

Curriculum Committee Minutes

February 18, 2015

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

Also attending: Lisa Hutchinson, Dan Sherman, Peter Wimberger, Rachel DeMotts

1) Call to Order at 8:00 a.m.

2) Remarks from the Chair

Freeman will try to end the meeting at 8:50! Welcome to the visitors.

3) M/S/P to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2015 meeting with two edits.

4) Working Group Reports

WG 1: Bristow reported that they are in the midst of the Hispanic Studies review and have begun Asian Studies. The WG will meet next week with representatives from Foreign Languages to discuss the transfer credit question.

WG 2: Kontogeorgopoulos said that the WG will meet tomorrow. He then yielded the floor to guests Wimberger, Sherman, and (arriving later) DeMotts, to answer questions about the ENVR major proposal that arose following Kontogeorgopoulos's presentation at the 2/11 CC meeting.

A member asked the guests whether they had considered making ENVR an emphasis rather than creating a new thing, a linked major. Sherman replied that many alternatives had been considered, but there were strong factors favoring the major, including the president's enthusiasm, the grant's specific focus on developing a major, and the sense that Puget Sound is at a disadvantage because it lacks the *major* in environmental studies that other schools offer.

The member agreed that "major" is a clearer concept than "emphasis," but wondered if the requirement of a hefty double major might continue to push students toward other schools. Wimberger replied that environmental studies majors are typically structured in this way, as supplemental to a more unitary area of expertise. He noted that Reed College, despite having a "discipline-heavy" ethos, now has this kind of cross-disciplinary environmental studies major, partly because their administration was gunning for it.

Sherman added that two things in the process led to the proposal of a linked major. First, one thing that was asked of EPDM-affiliated faculty was: what do we most like about the way things are now? What don't we want to lose if we make a curriculum change? At the top of list was that

students are trained deeply in some other area in addition to EPDM. That makes for a rich experience for students in the classroom, as they come together collaboratively, drawing on their diverse disciplinary backgrounds to problem-solve.

Second, Sherman said, when they did interviews with professionals in environmental fields and asked them for their likely responses to job applicants with a variety of possible things on their transcripts, they found that a stand-alone major in environmental studies was viewed as an unknown quantity in terms of skills and background. An applicant with a traditional major as well as an ENVR major would be understood as having a clear disciplinary background that they had brought to bear in the environmental field.

A member expressed excitement about the proposal, but also concern that this is a small (8-unit) major that runs shallow and broad; is it possible that our current resources don't allow for an authentic, substantial ENVR major yet? If the president and the grant point toward a strong desire for an ENVR major, perhaps this is the moment to take what is a de facto emphasis—not quite a major—and add enough resources that we can make it a *real* major?

Sherman responded that requiring only 8 units was not only a matter of resources, but also a pedagogical choice, and one that would make it more feasible for students to complete the second major. 8 units was determined to be optimal. Kontogeorgopoulos also noted, and Sherman concurred, that the experiential requirement went beyond the 8 units of coursework.

Kontogeorgopoulos said that the WG had asked the proposers whether the ENVR major could be fully implemented with existing resources, not wanting to approve something that couldn't. The proposers' answer was that it would be a stretch, but can be implemented as a linked major.

Freeman asked for confirmation that the proposers view a linked major as the ideal format for the ENVR major. Sherman confirmed this, noting that there three key reasons: (1) pedagogical concerns, (2) a desire to minimize impact on other programs, and (3) capacity. He expressed doubt that a school the size of Puget Sound could support a stand-alone ENVR major.

A member inquired about how the sufficiency of a student's experiential component would be determined. Sherman said that there would be a list of things that would definitely count, such as summer research, study abroad programs, and the Southwest Semester program; students wanting to select something not on the list would need to secure the director's approval.

A member wondered whether the consideration of whether an ENVR *major* would be more meaningful to prospective employers than an ENVR *emphasis* is a reasonable one; no one counsels students double-majoring in philosophy and French to consider their future employability. DeMotts noted that an additional factor is that the students themselves strongly want ENVR to be a major, and have said so repeatedly over the years in exit surveys: they majored in something as a second choice because they couldn't major in ENVR. They are

passionate about environmental studies and want to demonstrate that more powerfully than a mere minor does.

Freeman commented that it is the CC's job, not the ENVR major proposers', to work out all the possible implications of the proposed major or the new category of linked major. She asked how the proposers envisioned handling the challenge of communication and coordination with the unlimited possible majors to which ENVR would be linked. Sherman responded that the current ENVR minor can also be combined with any major, and that this is valued. He said that students majoring in ENVR would have an advisor in that and their first major, so the advisors would communicate. There would also be a curriculum guide for the ENVR major like there currently is for other majors.

Wimberger said that the idea of having coordinated majors had been discussed, where the ENVR major would be tailored according to a student's primary major, but that was seen as overly complicated and burdensome on other programs.

A member expressed support but asked whether environmental studies is ready, disciplinarily, to be a major, if the content is too broad and shallow to stand alone. Wimberger answered that it is a professionalized discipline, has peer-reviewed journals, etc. He also said that the ENVR major has a focus on policy and decisionmaking that keeps it from being as amorphous as some environmental studies majors. Nonetheless, it is a very broad field with no currency in a single discipline, so by having a primary major, students gain disciplinary currency, and then EPDM will help them to use those disciplinary skills effectively in the environmental arena, whether in political science, by writing, as a scientist, etc.

A member asked whether students in the humanities might be implicitly discouraged from majoring in ENVR by the policy focus, and by few humanities courses being ENVR electives. Sherman noted that students with majors in humanities have done the ENVR minor. He said that most of the faculty who teach in EPDM are not contractually obligated to do so, and offer their courses out of goodwill (and that of their departments). These faculty are in the sciences and social sciences. A humanities hire would strengthen that area of the ENVR major, and the proposers would very much like that; currently resources are lower in that area.

DeMotts said that the emphasis on policy is seen in both 100- and 400-level EPDM courses, but these are interdisciplinary and include readings in the humanities as well as natural and social sciences. These courses deliberately cut across these boundaries, sometimes stretching the faculty quite a bit! Students can choose a more humanities-oriented focus in their upper-division electives. In between the 100 and 400 levels, two 200-level courses are policy specific, to help make upper division courses with a policy focus accessible and welcoming to all students.

Wimberger added that classes at the 100, 200, and 400 levels include some ethics and some environmental history. The limited number of humanities offerings has to do with the limited

offerings in the university, rather than a bias among the EPDM faculty. The courses that are currently on the books are the ones that are in the elective pool for ENVR.

A member asked why the proposed ENVR major doesn't allow double-counting, which would make it accessible to more students. Sherman responded that people have strong opinions on both sides of this question, but the decision for now is to allow no double-counting except the Connections core; this is the way the current ENVR minor operates, and it seems to be working. The double-counting issue could be revisited in the future if it seems to be causing problems.

In a follow-up comment, the member noted that the minor is only 5 units, whereas the ENVR major would be 8. If a student's first major were 10 units, this would bring the total major units to 18, which may go against the liberal arts ethos.

Freeman thanked the visitors for their presence and helpful responses. Sherman said that the proposal has been crafted very carefully over the last 3½ years, thanked the CC for its thoughtful consideration, and expressed interest in members' ideas.

Sherman, Wimberger, and DeMotts left. A straw poll reflected that most CC members did not feel ready to vote on the ENVR major yet. Freeman encouraged members to communicate over the next week and to consider the implications if a new category of major does get approved.

WG3: Looper reported that the WG met last Thursday and is continuing its work on the Math Approaches core review and the SOAN review.

WG4: Rogers brought forward SSI2 180, The French Revolution (Diane Kelley) for approval as an SSI. The course uses the Reacting to the Past role-playing pedagogy. The WG praised Kelly for how well the course's research project is set up and connected to the role-playing piece.

M/S/P to approve SSI2 180, The French Revolution, for SSI.

Rogers reported that the WG is continuing to make progress on the Theatre Arts and BMB reviews. Those interested in BMB's statement in response to the question the WG posed can view it on SoundNet. In this afternoon's meeting the WG will do more work on the Curriculum Impact Statement, with the hope of bringing it to the CC at next week's meeting.

5) Old Business, part 1

Freeman said that she has drafted an e-mail inviting heads of interdisciplinary programs to a forum (discussed at 2/11/15 meeting). It is being reviewed by various members and will be sent soon. Everyone on the CC will receive the e-mail and is invited to attend. In the e-mail, Freeman explicitly states that the CC is working toward (1) revising the guidelines for interdisciplinary emphases, (2) the creation of a document guiding new proposals, and (3) creating an interpretive statement for WGs that are doing 5-year reviews for interdisciplinary programs.

6) New Business: Pilot Format for Advanced German Language Course

Ferrari said that German is looking to expand enrollment in upper-division courses, which would allow those courses to continue to be offered, and thus permit the German major to continue. Kent Hooper has proposed that advanced German classes could be combined with upper-division Humanities courses, because there will be some content in common. All students would meet together for 2 sessions a week, and then the students taking the course for German credit would have an additional weekly lab-type meeting, not for content but for work on reading texts and discussing them in German. This would allow course to be crosslisted as German/Humanities (or possibly German/Something Else).

Martin Jackson and Ferrari have talked at length with Hooper about teaching schedule, possible precedents, burden on students, burden on future teachers after Hooper leaves (not imminently). Jackson and Ferrari have concluded that it would be all right to try this once as a pilot to see whether it can work, in the interest of trying to support innovation that will allow the German program to remain available to students. At this point there is not enough info to give this proposal definitive approval. This one-time approval of a trial run can probably be done by Ferrari without the CC's approval, but Ferrari and Freeman agreed that it was best to run it by the CC. If this becomes a lasting model, that would clearly be CC business. Ferrari invited questions.

A member asked how the success or failure of the pilot would be assessed. Ferrari said this would be a matter of talking to Hooper, looking at course evaluations, and perhaps using a specially-generated additional evaluation form for this particular class. The member suggested that it would also be useful to interview the students directly.

There was a question about whether a single weekly German-language session was sufficient for an upper-division German class. The answer given was that because this would be a literature course and not specifically a language instruction course, this was acceptable.

Freeman said that the CC could return to this at next week's meeting.

7) Old Business, part 2: Discussion of 9 unit limit and evaluating department reviews

There was broad consensus that 30 seconds was not quite enough time. Freeman apologized to WG4 for the ongoing postponement of a discussion relevant to its work.

8) M/S/P to adjourn at 8:50.

Submitted by Gwynne Brown