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Curriculum minutes 02/03/2010

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UMM CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
2009-10 MEETING#9 Minutes
February 3, 2010, 8:00 a.m., Behmler 130

Present: Cheryl Contant (chair), Janet Ericksen, Mark Fohl, Sara Haugen, Michael Korth, Pareena Lawrence, Mike McBride, Jeri Squier, Dave Roberts, Clare Strand, Elizabeth Thoma, Tisha Turk
Absent: Talia Earle, Nicholas Johnson, Gwen Rudney, Dennis Stewart
Visiting: Jayne Blodgett, Nancy Helsper, Jeffrey Ratliff-Crain

In these minutes: EDP Subcommittee, Intellectual Community (IC) course continued discussion

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 27, 2010

MOTION (McBride/Thoma) to approve the January 27, 2010 minutes with one minor correction. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (EDP) SUBCOMMITTEE

Contant announced that it is time to form a subcommittee to serve as review group for EDP proposals. Proposals are due March 26. A call for proposals will go out via email to faculty. The subcommittee will meet on April 7 during this regular meeting time. The full committee will not meet that day. Subcommittee recommendations are due to the Dean's Office by April 14. The full committee will consider the subcommittee's recommendation at its April 21 meeting. Typically, the subcommittee consists of someone who has served in the past to act as chair, a faculty member from another discipline or division, and a student. Volunteers were Thoma, Roberts, and Rudney (chair). Contant added that she will do her best to ensure that there will be \$12,000 available for EDP awards in summer 2010.

3. INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY (IC) COURSE – CONTINUED DISCUSSION

Contant stated that the last meeting of the committee ended with a need to complete the discussion of the changes made to the proposal that was approved in December. Changes were made regarding the constraints that were presented last week. After a discussion regarding the number of sections and maximum class size, a vote on the proposed changes will be necessary before we bring the proposal to the Campus Assembly. A second set of issues that will need to be addressed is the process for review of courses to ensure they meet the spirit of the IC course, who will be involved, and in what general timeframe.

Contant suggested that only the following options will be discussed to simplify the committee's work today, and in respect for the work of the subcommittee. Based on the constraints discussed last week:

- **Option A** (Original Proposal) offers 37 sections of the course, a class size of 15. All transfer students are required to take it.
- **Option B** offers 28 sections with a class size of 15. It is not required of transfer students.
- **Option C** increases the class size to 18-23. It is not required of transfer students.
- **Option D** offers 2-credit courses with a class size of 16-17 students, and 4 -credit courses with a maximum class size of 22. It is not required of transfer students.
- **Option E** proposes to Campus Assembly to get rid of it entirely or make an IC component that would be optional. This would reduce the GER by 1.

Discussion: Lawrence stated that Option E was already discussed before the subcommittee received their charge. There was a vote by the full committee that we will not get rid of it. We had made that determination.

McBride stated that after last week's meeting he talked to students and nobody was concerned about class sizes of 15-18 students. He also spoke with one transfer student from a community college who told him that to take a first-year seminar type of class would be kind of silly. Thoma added that she spoke to a few other transfer students who all told her that they exempted out of it. The Scholastic Committee provided exemptions for transfer students who had taken 12 credits at another institution. McBride said that he talked with upperclassmen who would be affected by the potentially fewer options of higher-level classes. When framed positively, as a sacrifice for new students and the good of the institution, they were more willing to have larger 2xxx level courses. If posed less positively, as simply a sacrifice, they weren't as willing.

Thoma asked if faculty are okay with teaching larger, higher-level classes. Roberts answered that most faculty actually feel that a class size of 5 is too small. Any pressure to increase a class enrollment from 5 to 10 would be good. Turk added that in a lot of cases it depends on the class. In English a writing class becomes un-teachable with a larger class size. Korth stated that as he talked to faculty in the last month, the logistics of staffing the course have become more difficult than he had expected a month ago. He would seriously consider Option E.

Strand stated that the Twin Cities campus offers freshmen seminars that are not required for their liberal arts education. Contant answered that if we didn't require the course we would not have many students taking it. Strand disagreed. Contant stated that GenEd is required. It's not optional. An optional requirement is an oxymoron. Clare answered that it would be an option to register for.

Squier stated that when 1000-level courses have gone away in the past, they have been replaced by upper-level courses. Contant answered that faculty can be influenced to prevent that from occurring in the future. Haugen stated that the Disappearing Task Force realized what an investment and foundational piece this course is. We should not lose sight of that. McBride agreed that the point of a first-year curricular component is to create a foundation that enables students to succeed. If the class size has to be increased to 18 students in order to keep the course, he would be in favor of the increase.

Contant stated that she has heard very little conversation in support of Options A or B, so the committee should focus on Options C and D. Option D is an interesting twist on C but would result in several more sections needed. Ericksen asked what would happen if we went with Option C, keeping the class size to 15-18 students, but found we could not find enough people to staff it. Contant answered that we would beg until we have enough instructors to offer enough sections. Ericksen stated that a Campus Assembly vote against a proposed Option C would likely increase a vote to not offer the course. Contant answered that we will bring one proposal before Campus Assembly, and not several options. The natural outcome of voting it down would be to keep what's currently in the catalog.

McBride asked if there is faculty support for Option D, which would increase class sizes for a 4-credit course. Lawrence stated that her division faculty were only interested in the smaller-sized 2-credit courses. Ericksen stated that, as a faculty member, she would be more interested in teaching one 4-credit course with a class size of 22, which would be less work than two sections of a 2-credit 15-student class. Contant stated that the rationale for offering a 4-credit course was that with more contact time available during the semester you could increase the number of students and maintain the same level of intimacy that might be achieved with a 2-credit course.

Ratliff-Crain stated there are implications for removing the course that guaranteed a set of small courses for incoming students. The remaining available courses that don't have prerequisites or that are required by the biology major are few. There would be only 12 courses with enrollment of fewer than 25. Many are closed when sophomores register. Getting rid of it doesn't get rid of the problem or the issue of small-sized classes for first-year students. We need to offer courses that are smaller than 50 students if we are going to call ourselves a small liberal arts college of any worth.

Roberts asked Contant to expand on her statement earlier about there being resources or pressure to offer new courses. Contant answered that there is a need to look at how we can prevent students from taking only classes with enrollments of 75 or more their first year. There will be a discussion about having to deploy resources in better ways to better serve our students. We need to revisit how we make class size distribution closer to the average rather than spread out as they are.

McBride asked if having 18 students per course could also work to increase upper-level class sizes from 5 to 8 members, because fewer courses will be offered like that. Is there a possibility to reduce the 100 student class in a course like Intro to Psychology as well? Contant answered that the course could be capped with more sections offered. Faculty would need to be persuaded to buy into it. Their first allegiance is to their specialty, then to their discipline, and then to the institutional goal. We can try to work toward that. Whether we can accomplish it is not clear since we have no sticks but tiny little carrots. Roberts stated that, given our resources, Option E is looking more viable. We want small courses for freshmen. Several courses in which we have small enrollment may not be the most strategic place to have small sections.

MOTION: (Lawrence/Thoma) to approve Option E: Eliminate a first-year curricular component or remove the course requirement.

VOTE: (3-5-0) Motion failed.

McBride stated that the remaining Options C or D would be a hard sell with the increased class size. It would be helpful if student members of the Curriculum Committee speak with the student members of the Campus Assembly to create some excitement about it. If the students aren't supportive, it will have a hard time passing the Campus Assembly. It can be presented as a proposal to fix what's wrong with the current FYS, by reducing the class size, making it content-independent, relaxing the requirement for content, and stating the positive qualities we want to take place. Lawrence stated that one big selling point is that the laundry list is down to two instead of the big list that FYS was trying to accomplish. Ratliff-Crain added that the IC could not be accused of being a piece of fruitcake.

MOTION: (Ericksen/McBride) to approve a revised proposal of Option D in which we expect 2-credit class sizes of no larger than 18 students and 4-credit class sizes no larger than 25, if needed. It is not required of transfer students.

VOTE: (7-1-0)

Contant stated that the following steps now need to take place:

- Establish a process by which existing courses can be offered as 1000-level courses that can be granted IC designators.
- Establish a quick process by which new IC courses can be proposed.
- Continue a process that ensures that transitional skills for college will continue to be done for our first-year students
- Determine the criteria that faculty will need to address as they propose IC courses. (Ratliff-Crain will draft something.)

Contant asked the committee to think about topics and issues that need to be addressed in the remainder of the semester.

Adjourned 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by Darla Peterson