent part of the curriculum without ever receiving

approval. The other options outside of topics courses, of new faculty wanting to teach a course that can be added quickly, will still be available with provisional approval. At the October 15, 2003 meeting of the Curriculum Committee, three proposals were unanimously approved:

- I. All courses must receive Curriculum Committee approval (either provisional or regular) before being offered.
- II. Courses receiving provisional approval remain active for the duration of the catalog.
- III. All variable topics courses xx00 will either be converted to course cluster headings or be eliminated from the catalog, as each discipline thinks best. Note: New cluster headings are subject to Curriculum Committee approval, but do not need Campus Assembly approval.

Ericksen stated that the issue is that one of the things that occupies a lot of time is updating a course, such as changing a course title from “19th Century British Literature” (which is not exciting for students) to the more interesting title “Pirates and Vampires in 19th Century British Novels.” A new ECAS form must be completed to make the change. Every year a new ECAS form must be submitted if a course has a slightly different focus. Instructors try to change courses to attract student interest, but they would like to be able to do so without having to go to the discipline, division, this committee, and Campus Assembly each year for approval.

Turk stated that a lot of people were doing an end-run around the process anyway by using the online Course Guide to put out specific information about courses. However, students didn’t realize that was being done, because students weren’t using the Course Guide or didn’t know it exists. Having not been here when we had topics courses, and not having participated in the decision to drop them, she had never understood why we didn’t have topics courses. The English discipline thinks it is time to revisit it.

Dingley stated that perhaps changing a course title could be considered editorial. Helsper replied that, in the past, this committee has had issues with title changes. Finzel noted that we have the Course Guide now and tools that can help students. In the old days, when we had topics courses, we didn’t have such tools. Dingley stated that only a few courses provide Course Guide information, and some of that information is outdated.

Squier stated that ECAS does have the topics feature built into it. Morris had it turned off since we no longer have topics courses. The Twin Cities campus uses the feature. If we could get it turned on, then the transcript would show what the topic is.

Finzel stated that there is some controversy. The main critique was that some topics were too broad. For example, “Topics in Literature” was a mechanism in which almost any course could be slipped under it, avoiding a campus review of what we are teaching our students. The guidelines were not sufficiently narrow. Turk agreed that ridiculously broad topics would be a problem. Her own research interests have changed, and she

would like to make changes to courses, but the changes are too small to warrant fooling around with ECAS.

Helsper stated that cluster courses are used in disciplines such as French and Computer Science. Finzel agreed that cluster courses are a viable option. Cook asked how the current cluster courses would be different from topics courses. Ericksen answered that each cluster course needs to be approved. Helsper noted that they could get provisional approval. Helsper also stated that an advantage of cluster courses is that you can set up the repeatability with each course because they are individual courses in their own right.

O'Loughlin stated that if you make the change back to the old topics courses, we will have to think about whether people switching topics are equally eligible for EDP grants. If so, you could essentially have the same people coming to the same well.

Finzel stated that this has been a good information session. A decision will not be made today, so clusters may make sense in the English discipline for next fall's course proposals.

Finzel thanked everyone again.

Adjourned 12:52 p.m.

[The minutes for this meeting were approved by email vote.]

Submitted by Darla Peterson