

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES

29 February 2008 (Friday)

Misner Room

Present: Derek Boescher, Jane Brazell, Jordan Conley, Alyce DeMarais , Greg Elliott, Fred Hamel, Kriszta Kotsis, Mary Rose Lamb (Chair), Lynda Livingston, Brad Richards, Elise Richman, Florence Sandler, Stuart Smithers, Brad Tomhave , Barbara Warren

Call to order. Chair Lamb called the meeting to order at 9:04.

Remarks by the Chair: There were no opening remarks by the Chair

Approval of Minutes: Minutes for the February 15 meeting will be distributed when Bob Matthews (secretary) returns from a conference.

Announcements: DeMarais notified us that the first reading of a motion concerning the international study abroad committee would occur at the March 11th faculty meeting. (The second reading will occur at the faculty's subsequent meeting.) This committee, convened four years ago to look at issues with the study abroad program, will become a standing committee of the Senate if the motion is passed.

Working Group Reports:

WG 1: After initially refusing to tell us anything, **Richards** admitted that the Social Science faculty meeting with WG1 was still scheduled for Monday, March 3.

WG 2: **DeMarais** noted that the group had nothing to report.

WG 3: **Livingston** reported that WG 3 has scheduled its meeting with the Connections faculty for Wednesday, April 16.

WG 4: **Elliott** reported that WG 4 was making progress. They will soon have a report on internships and coop agreements.

WG 5: **Smithers**, reported that WG 5 had gotten so much done recently that they were currently "on Sabbath." They will regroup eventually.

Discussion of Possible New Honesty Topic Mandate for First Year Seminars

DeMarais summarized a request from the Senate to “consider adding discussion of academic honesty and integrity to the first-year seminars.”

We have been asked to consider the creation of models to educate students about their responsibilities and our expectations about academic honesty and integrity. We are to evaluate a “multipronged approach” (as opposed to a “single inoculation approach”) that scatters discussions of academic honesty throughout a student’s career, especially in the first year. We are to consider adding specific sections on honesty in both of the first-year seminars.

DeMarais also noted that students currently do not sign an honor code, but do get a handbook when they are freshmen that summarizes our expectations.

Discussion followed.

Members noted possible negative consequences of the addition of an explicit “honesty” section to first-year seminars:

- ◆ Setting up a “disciplinary model” in class may have consequences for the tone of the overall course, and may translate into lower evaluations for professors. (**Boescher**)
- ◆ **Hamel** agreed that it would be a problem if the addition of this topic shifted the tenor of a class.
- ◆ There were some additional comments that the initiative would probably not “do a lick of good.”

Members gave arguments in favor of addressing the issue of academic dishonesty explicitly:

- ◆ **Tomhave** asserted that an inoculation approach to teaching students about scholastic integrity is *not* sufficient.
- ◆ **Smithers** decried a “growing culture of academic dishonesty,” a problem on the rise. He wondered if the current rules work well, and asked why we don’t have a honor code.
- ◆ **DeMarais** said we need a “more prophylactic method” of addressing the issue: “get it out there.”

Members offered suggestions about incorporating discussion into coursework:

- ◆ **in Prelude:**

Discussion may be more effective in Prelude (**Smithers**). However, other members noted that faculty participants in Prelude may not be aware of any desire for them to discuss academic honesty; others suggested that such discussions may currently be handled during non-faculty parts of the program. **Sandler** said Prelude is about getting students excited about learning; would an honesty talk dampen their enthusiasm?

◆ **in writing classes:**

Writing courses are a good place to incorporate these discussions, where they could be framed in a curricular dimension (**Hamel**). Honesty issues could be built into assignments (**DeMarais**). The WR seminars would be “uniquely right” for such an addition. They focus on both speaking and writing, two communication methods that have different rules of engagement (**Boescher**). **Kostis** said the addition could also work well in the SCIS seminars, which involve the scholarly method.

Tomhave gave institutional background:

Tomhave gave us some background on the formal disciplinary process. The first report of scholastic dishonesty is noted by the registrar, but effectively stays between the student and the instructor. The second report triggers a hearing board. **Tomhave** estimates that there are 15-20 reports each year, with about four proceeding to the hearing board.

Tomhave classified the reports into two types: ones in which the student was trying to deceive, and those in which the student’s defense was, “This is how I did it in high school.” **Hamel** made a consistent observation, noting that some of the problems we have are “moral,” while others are simply the result of confusion. He noted when we are “reporting,” it is difficult, even for professors, to take information from sources without unintentionally plagiarizing. How to integrate sources correctly is a teaching issue. Students will need our support with this, especially if they had no experience with it in high school.

Tomhave noted that professors’ explicitly specifying penalties for dishonesty on the syllabus helps with the hearing board. However, this notation is not required, and many professors prefer not to “tie their own hands” with such an explicit statement.

Members briefly discussed the “turn it in” software:

This software checks written work to see if it is similar to other sources. Faculty can use it to verify that a student is doing his own work. Students could also use it to ensure that they have paraphrased sufficiently. Is this tool punitive? Is it potentially helpful to students? Should we make it available to all students?

At the conclusion of our discussion, **Sandler** proposed that we accept the Senate's suggestion. She moved that we form a small subcommittee to consider the addition of language to rubrics of the first-year seminars requiring that they explicitly address our expectations for students' academic honesty and integrity. **M/S/P**, with one nay vote and one abstention.

Boescher asked that faculty and students be made aware of the results of our work, so that everyone is clear on the process.

Discussion of the Calendar

We returned to our discussion of due dates for grades. Having grades due the 2nd of January cut our grading period short after fall semester, 2007. Members wondered if there is a mandatory period between the end of a semester and the deadline for grades. (There is not: it is within our purview to set these sorts of guidelines.)

Tomhave noted that the fall semester's running late does not affect when spring semester starts. Grades are due the day the Christmas holiday ends, since the petitions committee needs grades soon enough to make timely decisions affecting students' returning for spring. (The committee likes to ensure that returning students have at least a week's notice before the start of the spring semester, to accommodate necessary travel plans.)

Tomhave reported that the ASC bases its decisions on the best available information, and may meet several times if necessary. However, other activities cannot proceed without all grades—determining the dean's list and the final sanctions reports, for example.

Having run out of time, we asked that **Richman M/S/P** that we adjourn. We did adjourn at 9:52.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynda Livingston