

3-6-2014

## Curriculum minutes 03/06/2014

Curriculum Committee

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## **UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**

### **2013-14 MEETING #6 Minutes**

**March 6, 2014, 10:00 a.m., MFR**

*Members Present:* Bart Finzel (chair), Joe Alia, Donna Chollett, Mark Collier, Carol Cook, Clare Dingley, Pilar Eble, Eric Gandrud, Hector Garcia, Pieranna Garavaso, Leslie Meek, Peh Ng, Gwen Rudney, Jeri Squier, and Emily Sunderman

*Members Absent:* Zach Johnson and Sara Haugen

*Visitors:* Chlene Anderson, Julie Eckerle, Nancy Helsper, Kellie Meehlhause, and Heather Waye

*In these minutes: Biology Program Review Report, Course Approvals (Divisions of the Humanities and Science and Mathematics), Latin American Area Studies Minor, Online Learning Task Force Update, Writing for the Liberal Arts (WLA) Proposed Changes.*

### **Announcements**

Dean Finzel welcomed new student member Hector Garcia. Garcia is a freshman majoring in psychology and Spanish.

The Scholastic Committee made a request for Curriculum Committee representation on a subcommittee they are forming to come up with ways to create structures beyond the first semester that will assist our international students who struggle with the English language. Finzel asked for a volunteer to serve on the subcommittee. Meek volunteered.

### **Approval of Minutes – January 30, 2014**

The January 30, 2014 minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote, with several minor corrections.

### **Biology Program Review Report**

Finzel explained that he had asked Professor Wayne to join the meeting to talk a bit about the distinctiveness of the biology program, the curriculum link/relationship to other programs (including Gen Ed), innovation in the last few years, and program goals or areas that might improve in the coming years. Wayne stated that one aspect biology is particularly proud of is the breadth of the program. Majors are required to take courses that cover a range of biological topics from molecular to cellular, to organismal to ecological, to environmental. Courses in mathematics, statistics, and chemistry also make up the required core courses. Most courses involve lab sections that offer a hands-on experience and opportunity to apply what students are learning in the classroom. This broad base is something that is starting to slip away in other schools, but our program feels it is an important component. The major requires 21 credits outside of biology, and has an intensive 2-semester writing experience in the sciences. In addition to the lab component, in molecular and ecology, there is substantial student research being done. Students come up with their own proposals for experiments to give them experience in developing research projects using the scientific method. For the senior capstone presentation students often present their own research. Biology students are involved in many paid undergraduate research experiences at UMM or elsewhere. Our biology graduates are successful, with 42% going on to graduate school.

There is a large demand for the program. Seventeen percent of all UMM declared majors, including pre-health professional students, are involved in biology. The major is also linked with biochemistry, environmental science, and environmental studies. Core requirements and electives such as pre-health, anatomy, and intro to human physiology serve students in a number of different programs. Electives such as biochemistry, microbiology, and genetics are prerequisites for many medical school programs. The program offers courses that support the elementary and secondary education programs. A number of biology faculty have co-taught IS courses, two faculty members teach in environmental studies, one teaches a geology course, and another teaches an IC course in biology.

Biology takes assessment seriously. They formally assess the program, looking at vertical alignment of courses, the skills components, and the senior seminar. They also communicate on a more informal level about courses and look at feedback and results of the exit survey for graduating seniors. The first course in the writing series was developed because of feedback from graduating seniors. Senior seminar feedback was used to redefine the introductory course from principles of biology to fundamentals of genetics, evolution, and development. They constantly seek to improve course offerings. A tenure line at the cell level was recently added, allowing them to offer a few more electives in cellular biology as well as an immunology course. An HHMI grant has allowed more research opportunities in the summer, which keeps students on campus in the summer and develops a community of students, hopefully leading to greater retention. The HHMI program has already proven to be more of a success than originally thought and students have asked for a reunion. More writing is being incorporated into the biology program, not only in the upper division level. Skills learned in Biochemistry I are helpful when taking Cell Biology or Molecular Biology, so they are trying to incorporate 1xxx-level and 2xxx-level classes with knowledge of how to approach scientific literature.

Core courses have been divided into multiple sections as majors and program enrollment has grown, to maintain small classes. Biodiversity, cell biology, and biochemistry I, all have two sections, molecular

biology has an additional section, and physiology is offered every year now instead of every other year. Fundamentals increased from three to five sections, with three offered in the fall and two in the spring. It has expanded from 120 to 200 seats in the last two years.

In the last two years, the biology faculty has increased by two, providing an opportunity to introduce cutting edge courses. New members can assess the programs and see what is missing from their expertise. There is an opportunity for cross-teaching among disciplines, with more combinations of chemistry and biology. They can increase course offerings in the environmental areas as well. A new data science program will provide an opportunity to get into bioinformatics. The HHMI grant helps incorporate students in research, but if the program continues to grow, faculty who can handle three student researchers now will not be able to handle ten or twelve. Biology would like to continue to raise class sizes in the upper level courses. There are 48 students in the ecology course and offering two sections would help. Unfortunately the two new faculty members are in the suborganismal area. The goal is to add a tenure line in organismal biology. Currently 50 students do a senior seminar every year. All biology faculty attend hour-long seminars twice a week throughout the year. That will be a challenge if the goal of greater retention is achieved and there is a larger number of seniors. Biology would like to offer more Gen Ed courses especially tailored to non-majors.

Finzel stated that the program will be asked to return in four years to report on the progress it has made, and he asked what specifically will have changed in four years. Wayne answered that in four years the program will be engaging more with other disciplines, with cross-disciplinary teaching and more offerings of Gen Ed courses. The program is motivated to achieve those goals. Cook expressed thanks for making that a goal since there is currently nothing in biology for education students to take to enhance their core. Wayne answered that there is a four-credit environmental biology course with a lab that is an overview of biology. It has no prerequisites and has been under-enrolled. Rudney stated that biology is a great major and she hopes that biology faculty will encourage good students to go into secondary education. UMM can prepare excellent science teachers. Rudney responded that there were 43 graduates in biology last year, and secondary education should be able to capture five of them.

Gandrud asked if poster boards were considered as an alternative to a senior seminar. Wayne answered that biology majors make posters for meetings, conferences, or the Undergraduate Research Symposium. Allowing posters is definitely an option, but the senior seminar experience requires a student to get up in front of a crowd and articulate a complex topic to intellectuals in that topic. It is an excellent skill to develop.

## Course Changes

### Division of the Humanities

AMIN 2801–Anishinaabe Song and Dance: An Exploration of Song and Dance, Traditions and

Practices (HIST, 4 cr) – *New*

ARTH 1802–We Live in a World of Art and Heritage (IC, 2 cr) *New*

ARTH 3272–Athens, Art, and Theatre (FA, 4 cr) – *New*

ARTH 3273–Ars Otii: The Art of Roman Leisure (FA, 4 cr) *New*

CMR 1803–Not Just For Laughs: Humor in Interpersonal Communication and the Media (IC, 2 cr) *New*

CMR 3124–Rhetoric of Comic Art: Analysis and Creation (HUM, 4 cr) *New*

ENGL 2016–Monsters and the Monstrous in English Literature (HUM, 4 cr) *New*

ENGL 3172–American Utopian Literature (HUM, 4 cr) *New*

ENGL 4036–Research Seminar: American Biographical Novel (HUM, 4 cr) *New*

SPAN 3685–Seminar: Slavery and Abolition in Cuban Literature and Culture (IP, 4 cr) *New*

SPAN 3686–Seminar: Writing History in Spanish American Literature (HUM, 4 cr) *New*

SPAN 3687–Seminar: Afro-Hispanic Literature and Culture (HDIV, 4 cr) *New*

SPAN 3688–Seminar: Literature and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Spain (HUM, 4 cr) *New*

Garavaso noted that AmIn 2801 is a new 2xxx-level course. Students are supposed to have taken the Anishinaabe language course before taking this course. Arth 1802 is a new IC course that was taught this year. The other two art history courses are in the specialty area of the instructor. CMR 1803 and 3124 are new courses with topics that should attract students. Engl 2016 is a new course without a prerequisite that came out of a discussion last year about the need for students to take English courses who were not able to get into WLA their first semester. Engl 3172 and 4036 are courses taught by the faculty members in their areas of expertise. The first three Spanish courses will be useful in the LAAS major as well as the African American Studies minor. Span 3688 is a new course that fits the expertise of the instructor. Programs have already reduced courses so many of the new courses are offered as replacements or electives.

MOTION (Ng/Meek) to approve the proposals for course changes in the Division of the Humanities was unanimously approved (13-0-0).

#### Division of Science and Mathematics

BIOL 3121–Molecular Biology (SCI-L, 5 cr) – *Revised (when offered)*

BIOL 3131–Ecology (SCI-L, 4 cr) – *Revised (stats prereq added)*

BIOL 4211–Biochemistry (4 cr) – *Revised (prereq 3121 change to coreq)*

BIOL 4351–Conservation Biology (4 cr) – *Revised (BIOL 3700 added as prereq or coreq)*

Ng explained that Biol 3121 will be offered every semester to avoid having 85 students in one section. Biol 3131 adds Stat 1601-Introduction to Statistics as a prerequisite. In the past, Biol 4211 and 3121 were not offered during the same semester. Now that 3121 (molecular) will be offered every semester, it will be allowed as a corequisite for 4211. Biol 4351 adds 3700 as a corequisite or prerequisite.

Finzel asked if the prerequisite changes might add rigidity to the biology curriculum and keep freshmen and sophomores from taking the courses that have additional prereqs. Ng replied that typically students take ecology (3131) as juniors or seniors and would have taken Stat 1601 in their first year. There is no problem getting students into the statistics course.

MOTION (Ng/Garavaso) to approve the proposals for course changes in the Division of Science and Mathematics was unanimously approved (13-0-0).

### Division of the Social Sciences

#### Latin American Area Studies Minor proposal

The LAAS minor proposal was presented for discussion at the March 6 meeting. Helsper asked if the statement “Students may have up to a two-course overlap with any other minor” should include other majors. Dingley answered that because of demand between the Spanish and LAAS, the issue of double-dipping was considered and the limit of a two-course overlap is an attempt to rein that in.

MOTION (Ng/Garavaso) to approve the Latin American Area Studies Minor was unanimously approved (13-0-0).

### Online Learning Task Force Update

The Online Learning Task Force was discussed at the last meeting. Finzel stated that he had been soliciting volunteers to serve on the task force and wanted to confirm representation from the Curriculum Committee. He would like three members to serve, a division chair, a faculty member, and a student. The timeline would begin late this spring and work will spill over into early spring 2015. Rather than have people who know everything about online learning, it would be best to have members who will look critically at what we are doing and what is being done around the country. Alia had volunteered during

the last meeting. Dingley asked if there is a charge for the task force. She would be interested in working on the task force if the charge related to technical changes. Finzel answered that the charge will be broader than that. He will be working on the charge with the chair of the task force. Gandrud volunteered to sit on the committee to help frame the questions this spring, although he will be graduating this year. Next fall he could be replaced by another student from this committee. Garavaso volunteered to serve as division chair. Kellie Meehlhause, although not a member this term, volunteered as well. Finzel stated that he will ask for someone from the Division of Science and Mathematics to chair the task force. Pam Gades and Chlene Anderson will also serve as resources for the committee. By the next meeting the task force should be fully constituted.

### **Writing for the Liberal Arts (WLA) Proposed Changes**

Finzel reminded the group that the Steering Committee had created a WLA Working Group to create a mechanism to be sure that the intent of this committee and that of Campus Assembly is fulfilled. The vast majority of students will be expected to take WLA. The intent of this body was to require all students to take WLA. We have students transferring in with credits of substantive writing in their background. That concern is addressed in the revised proposal. Another management issue that the working group is trying to resolve is how to properly review all of the potential substitutions for the WLA requirement and what mechanism we might use to do so. Substantive changes in the proposal are outlined below.

Language from the IC requirement has been utilized and applied to the WLA requirement. This ensures that a vast majority of students whose writing in their background consists of high school courses would be required to take WLA. Many students come to us after having pursued an associate degree while in high school. With that in mind, we have removed the words in the Degree Requirements section of the catalog “as a degree seeking student” and added “after receiving their high school diploma” and “post-high school.” Another language change includes adding “at least four credits of writing instruction.” The result is that students who come with a two or three credit writing course will be asked to take the WLA. This is consistent with the spirit of the requirement. Students are better off and it is in their best interest to do more writing. All students will be strongly encouraged to take WLA even if they have met the requirements.

### **General Education Requirements Proposed by English Faculty**

Professor Eckerle explained that the English faculty are trying to clarify what they think not only distinguishes the course from others but highlights the skills we expect students to achieve. The words “develop” and “improve” are used because even if they have had a class before coming to UMM, they are required to take WLA. We are trying to clarify how the course is unique to this campus. Collier asked why “strengthen the foundations of advanced writing conventions” is better wording than “lay the foundation for learning. . .” Eckerle clarified that the old language suggests that the course is the start of

learning to write, while we are trying to emphasize that even if a foundation has been laid, the course can strengthen the foundations and go beyond. The English faculty did consider putting the word “learning” back in but decided to go with the proposed wording.

## **Course Description**

Eckerle explained that the emphasis is on improved development in small classes, and thinking about the varieties of writing instruction students may have had before coming to UMM. Common examples of writing courses that students have taken before coming to UMM include classes with forty students in a classroom, classes where students were taught information literacy but never visited a library, and courses in which students were given sources to work with but were not taught to seek the sources themselves.

Ng stated that the change in the course description mentions that they will use resources available on the Morris campus. Is that too restrictive to insist that they use local resources only? Garavaso stated that she thought the intent was to rule out situations in some high schools where resources are given to students, but not something comparable to the Morris campus.

Eble stated a concern regarding the wording in the degree requirement section that says “. . . 12 or more post-high school matriculation credit hours include at least four credits of writing instruction, are exempt from the WLA requirement.” This is saying that they must have basically a full semester of college work. The MNSCU standards are three writing credits. Is that a retention issue? Anyone transferring from a community college will still be complaining next fall because that hasn’t been addressed. Eckerle answered that the student took a course and its credits will transfer, but it doesn’t meet the WLA requirement. Nothing will change the amount of complaining. One of the things we need to do is make the case and be able to explain to students why we ask them to take the course. When they say they have already taken a writing course, we should tell them that they are in a good place to take our minimal standard. They won’t lose their money because they will get the credits, but they do have to take the additional course.

Sunderman noted that she took both the WLA course and the three-credit MNSCU course. They are very different. She found it very beneficial to take both. Finzel agreed and stated that there is zero motivation to allow students to bypass the requirement when we have overwhelming evidence that students do not come to Morris with sufficient writing skills. We are moving to improve the campus, the curriculum, and retention. We have to be about being better and this requirement makes us better.

Dingley stated that historically the exemption from FYS Inquiry and IC was associated with students being freshmen and having a relationship with their cohort. She stated that she did not understand why

the IC requirement is part of this proposed exemption. She asked to be on the record and in the minutes as saying that she would rather see language that all students who are first year students take this class—end of story—no exemptions. If we are going to be criteria based, the criteria should come from the English faculty and has nothing to do with transfer courses, where, when, or how a student took a similar course. The exemption is in the hands of the English faculty. It's not fair to her or the transfer specialist to have to explain to students why they have to take the course. Eckerle answered that is exactly what the English faculty said last year when the requirement was proposed. Dingley stated that the Scholastic Committee grants exemptions to degree requirements. She cannot say that a three-credit course is not equivalent to a four-credit course. Eckerle asked what they did wrong when the English faculty said that all students should take the course without exemption. They received feedback from the Scholastic Committee and the transfer specialist that they had to look at petitions. Dingley replied that it should be stated in the catalog that all new students take WLA. It is important to state it explicitly. This is a unique Morris experience.

Dingley stated that she is trying to find a way to defend it and make it clear that all should take it. Eckerle stated that they want all students to take this writing course. The English faculty thought that is what was being implemented.

Time ran out and the conversation was tabled until the next meeting.

Submitted by Darla Peterson