

Curriculum Committee Minutes

October 8, 2014

Committee members attending: Richard Anderson-Connolly, Bill Beardsley, Rob Beezer, Luc Boisvert, Nancy Bristow, Gwynne Brown, Jane Carlin, Jim Evans, Lisa Ferrari, Sara Freeman, Lisa Johnson, Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, Julia Looper, Janet Marcavage, Tim Pogar, Elise Richman, Brett Rogers, Allison Simmons, Brad Tomhave

Also attending: Lisa Hutchinson

Meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m.

- 1) **M/S/P** to approve minutes from meeting of 9/24.
- 2) Charge from Faculty Senate to clarify distinction between interdisciplinary emphasis and interdisciplinary minor.

Comments made by CC members:

- Our goal is to analyze whether there is any rhyme or reason to the current designation of emphases vs. minors, and to make suggestions for what might be a good way forward.
- WG group working on curricular impact document might include something for those who are proposing new emphases/minors, asking them to explain why they are proposing an emphasis versus a minor.
- Typically courses for minors don't also count for other requirements, whereas emphasis requirements are more overlays where a course could both count toward the emphasis and fulfill another requirement.
- Minors seem more to be disciplinary, while emphases are more topic-based. Also, minors are housed in departments upon whose resources they draw. Global Development Studies, for instance, spreads its coursework among 20 faculty, so the workload is widely distributed.
- The institution might have commitments to offer courses listed in majors and minors, but not in emphases? Since students formally declare an emphasis, just like a major/minor, there *is* an institutional obligation to offer the required courses.
- People who have made proposals to create emphases and minors have deliberately chosen to pitch one or the other; we could ask them what their motivations were. We could also survey current heads of emphases and minors to get their thoughts on the difference.
- The table created last year (Appendix to 9/10/14 meeting minutes) doesn't reveal obvious quantitative differences between emphases and majors, aside from minors limiting double-counting classes more than emphases do, so it seems to be more of a philosophical difference; we hope to be able to explain that difference to the Senate.

- Neuroscience emphasis restricts which courses can double count; Latin American Studies and STS do not. Possibly we could suggest that part of what defines an emphasis is that it's more of an "overlay" and double-counting (e.g., a course could count both toward the emphasis and for a core requirement) is allowed, unlike in a minor.
- The minors require 5-6 units, emphases 7-5, so there's no consistent difference there.
- Minors seem to have same structure every time: introductory course, a couple of intermediate courses, some kind of completing course (not exactly a capstone). All students take something in common in the beginning and at the end, with more leeway in middle. Some emphases are also like that.
- Some students wonder why they're getting an "emphasis" and not a minor. Students seem to think minors are more valuable than emphases. Some view having multiple minors as prestigious.
- Do emphases show up on students' transcripts, as minors do? Yes. How do potential employers, graduate schools, read the difference between the two? Do they know what an emphasis is? Should we get rid of "emphases" and call all such things "minors"?
- Some majors also have emphases within them; e.g., Politics and Government majors can have an emphasis in political theory. That's another use of the word "emphasis" in our curriculum.
- History majors are often asked by their peers what their emphasis is (i.e., within history)—another usage.
- Minors often have their own course prefix, whereas emphasis courses sometimes do, sometimes not.
- Minors seem to be bodies of knowledge that have over time evolved into overlapping but discrete bodies, whereas emphases are subfields within larger disciplines. Emphases are topical, minors are disciplinary. Structural consequences result.
- We could look at peer institutions and see what they do about this question.
- Freeman will probably end up drafting a short report, upon which the CC can comment.
- Having an "emphasis" has meant different, sometimes mysterious things at different institutions over time. For example, around 1980 a school might not offer a computer science "major," but students could have an "emphasis" in computer science, to indicate that computers were not "real."
- A minor is a more distinctive thing; an emphasis conveys that someone took a lot of courses in a particular topic.
- The first emphasis offered at Puget Sound was Asian Studies. The idea: you'd go about your liberal arts education but Asian Studies faculty would guide you, you'd take relevant courses, you would seek Asia-related courses for core requirements.

Your transcript ends up Asia-heavy, but there's no specific program set up by a department or body of faculty.

- No one who teaches in Asian Studies has a degree in “Asian Studies”; faculty come from different disciplines. It's an interdisciplinary emphasis. The point of creating the emphasis was to give recognition to students who gained substantial knowledge. But students in the Asian Studies emphasis *would* prefer that it be a minor, because it's not explained well to them.
- Minors can also be interdisciplinary, such as Gender Studies, so that's not the distinction.
- Minors seem to have bigger institutional commitment of resources, tenure lines.
- A student with a history major and an Asian Studies emphasis can market themselves as having an Asian Studies minor. Having a liberal arts degree and a transcript that reflects a diverse education is going to be worth a lot to future transcript-readers. We can help students to message their minors and emphases. This is more valuable than polling students to figure out whether *they* want a minor instead of an emphasis.
- Maybe we should ask potential employers. Big corporations often make initial applicant cuts fairly automatically based on things like majors and minors; does an emphasis help a student make the first cut the way a minor may? We could also ask the heads of emphases about how folks do post-graduation. And alumni.
- Emphases are perhaps even more demanding than minors, so it's funny that the minor has more prestige.
- Note that we're not considering monodisciplinary minors (e.g. art, theater, history), but only the interdisciplinary minors.
- Conclusion: This was a productive discussion, and we're closer to being able to offer the Faculty Senate some insights about the current situation with minors and emphases, and recommendations for how we might want to move forward.

3. Working Group Reports

WG 1 (Bristow reporting): Met yesterday to look over 3 KNOW proposals, had a productive conversation. None of the 3 posed the difficult questions we know we're going to have to work through with other proposals. All clearly met the KNOW guidelines, and with sincerity.

M/S/P to approve for KNOW:

- Music 393: Introduction to Secondary Music Education (practicum) (Pat Krueger)
- SOAN 370: Disability, Identity and Power (Margi Nowak)
- Religion 265: Thinking Ethically (Judith Kay)

Bristow: Most of the WG's conversation was about the practicum and whether it was appropriate, but members agreed the subject matter didn't matter so much as that the faculty member made clear that the course considers the issues and uses methodologies that match the KNOW requirements. This practicum prepares students to think of who they are as teachers and who their students are as learners. Proposal showed great commitment to thinking of classroom as a space for real development, intellectually and as members of a democratic community. The resources on the bibliography were explicitly engaged in pedagogical practices that would make the teaching of music something that can only be done with full understanding of your identity and your students'.

Anderson-Connolly: The cover letter was key for explaining the rationale. It was long, however; are other WGs getting very long cover memos? He may consider making a motion to limit length of cover letters, helpful though this particular one was. Cover letters could be kept to 1-2 pages—there may be a motion on this in the future.

Bristow: How can such good proposals be put online as models for other proposers?

Answer: WG leaders can ask proposers for permission to make their proposals public, and then send the proposals to Lisa Hutchinson to pass along to Julie Christoph.

WG 2 (Kontogeorgopoulos reporting): The WG met yesterday, and is gathering info before proceeding on charges. Two major proposals on the task list: one from EPDM and one from AFAM, to create majors where there are currently only minors. WG2 talked about the importance of corresponding with WG4, which is looking at the development of a Curricular Impact Statement, because the questions that emerge there will be relevant to programs proposing to offer majors. These programs are not being created from scratch, but new majors will have an impact on other departments. WG 2 won't wait for WG4 to finish, but will wait to get a sense of the approach they're taking so that it can be applied in these cases, because once a major is approved, it exists.

WG2 has started on its review of the core as a whole, and divided tasks. WG has also started talking about the upper-division requirement and how foreign language fits into that.

Discussion ensued about the timeline for approving new majors:

- Is the addition of a major in a program that already has a minor a sufficiently large change that it has to go to the full faculty?
- CC's actions are subject to approval by Senate, so we could recommend approval and let the Senate figure it out.
- Probably the CC can go ahead and finish this task on its own, since in these cases it's just minors becoming majors.

- There's usually a statement in the Bulletin, after something curricular is approved, that a change will become official starting in a particular term and year

WG 3 (Looper reporting): We have 2 KNOW courses and 1 HUM course to bring forward for approval. The KNOW proposals, like WG1's, were not controversial.

M/S/P (1 abstention) to approve AFAM 355, African-American Women in American History (Nancy Bristow), for KNOW, with praise for the lengthy informative memo that outlines how the course satisfies the KNOW rubric.

M/S/P to approve LAS 200/SPAN 210, Latina America, a Critical Introduction to Latina Studies (Oriel Siu), for KNOW

Boisvert: Part of WG3's discussion was about the fact that this is the first time KNOW proposals are being accepted, and so we are setting a precedent for the evaluation of subsequent proposals. We've seen nothing but good proposals, but with very different approaches, from Bristow's detailed addressing of each point of the rubric to others that are more general. Do we want to require proposers to provide specifics, or allow them to propose as they will? Should WG1 and WG3 be communicating to ensure consistency? Is this wide range of proposal approaches okay?

Discussion:

- When SSI proposals were coming in for the first time, the WGs did get together and create guidelines for proposers that made the process more consistent.
- The idea of a cover memo came from that first generation of SSI proposals, and it seems to help. It's been useful for CONN proposals, too. But not all faculty are aware of, or comfortable with, the requirement to submit more than a syllabus.
- It will be interesting to see what KNOW proposals come in at the 200 level.

M/S/P to approve HIST 230, Roots of English Society and Politics (Katherine Smith), for HUM core

Evans: Sometimes we get proposals for KNOW status for pre-existing courses that already meet a core requirement. If the proposal doesn't also address how the course fulfills the core, is that okay because it's already been approved for that, and the only question being considered is whether it also fulfills KNOW?

Discussion:

- yes, this is fine. Once a course is in the core, it's in the core. No need to make faculty reargue the point—we don't want to discourage people from proposing KNOW courses.
- Judith Kay's KNOW proposal took her pre-existing course *out* of the core, but Bristow talked to her and found that this decision had to do with her desire to affect who enrolls in the course.
- Maybe we should think about how core requirements map onto the distinction between minors and emphases.

WG4 (Rogers reporting): WG has had many virtual meetings and evaluated 6 SSI proposals.

M/S/P (1 abstention) to approve SSI2 131, Agons of Athens (Eric Orlin, Classics), which builds on an existing SSI1.

M/S/P to approve SSI2 167, Russian Revolution (Ben Tromley, History)

M/S/P to approve SSI2 168, Zen Insights (Jonathan Stockdale, Religion). The syllabus included very useful information about how to do oral presentations, and on the paper writing process, which others would benefit from if Stockdale gave permission to put this syllabus on SoundNet.

M/S/P to approve SSI2 177, The Digital Present (Laura Krughoff, English), a sparkingly cool course about how the internet and social media and technology change how we think about writing and information; has a lab component, and is a test case for thinking about how form and content interact. Provides a fascinating read of the SSI requirements and would be another valuable one to put on SoundNet for others.

M/S/P (1 abstention) to approve SSI2 178, George Gershwin (Gwynne Brown, Music).

Rogers: There is a time crunch at the start of the semester to get proposals approved in time for all the paperwork and scheduling that needs to happen. It might be useful for a course's paperwork to get started in the Dean's Office before the CC officially approved it, but would this effectively render the CC's discussion pro forma?

Hutchinson: The timeline is, proposals are put into databases, reviewed by Ferrari, given to Jimmie who puts data in PeopleSoft and deals with prerequisites, then they are available for Doris to schedule in consultation with departments about rooms. This is always a huge time crunch for Doris, so if something were proposed for the core and didn't get accepted, it could possibly be put on the schedule as an elective first. Hutchinson's part happens quickly, but Jimmie and Doris have a full plate.

Discussion:

- That timeline involves more than paperwork—it’s partial implementation. Ultimately, how hard would it be to pull a course *out* of that process if the CC withheld approval? Would we still really have that option?
- Although it seldom happens, it’s possible that a proposed course *could* cause controversy in the CC, and we wouldn’t want to feel compelled to approve something just because the process had started.
- Ferrari has to have the course schedule ready to go, at least the seminar part, 3-4 weeks before registration begins, which is about 2 weeks after departments submit their final schedules, so she doesn’t know until 2 weeks before the schedule has to be finalized how many seminars are still needed. Finding them often requires someone to propose a new one. Ferrari hopes that some of this problem will ease or go away as more faculty develop seminars. She agrees that CC approval needs to be real and have enough time, but the conundrum is that the scheduling is tight and essential.

Freeman:

- Let’s start our next meeting, **October 22**, with WG4’s question about the Curricular Impact Statement.
- Robin Jacobson has requested guidance/feedback from the CC about a set of proposals regarding how students can participate in the state legislative internship program in Olympia—a regional “study-away” program. Proposals wouldn’t come to CC because of core, but rather because of unusual structure. We’ll do what we can to give her feedback before official proposal comes.
- Freeman has met with George Tomlin from Committee on Diversity. CC and COD have shared interest in seeing what emerges out of changes to the language of Review Question #6, the “new new language.” An update about that will come next time.

M/S/P to adjourn, 9:04

Submitted by Gwynne Brown