

Curriculum Committee Minutes

December 3, 2014

Committee members attending: Richard Anderson-Connolly, Rob Beezer, Luc Boisvert, Nancy Bristow, Gwynne Brown, Jane Carlin, Jim Evans, Sara Freeman, Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, Julia Looper, Tim Pogar, Elise Richman, Brett Rogers, Brad Tomhave

Also attending: Lisa Hutchinson

1) Call to Order at 8:02

2) Remarks from the Chair

Freeman will be e-mailing members about meeting times next semester; most likely the CC will continue to meet on Wednesday mornings.

3) M/S/P to approve the minutes from the November 12 meeting with a few edits.

4) Working Group Reports

WG1: Bristow said that the WG had a lengthy meeting yesterday to discuss the SIM that has still not been approved, and did not reach resolution. The WG will meet with the student proposer and two of the student's committee members on Tuesday. The student is going abroad in the spring, and needs to declare her major. If the WG approves the SIM but the CC is unable to vote until next term, this would seem to cause problems.

Tomhave noted that if the WG approves the SIM, the student can feel reassured that it will ultimately be approved by the full CC, and can proceed accordingly.

Freeman commended WG1 for its hard work.

WG2: Kontogeorgopoulos reported that the WG met before Thanksgiving to discuss the proposal for an EPDM major. The WG developed questions for the proposers and have recently received answers. The WG will continue its work on this in the spring.

WG 3: Looper noted that although LAS 200/SPAN 210, Latina America, a Critical Introduction to Latina Studies (Oriell Siu), was approved by the CC as a KNOW at the October 8 meeting, Siu

also proposed the course as fulfilling the Humanistic Approaches core. The course clearly meets the rubric; this was merely an oversight.

M/S/P to approve LAS 200/SPAN 210 for Humanistic Approaches Core.

WG4: Rogers reported that the WG has an SSI proposal waiting in the wings to be looked at next semester.

Rogers inquired what the next step is for the Curriculum Impact Statement process. There was a consensus that it would be nice to see a revised version, but that the WG should keep track of the issues that the CC's discussions have been raised (e.g., financial issues) that fall outside of the CC/CIS purview but nonetheless need to be included in the broader process for vetting proposals for new programs/majors.

5) Associate Dean's Report of Approved Courses

Freeman provided a brief overview of the 7 actions listed between October 28 and November 21—changes of prerequisites, language of instruction, and title. Members were content with the information provided.

6) Old Business: Interdisciplinary Minors and Emphases

Freeman reminded the CC that our work to differentiate interdisciplinary minors and emphases is being done for the CC's own sake.

Freeman noted that there is a document in the Virtual Binder on SoundNet titled "Guidelines for the Program Designation Interdisciplinary Emphasis"! It was probably created around the time that the Asian Studies Emphasis came into being, and was revised in Fall 2013. Freeman talked through the six guidelines listed in the document. Interestingly, it specifies that an emphasis should require 7-9 units, which only one of four current interdisciplinary emphases actually does—the other three require 5 or 6 units. The document does not discuss interdisciplinary minors, and there is no equivalent document for those.

Freeman wondered whether the CC should start tracking and enforcing the items in the guidelines, and broadly what we are paying attention to in proposals for new programs and reviews of existing ones.

Several members expressed pleasure at the prospect of a straightforwardly quantifiable distinction between emphases (7-9 units) and minors (5-6 units). There was also discussion of whether a consistent point of distinction between emphases and minors might be that the former allow courses to be "double-counted" whereas minors do not. Neither of these distinctions is

consistent in current minors and emphases; the Bioethics Interdisciplinary Emphasis does not permit double-counting. Would the CC consider demanding that existing interdisciplinary emphases add more requirements and permit double-counting, or become minors?

A member suggested that beyond the appeal of objective criteria, there is also a difference of spirit between emphases and minors: minors are more tightly focused, like a small major, whereas emphases are more loosey-goosey. The two serve different purposes; they're not just versions of the same thing. Another member noted that the possibility of "double counting" courses in an emphasis speaks to this looser (gooser) aspect.

A member expressed curiosity about why emphases were first created and defined. Why were they seen as necessary, and what was their objective? Another member shared that the first emphasis, Asian Studies, was created because Asian Studies is not a traditional discipline, and faculty felt that students would benefit more from majoring in other disciplines while focusing their studies on Asia. Another reason was to promote the program's goal of increasing exposure among students to the study of Asia, since an emphasis is much less restrictive than a major in terms of double-counting, etc.

A member opined that it would be desirable to consider the presence or absence of a capstone component, not only for emphases but for all majors. Having that information readily available would help students know, when they pick a major or emphasis, how much work they're taking on for themselves in the senior year.

With regard to how to proceed, one member suggested that the document Freeman unearthed could be reviewed and adjusted. Others suggested that the CC host an afternoon meeting (with quaffable enticements) so that those currently heading or teaching in interdisciplinary minors and emphases can share their views about what is currently working and not working, and about how the CC can create policies and procedures that will help them to succeed.

One member noted that such issues can already come up at emphases' 5-year CC reviews. Another replied that over time the membership of the CC shifts, whereas right now we all know what we're working on.

Freeman said that she would think about a format for a meeting with interdisciplinary emphasis/minor stakeholders and bring an idea to the CC in January.

Members noted that there are disadvantages to being an emphasis instead of a minor: not all directors of emphases get a yearly course release, whereas minor directors do (in practice if not by policy). Minors have a budget (albeit small) whereas emphases do not. The Asian Studies Emphasis is considering becoming a minor.

7) New Business: Faculty Senate Conversation

Freeman attended the Faculty Senate meeting on November 24. The Senate was interested in talking about the CC's decision to affirm the 9-course limit for majors and what this would mean in terms of the CC's evaluation of majors. What rationales for going beyond 9 units will the CC accept in program reviews? Since many majors require 10 units and very few require 9, would it be preferable to have a firm 10-unit limit rather than a 9-unit limit that is routinely flouted?

Some points of discussion:

- This might be an issue for the full faculty to discuss, as it speaks to broad issues of educational purpose and curricular depth vs. breadth: do we all agree that the degree should break down roughly as one third core/liberal arts, one third major, one third exploratory, or do we have different views?
- 32 divided by 3 is not 9 (courtesy of a member of the mathematics faculty)
- Some majors, once you factor in prerequisites, far exceed 9 units (e.g. biology)
- If we raise the limit to 10 units, that won't change anything, but the goal is to make departments reflect on why their majors are as big as they are, and to affirm that students should have room in their coursework for exploration. We want good answers on 5-year reviews.
- We want to discourage proliferation of major requirements.
- How rigorously are we prepared to enforce a 9- or 10-unit limit on majors?

8) M/S/P to adjourn at 8:58

Submitted by Gwynne Brown