

Curriculum Committee Minutes

April 22, 2015

Committee members attending: Richard Anderson-Connolly, Rob Beezer, Luc Boisvert, Nancy Bristow, Gwynne Brown, Lisa Ferrari, Sara Freeman, Lisa Johnson, Alan Krause, Julia Looper, Janet Marcavage, Elise Richman, Allison Simmons, Brad Tomhave.

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

2) **Remarks from the Chair:** Freeman noted that we are a small group today, but mighty.

3) **M/S/P to approve the minutes from the 4/8/15 CC meeting** with two corrections.

4) Working Group Reports

WG1: With great pleasure Bristow brought forward the School of Business and Leadership review. M/S/P to accept, 2 abstentions.

WG2: Boisvert reported that African American Studies has proposed a revision to the minor and a new major. Communication is ongoing between the program and the WG; there may not be time for the proposal to get approved before the end of the semester.

Boisvert summarized the results from the faculty survey about the core. As background, he noted that the WG's charge was to "examine overall coherence and appropriateness," which struck the WG as a broad and demanding task for a subcommittee of the CC to take on. They chose to collect some data, including through this survey, and will pass all of it along to a larger committee that could be formed by the Faculty Senate. Ellen Peters is gathering additional information via focus groups, which will also be added to the pile of information that this future committee would be able to draw upon.

The faculty survey was open between March 31 and April 10. 117 faculty provided answers. Peters sent the WG a 50-page document containing statistics and comments. Last week the WG took a look at this information, and would like to highlight five big categories.

~~March 31–April 10 survey. 117 faculty provided answers. Last week Ellen sent a 50-page document containing statistics as well as comments. Last week the WG began to analyze the data, and have five categories to highlight.~~

1. There is a strong desire for a conversation about the core and possible revisions. Only 18% think that the core should be kept as is; 25% think it should be completely reformulated.
2. The size of the core (8 units) is favored by 74%, but several questions were raised about the "effective" size of the core when foreign language, KNOW, upper division, and other graduation requirements are included. It is clear from many comments that there is confusion and disagreement as to how the KNOW and FL requirements relate to the core.
3. Clarifications are needed about what the core seeks to accomplish.
 - a. Should we work more intentionally to reach the core's objectives?
 - b. Is it a core, or is it really distribution requirements? (And whichever it is, should it be that, or the other thing?)

- c. Do students understand the purpose of the core? Do they perceive it as distribution requirements?
 - d. The majority of faculty agree that the core's objectives are distinct from Puget Sound's educational goals. The core is seen as contributing importantly to educational goals #1 ("The ability to think logically, analytically, and independently"), 2 ("The ability to communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing"), and 4 ("Breadth of learning in the form of familiarity with a variety of academic fields and potential interests"). Although several noted that goal #6 ("An understanding of the interrelationships among the various fields of knowledge and the significance of one discipline for another") is important for the core, most think that the core only "somewhat" contributes somewhat to reaching this goal.
4. Support for the core's objectives is high, but the way these are addressed seems problematic. Are the objectives for the core as a whole, or should each course individually address all of the objectives? Many noted that not all objectives apply to all core courses. Several objectives seem most applicable to courses in the humanities. Should the objectives be changed to be more widely applicable? Should courses from majors be adapted to better address course objectives? Are the objectives outdated? The word "aesthetic" (and its combination with "ethical") in the second objective ("Enable each student to understand herself or himself as a thinking person capable of making ethical and aesthetic choices") was found to be particularly troublesome.
5. The survey revealed notable dissatisfaction with the following aspects of the core:
- a. The burden of teaching in the core, especially SSIs, falls disproportionately on a few departments.
 - b. SSIs: Should we have them? Should there be two, or one? Are they reaching their objectives? Is the format okay? They are difficult to teach, and some of the weakest course evaluations come from SSIs.
 - c. Connections: Are they valuable? Should we review the philosophy behind this requirement? Are they reaching their objectives? Should the objectives be pursued more intentionally?
 - d. Foreign language requirement (not technically part of the core): Should we keep it? Is one year sufficient? Is it an unnecessary repeat of high school?

The WG will prepare a formal report for the CC, and will also pass along the document that Ellen produced. All of this will go to whatever body will eventually review the core. Kontogeorgopoulos has already spoken to Senate Chair Ariela Tubert about the likelihood of a core-considering ad hoc committee needing to be formed.

Brown said that she mentioned her desire to be involved in this when indicating her service assignment preferences. Anderson-Connolly suggested that Freeman might ask Tubert to send a brief e-mail to faculty asking potentially interested parties to identify themselves, since very few people had this as-yet-unformed committee on their radar when making their service selections.

Freeman praised WG2 for carrying out its charge by gathering information and determining that the faculty would definitely like to reexamine the core.

WG3: Looper reported that the WG met to review Math Approaches with people teaching in that core area. Faculty members had drafted changes to the core description in the Bulletin that were approved by the CC and by the full faculty in 2011, but the language in the Bulletin was never changed! This will now be fixed.

Looper also said that SOAN's response to the WG's questions has come and will be discussed soon.

WG4: Beezer had three items to report. First, he reported that Brett Rogers's daughter, Elinor Trebby Rogers, was born Friday morning!

Second, Beezer brought forward SSI1 181, Science and Theater (Jim Evans), for approval. **M/S/P to approve SSI1 181.**

Third, Beezer brought up the BMB review. The report circulated to the CC was based on what was discussed at the last CC meeting. The bottom line is that BMB should remain a program if they want to, but they don't need to do an independent curriculum review; they will be reviewed through the Biology and Chemistry departments. **M/S to accept the report.**

Freeman said that she had tried to follow up with Jonathan Stockdale, CC's Senate liaison but had been unable to make contact and verify that the Senate was all right with this approach. However, she opined that the report can still be accepted by the CC.

Ferrari said that although she will vote in favor of the report, she wanted to state for the record that it is problematic to have an official program that doesn't undergo curricular review. Our action on BMB should not be taken as a precedent: CC can't just exempt *any* program from review. We are responsible for curricular oversight of programs.

Beezer noted that language was added to the report suggesting that BMB should perhaps be structured differently—that as it stands, it should not necessarily be designated a “program.” If it wants to be a program, it could include a 100-level entry course and other components that would make it like other programs.

In further discussion, the following issues were raised:

- BMB does not appear on students' transcripts. In essence, BMB is not something offered to students, but an administrative category. It might not even belong in the Bulletin, which is for students.
- If BMB were to become more of a typical program, would CC be re-involved in reviewing it? Yes, because a new 100-level BMB course or capstone would come before CC and thus attract attention.
- Because BMB is administrative rather than curricular, it's not a problem for CC not to review it. The problem is with the word “program” to mean two different things. BMB and African American Studies are both “programs,” but very dissimilar entities.
- If the report recommends that BMB restructure itself, this will be taken as a stronger directive than we intend. We are concerned about categories, but not asking BMB to make changes in response to that concern. Subsequent wordsmithing softened the language (“invite” instead of “recommend”).

- Perhaps BMB should consider changing “program” to “advisory group,” if it’s happy with its current structure.
- “Program” is a useful term for grants and prospective students; it indicates something stronger than a cluster of faculty interested in a topic. But at least internally, we need to articulate what it means to be a program that doesn’t need curricular review.

The motion to accept the BMB report passed, clearing the WG4 docket. (But for how long....?)

5) ADO Delegated Actions: There were no comments or questions about the distributed list of actions.

6) Discussion of Condensed-Format Course

Freeman reminded the CC that early this year we received a rough draft narrative description of a semester package connected to the Washington State government internships. This package would enable students doing an internship to remain full-time students by offering courses that would work around the internship schedule and help them to process and build upon their internship experience. Robin Jacobson will be on leave in the fall, and has requested that the CC evaluate Federalism and Comparative State Politics (PG 3xx) now so that it can be on the books for Spring 2016. Although PG 3xx is not a core course, the unusual format brings it to the CC. The rest of the package will come to the CC next year and after. The question is whether the CC is willing to delegate approval of this unusual condensed course to Ferrari and the ADO, or whether a WG wants to review it first. In discussion:

- A member expressed support for the internship package, confidence in Jacobson’s ability to pilot PG 3xx, and praise for the clear overview of the course provided to the CC.
- Another member expressed unwillingness to rush approval.
- The course could be offered in an uncondensed version as well. Jacobson included in the syllabus provisions for how class hours would play out in different formats.
- A member urged that the CC think holistically at some point about how condensed is too condensed for effective learning. Another noted that summer courses are already 6 weeks long.
- A member said that it’s important to realize that this isn’t just a 6-week course, it’s connected to an internship. This needs to be part of the discussion: what does experiential learning look like in the context of courses?
- The Olympia internship semester would consist of 4 units: 1 for the existing Local Politics course (PG 319) offered in the evenings, 1 for this new course, 1 for academic internship (which Jacobson is framing so that students choose either a policy focus or a political writing focus), and 1 unit for a class called “The Washington State Legislative Experience” which consists of academic coursework in addition to the work of the internship. Proposals for the latter 2 units are being developed; the CC gave some feedback on a very rough draft in the fall, and we asked for clarification of the relationship between internship and coursework.
- Some members were disinclined to delegate approval of PG 3xx, and Ferrari said she wanted to allow the CC to deliberate fully if members wish to do so.
- Freeman will seek clarification from Jacobson as to whether this course would be offered in the spring even if the rest of the internship semester package were not yet approved

7) SSI Shells: Freeman reported that she had had a discussion with Derek Buescher about Communication Studies’s SSI “shell” proposal for a course that could be adapted to suit the as-yet-

unhired faculty who will teach it. One possibility is that Ferrari and a small number of CC members could be empowered to review syllabi over the summer via e-mail, so that once the visitors are hired, a more complete syllabus can be submitted for approval. This will be discussed at the final CC meeting on May 6.

8) CC Continuity: Sunil Kukreja has approved funding for some CC members to do a week's worth of work creating some helpful materials so that the work, approaches, structures, etc. of this year's CC and past ones can more easily be accessed and implemented by future CCs. Freeman will be reaching out to ask who might be willing to spend a week (TBA) doing this work.

9) Curriculum Impact Statement: The Faculty Senate sent the CIS back with a few requests for softening/refining language so that it doesn't sound like stakeholders have to support a new program. This, too, will be discussed at the May 6 meeting.

10) Move to Adjourn, 8:54 a.m.

Submitted by Gwynne Brown