

Minutes for the Curriculum Committee Meeting: October 20, 2004

Members present: Mark Jenkins, Bill Barry, Carrie Washburn, Rich Anderson-Connolly (Chair), Christine Smith, Ken Rousslang, Lori Ricigliano, Sam Armocido (Student Representative), Suzanne Barnett, Grace Livingston, Brad Tomhave, Karim Ochosi, Carlo Bonura.

1. Call to order, 9:00 am.

2. Announcements

Barry reminded the Committee of the deadline for Connections courses was November 1, 2004.

3. Approval of academic calendar

The Committee took up the approval of the academic calendar for 2005-2006.

Approval was limited to just the dates of the academic calendar not the general calendar guidelines. Anderson-Connolly suggested that the discussion on the academic calendar could test waters for a larger discussion on the calendar guidelines.

The approval was moved and passed.

Washburn said that she would send the calendar off to the Faculty Senate.

Washburn suggested deferral of the 2008/9 calendar until further discussion on the calendar guidelines is concluded. Calendars are set four years in advance.

After a call for open discussion, Bonura inquired into shifting the day allotted to "fall break" to the Wednesday before the Thanksgiving holiday, currently a class day.

Anderson-Connolly stated that in determining the Fall semester calendar there was a certain inflexibility in terms of creating new holidays. This issue is made more difficult as there are less teaching days in Fall than in Spring semester.

Jenkins asked if there were a more appropriate place for this discussion to take place (as in the Faculty Senate). He cited issues of geographical representation as a factor in any new discussion over changes in the calendar. Students who live on the east coast, he argued, had no real opportunity to travel back home during fall break.

Barry said that he would inform the Senate of the Committee's discussion and see if we are fully charged to change calendar in such ways.

Joyce reminded the Committee that this issue was the subject of recent discussions and asked why the Committee (of Faculty Senate) did not change the calendar in the recent past. Washburn shared the arguments of the previous debates. It was faculty experiences with student absence patterns (on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving) led past Senates to avoid a Wednesday holiday in order to prevent Tuesday departures. Past attempts to reform the calendar have generally not received faculty support.

Barry reiterated the point that the Committee could not both establish a new Wednesday holiday and retain fall break because if the two holidays are included into the calendar this raises the question of overall number of days in a semester.

Jenkins offered up the possibility of a straight faculty vote on a "clean proposal" that would force a choice between fall break and a Wednesday Thanksgiving holiday.

Anderson-Connolly suggested a volunteer subcommittee concerning calendar reform to

create motions and put the question formally before the Committee. Barry suggested the subcommittee would look at other schools policies on Thanksgiving. Smith raised a comparison to Reed and how it deals with the question of accreditation (as it has a semester schedule that has two 7 week sections with a week break in between.

Barry, Bonura, Jenkins and Tomhave volunteered for the Sub-committee, Bonura volunteered as chair.

4. *Connections Subcommittee report*

The Connections Subcommittee moved the approval of three courses for the Connections core rubric:

"Art 372" [as Connections 330] - Tao and Landscape Art, proposed by Zaixin Hong (Art)

"Religion 302" [as Connections 302] - Ethics of Responsibility and Difference, proposed by Suzanne Holland (Religion)

"Religion 310" [as Connections 310] - Crime and Punishment, proposed by Judith Kay (Religion)

The two religion courses were already on the books. Connections 330, on the other hand, is a new course and the first course entering the schedule that was not retooled from an old course.

Rousslang asked how common was it to classify Science and Context classes as electives.

Barry explained that there was a past worry about making Comparative Values/Science in Context courses as (disciplinary) capstone courses but "not uncommon" for Science in Context courses to be classified as electives.

The motion to approve the Connections classes passed.

5. *SCIS subcommittee report*

The SCIS subcommittee moved the approval of one course:

BIOL 157, Genetic Determinism: Are We Our Genes?

The motion to approve the class passed.

Barry said that both courses would be taught next semester and Tomhave said that he will have them added to the schedule. Washburn added that two other Writing and Rhetoric classes waiting approval.

6. *Continuation of discussion of status of faculty teaching first year seminars*

Jenkins began the conversation but stating that he came from a college in which there were first-year seminars. Visiting faculty could not teach these courses. In an informal survey of his colleagues his was surprised to find wide differences of opinion over intent of these courses (that there was more interpretation about the intent of first-year seminars than expected).

Smith observed that a visitor she knows in their second year have a good sense of what is going on in the campus community and seem to be engaged with teaching courses.

Jenkins argued that there was a potential for courses to “go badly” if taught by visiting instructors.

Rousslang inquired as to whether there were numbers on exactly who is teaching the seminars (and additionally whether the permanent faculty were senior or junior).

Barry said that there was a big difference in the way that Writing and Rhetoric and Science in Context classes were taught. Writing and Rhetoric courses fall mostly on English and Communications. When they have visitor that person is expected to take on teaching of seminars

In the end Barry argued that this was departmental prerogative; each department has the right to construct its own schedule. The Committee still should set policy over such issues, but it should respect the right of the departments.

Jasinski raised the issue question of quality control of such classes. Jenkins recognized that professors put together courses on strengths, but asked if instructors with one year positions would have time to focus on developing classes (in the summer prior to their appointments). Also he suggested that such instructors would not have an ongoing relationship with students over their four years at Puget Sound.

Both Anderson-Connolly and Jenkins agreed that the Committee should determine if this was an actual problem based on the numbers of students affected by such teaching/courses.

Barry suggested planned discussions among instructors to see what their sense was of the effects of such courses on students.

Anderson-Connolly reiterated a point made earlier that most courses are highly personalized, but even in the case of the “generic” courses it seems that ongoing faculty are still teaching the majority of the courses.

The issue was again placed back on the agenda for future discussion.

7. Other business: *Interim Study Abroad Committee*

Barry explained that currently study abroad programs must be six weeks long, equal to summer courses, and that the Academic Standards Committee has loosened up one rule to allow courses from colleges, such as Colorado College. There have been a number of programs brought to the study abroad office with not enough overall time (weeks), but same contact time.

His motion would allow exceptions for approval for such programs [under six weeks in length].

Washburn asked if the rule currently in place is in order to get a full unit of credit? Tom have responded that if a study abroad program is shorter than six weeks now it is not approved. Anderson-Connolly clarified the earlier question asking if students would be allowed fractional units how much credit would such units translated. Tom have responded that the credit received is exactly what the granting university awards (there would be no fractional units).

Jasinski asked the Committee to seek expert advice to see if duration of a program would actually allow for the transmission of knowledge that would occur during a six-week program (ie. is it possible to learn quantum mechanics in four rather than six weeks?).

Barry said that the Committee should seek advice and that it still retains power to reject such programs, but at least they would not be automatically rejected.

The motion was seconded and passed.

9. *Adjournment*

Submitted by
Carlo Bonura