

Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 30, 2012 - 4:02-4:59 PM
Collins Memorial Library #020

Attendees: Roger Allen, Terry Beck, Gwynne Brown, Jane Carlin, Julie Christoph, Lisa Ferrari, Sara Freeman, Lisa Hutchinson, Lisa Johnson (Secretary), Tatiana Kaminsky (Chair), Alan Krause, Paul Loeb, Phoebe Smith, Mike Spivey, Brad Tomhave, Linda Williams

Invitees: Andy Rex, Denise Despres

Meeting called to order by Kaminsky at 4:02 p.m.

Remarks from the Chair: There are no remarks from the Chair.

M/S/P (16-0-0) to approved minutes for 10/23/12, with minor changes.

Kaminsky noted that Andy Rex and Denise Despres are present. Rex is the current director of the Honors Program and Despres is the incoming director. Both are faculty members in the Honors Program. They were invited by the Curriculum Committee (CC) to answer questions that arose in last CC meeting concerning the Honors program.

Allen said the minutes are really good. He doesn't know if anyone has conveyed that fact to the Secretary yet. Johnson thanked Allen. Allen suggested that a section from the minutes could be read out loud for the benefit of Rex and Despres.

Kaminsky read the following section from 10/23/12 minutes:

Allen reported that WG 1 reviewed the Honors program. The Honors program is comprised of eight courses. Instructors in all courses know what the common background has been. There is a requirement for a senior thesis. It is a western civilization and classic literature focus. A question is whether this is really an "Honors Program"? If the university has one, is this it? There is an implication that the Honors program has more rigor and more talented students than other programs. However, there is some indication that these courses do not present greater rigor than other programs. There is also a focus on Classics and Literature. WG 1 thought that this particular issue or question was vastly beyond the WG authority. WG 1 wishes to bring it to the CC. Is this a time to consider whether it is appropriate for the university to label a program as the Honors program? Is this program an Honors program? Is it simply a marketing device?

Rex discussed that there is a focus on classics and literature, but that particular focus is only for the first semester. After that, the focus is history. After that, the focus is on "ways of knowing," which are in tune to core courses, such as social science, science, and math. For classics, what Honors strives to do is to use primary sources that are exemplary regarding ways of knowing.

Despres said that from the position of a faculty member currently “new” to the Honors program, she sees that the focus of the program is on the transition from the early modern to the modern world. She said that the focus is on primary documents. She discussed her writing course, and she said that it is geared towards writing across the curriculum. She teaches to her expertise, viz. early modern and medieval. The pedagogy is the same as that used by the Center for Writing, Learning and Teaching.

Ferrari asked whether it was a fair characterization of the program to say that the sources are drawn from the Western canon. Rex said that the university curriculum is a wide smorgasbord. If we look at the core in general, there is no focus whatsoever. Ferrari said that was right, of course. Ferrari clarified that what she meant was whether there is a deliberate choice to focus on a particular type of a tradition of foundational works.

Despres said that the program had been based on Columbia’s program. Now, it looks a lot like Harvard’s program. The Honors program is explicitly western. It complements other things that the students are doing. Students do have huge gaps, especially historical gaps. It is a western based program. Rex said that the program is not a “top down management thing.” It is not something that they direct. In fact, when Mott Greene taught in Honors, the focus was an eastern core. Despres said that as a faculty member who has rotated in and out of the Honors program, she can see that the focus has changed, viz. the shift in the reading and the way of teaching and questioning the readings has changed. Despres said that the program is academically and intellectually a creation of the faculty who teach it. It is not made somewhere else.

Freeman said that she is a graduate of the Honors program. Her experience of it is that there was a strong western thread, but there were other things, too. Rex said that faculty members teach outside of their element. The faculty members try to maintain a wide historical swath. Homer and Troy are taught by Aislynn Melchior and George Erving. Despres said that in Honors 101, they use a world reader, so that they look at early modern colonization. For example, they look at not only early Europe, but also at *The Samaurai*. In doing so, they can compare similarities between early modern Japan and England. Despres said that where possible, they are preparing students to jump out of this context to other things.

Allen asked why we have a program called Honors. Aren’t we all doing this across campus? Rex answered that this gets to rigor. Rex said that no claim is made that Honors is more rigorous than everyone else. However, Honors is consistently rigorous from the first day. The Honors program draws students who are accustomed to this sort of thing. They come out of high school from AP and IB programs. The students have the reading list when they apply. They know that they are getting a rigorous program and are being asked to do high quality work, and they know this from the beginning in Honors 101. Rex said that the Honors program never make any representations to other programs across campus that it is more rigorous than other programs. Honors courses are core courses without prerequisites. Rex said that we cannot compare such courses to courses like quantum mechanics. Rex said that students have said that there are courses around

campus that are at the same level as Honors courses and that there are some courses around campus that are not. Rex said that it is an Honors program because it is consistently rigorous. It draws students who want that sort of thing. Sometimes students apply who are not well qualified. Those students are rejected. The faculty members in the Honors program want students who are interested in learning and used to working hard and meeting high expectations. Rex asks for teacher recommendations as part of the application process. Teachers are forthright. Rex looks for the words “work” and “ethic” right next to each other. If those words are there, then all else being equal, those students will be good candidates for the Honors program.

Despres added that she cannot assume anything about students’ prior knowledge. Rex said that he also teaches physics and history (outside of the Honors program courses), and he does a great deal of time backfilling. Despres said that some students take the first year of Honors and they decide that they do not want to sign on for the long haul.

Loeb said that there is a communal sense in an Honors class. They know each other, and they are used to talking with each other. The conversations are at a high level right away. Loeb asked about the standards and whether those standards are higher than other students who apply to the university. Rex said that students elect to apply after they have been accepted, and the acceptance rate is 75%. This is because the majority of students who apply are well qualified.

Rex said that if there is another name more reflective of the program, the Honors program faculty could not come up with it. There are about 800 programs across the country. UPS might not have one someday. Whitman does not have one because their entire college is the same way. Rex said that he wished that our university was there, but he does not think that we are there yet. Freeman said in order to do that, we need a core where readings are shared, so that the conversation can continue. Freeman said that one of the most important parts is the cohort. Allen asked whether we value homogeneity more than diversity. Freeman said that the Honors program curriculum is diverse. There are many opinions and viewpoints. Rex said that students are not single-minded.

Loeb said that students come to UPS so they can be in the Honors program. It is a recruitment tool. Rex said that this is true. Rex said that Honors puts in its document that the university enrolls 20% of our applicants. Also, Honors enrolls 30% of our acceptances in our program. Rex said that we would get many more students, but financial aid is a challenge. Students at the top level are being wooed by financial offers from elsewhere, like Whitman. Students will say that they would love to come, but the financial aspect is an issue for them.

Loeb asked about retention. Rex said that a little more than half of the Honors students complete a thesis. Overall at UPS, it is higher, because at some point they drop off and do other things. The thesis is a big hurdle. Sometimes students do all of the classes, but then do not do the thesis.

Loeb asked whether the Honors program keep students in UPS. Rex said that he thought so, but he could not cite that assertion with any solid evidence. Despres said that like any residential program does, Honors has a way of forging intellectual community outside of the classroom. Students like it. There are lectures and all kinds of things that happen in the Honors community. At Langlow, there are people who aren't in Honors that are engaged in the intellectual community. Those activities and engagements are reflective of larger things going on in university.

Williams asked, in the context of the Mellon Grant discussion, whether the Honors faculty discussed a different name like "Great Books," "Western Tradition Honors" or something else altogether. Williams said that the "Honors" word does not describe what the curriculum is, except in a historical sense regarding other institutions. Rex said that it is difficult to capture the whole thing in a word or phrase. Despres said that she would be much less comfortable with "Great Books" because it does not reflect the way faculty members are teaching nowadays. Rex said that the Honors faculty take fundamental texts and tear them apart; they do not have a set of books that are simply revered.

Despres said that we do not want to market ourselves as a continuation of high school, or as a program where we take a "check off" approach, such as that which is associated with AP. Rex disagreed. He believes that AP is a signal that students will be able to do the work. Freeman said that Honors designates that this is a distinctive set of tasks that students take on and they have completed them. Rex said that there are other forms of "honors" in majors. They do not have a monopoly on the "Honors" name. Williams asked whether there can be multiple honors programs. Rex said that we could do that. Some schools already do this. There are 800 different honors programs and 800 different ways to do it. If a parallel program wished to start up, then that would be welcome. Despres said that Honors is not a program major. It is a minor. Despres asked whether the parallel would be another core honors program. Or, would it be an honors program within a discipline? Rex said that he began teaching in the Honors program in 1984. Today, students have to take 7 out of 8 courses in the Honors program, but it has changed over the years.

Allen said that one of the elephants in the room was the perception that the Honors program serves the top tier students. Rex said that the Honors program does not exclusively serve the top tier. There are many top tier students who are not in the Honors program. Allen agreed with that statement. Allen said the difficulty is that this program is labeled as the "Honors program." Allen asked what message this title relays to the rest of the university community. Allen asked whether the message is appropriate. Rex said that the most common response from the university community is, "We have an Honors program? What is it?" For the rest of the university community, they simply take it for what it is. Allen said that there is an implication that the rest of the university is a different tier. Allen suggested a different title, such as "Honors program in (blank)" to imply that there may be multiple threads. Rex said that since the Honors program covers the whole core, he does not think that it can be reduced to a single word or phrase. Freeman said that we already use Coolidge Otis Chapman. Freeman asked what if we had an umbrella to distinguish different honors program. The programs could be less

descriptive of the curriculum, but instead carry an historical name, such as “Thompson Honors Program.” Loeb asked whether the program would be open to calling it the “Chapman Program.” Ferrari suggested the “Chapman Scholars Program.” Ferrari said that the word “Honors” suggests that those students are our finest students, and there is an elite feel to that. If a student is a Chapman Scholar, the student is still a scholar. Rex said that the fear is that such a change would be detrimental to our recruitment. Freeman said that she would be OK with such a change. Freeman said that she liked being a part of the Honors program, and that she would hate to see it go. Freeman said that the word “scholar” does not do the same thing as the word “Honors.” Loeb said that the program already uses the Coolidge Otis Honors Scholars. He asked if Rex or Despres would discuss that. Rex said that the faculty members in Honors discussed it two years ago and at that time, they decided not to do that. Despres said that it would be wonderful if other faculty members got together to commit themselves to an integrated core.

Kaminsky ended the discussion because the CC must address other agenda items.

Kaminsky changed the order of the agenda. The CC must address the work load from the Senate charges. There are four charges that the CC must address. Everyone needs to sign up, including the president and secretary. Working Group (WG) 1 is excused from the Senate charges because the members of that working group will be on leave in the spring. Loeb suggested that the work simply be given to the existing WGs. Kaminsky said that such a plan would be fine. Charge 1 goes to WG 3. Charge 2 goes to WG 4. Charge 3 goes to WG 5. Charge 4 goes to WG 2. These charges are as follows:

Charge #1: Complete review of policy recommendations for the SSI courses – at this point, it deals with point #17: “The Associate Deans should ask more experienced faculty to teach the off-cycle seminars, since the off-cycle seminars will likely include a more challenging group of students (students who failed a previous SSI course, incoming transfer students, and so forth).”

Charge #2: “Find concrete ways to encourage departments and programs to prepare for implementation of the new freshman seminars (Seminar in Scholarly Inquiry I and II), including – as suggested in the April 2012 Student Life Committee report – avoiding assignment of adjunct or visiting faculty members to first-year seminar courses.”

Charge #3: “Review the curricular distinctions institution-wide between the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees.”

Charge #4: “Work with the International Education Committee to design a process for approval of faculty-taught study-abroad courses that fulfill core requirements.”

Terry asked if the CC must meet every week. Kaminsky said that she and Ferrari have been looking at ways so that the CC does not have to meet every week. Kaminsky said that the CC had many items left over from last year that we have had to deal with. Now that we have done that, then we can anticipate not meeting every week.

Kaminsky asked for reports from the WGs.

Allen reported for WG 1. WG 1 had planned to meet on Thursday regarding the Latin American studies program. Williams asked whether she should participate. Allen said that there is an assumption that the person involved in a program under review should not participate in the review of that program. Kaminsky said that Alyce DeMarais would be the person to ask. Allen said that having someone on the WG who is associated with the program could be helpful. Tom have there is a suggestion of a conflict of interest. Ferrari said that she would ask DeMarais. The WG 1 meeting is on hold.

Brown reported for WG 2. WG 2 has almost finished looking at the syllabi for the Connections core.

Loeb reported for WG 3. Three courses are recommended for approval.

1. Ecotopia?: Landscape, History and Identity in the Pacific Northwest, History 122, proposed by Doug Sackman. SSI 1&2.
2. Understanding High Risk Behavior, Exercise Science 1xx, proposed by Heidi Orloff. SSI 1&2.
3. Doing Gender, Communications 1xx, proposed by Renee Houston. SSI 1&2.

Loeb reported that his working group found that all three were great courses and met the SSI rubric guidelines

M/S/P (16-0-0) to approve all three courses.

Kaminsky reported for WG 4. WG 4 is reviewing outstanding SSI proposals. They are meeting on Friday.

Terry reported for WG 5. WG 5 is continuing to work on the special interdisciplinary major review and the Latino studies proposal.

Kaminsky asked that we discuss spring and summer due dates.

Tom have said that the calendar setting guidelines do not list grade due dates. For purposes of our discussion, the current practices were described. Specifically, Tom have conveyed the following information:

Fall semester midterm grades due: Wednesday after midterm
Fall semester final grades due: As set by Guidelines for Setting Academic Calendar
Spring semester midterm grades due: Monday after spring break
Spring semester final grades due: 10 calendar days after Commencement
Summer session final grades due: 6 working days after the end of the each summer term

Tomhave said that these practices do not have the force of academic policy. Ferrari asked how we got them. Tomhave said that they have been there at least since he has been here. Kaminsky asked if there had been any complaints. Tomhave said that there have been complaints that the due dates are too early, and there have been complaints that the due dates are too long. Tomhave said that the issue regarding fall grades being due after first of the year has been discussed at length. Tomhave reported that faculty members did not seem to want to revisit that issue. Faculty members want enough time to read research papers, and a shorter period of time might not allow faculty to do that. Shortening the length of time might compromise the rigor of the final assignment. That is the evolution of how we came to where we are. Allen asked, from the operation of the Registrar's Office, whether there is anything that needs to be changed, Tomhave said that the time period for assigning sanctions is presently a very short time. This short amount of time does not give students or the committee much time to work. Often the parents do not know about the issue at all. Also, the summer and spring term grade due dates are not in the guidelines. Kaminsky asked whether Tomhave could write down some proposed language, then the CC could vote on it in a future meeting. Tomhave agreed.

M/S/P to adjourn at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Johnson
Secretary, University Curriculum Committee