

Curriculum Committee Minutes
March 31, 1999

Present: Barnett, Cannon, Goleeke, Hooper, Kline, Livingston, Mehlhaff (Chair), Pinzino, Proehl, Stevens, Sugimoto, Warning, Bartanen, Tomhave, Washburn
Absent: Grunberg, Kirkpatrick, Heavner

Mehlhaff began the meeting at 5:06 p.m.

Minutes. **Kline M/S/P approval of the minutes for the meeting of 24 March 1999.**

STANDARDS FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS. Mehlhaff reminded that this agenda item responds to Cannon's 24 March 1999 memorandum proposing the committee's consideration of the subject. In the memorandum Cannon refers to President Pierce's "Charting the Future" report of 25 February 1999, and Mehlhaff called attention to the President's identification of "the range and quality of our interdisciplinary majors, interdisciplinary minors, interdisciplinary concentrations within majors and interdisciplinary Core courses" (Pierce, p. 8, number 3) as a distinguishing feature of the University. Mehlhaff suggested that the University can do more to cultivate this "hallmark" of the institution and that the Curriculum Committee is one venue of deliberation in this regard.

Washburn distributed copies of two documents: (1) "Comparison of Existing Interdisciplinary Minor Programs" and "Comparison of Existing Interdisciplinary Major Programs; (2) a sheet listing the "Requirements for the Special Interdisciplinary Major," "Requirements for the Contract in Mathematics," and "Requirements for the Contract in Computer Science." Mehlhaff pointed out that Appendix H of the President's report also lists interdisciplinary major and minor programs.

Open discussion yielded no committee action but did bring out the following realizations and points: At present no special requirements attend the process of review and approval of interdisciplinary programs, with the exception of the Special Interdisciplinary Major (SIM). The committee has interest in promoting "verticality" in all interdisciplinary programs, with introductory and advanced courses leading toward an eventual "capstone" course.

During the discussion Washburn pointed out that the only time the committee ever addressed requirements in interdisciplinary programs was in approving the SIM. Barnett noted that interdisciplinary programs initiated by the faculty and approved by the committee have influenced the creation of new faculty positions in recent years. Mehlhaff wondered if the committee should have separate guidelines for interdisciplinary programs or should allow proposals to emerge freely by faculty enterprise; Warning suggested that the committee could deal with such proposals on an *ad hoc* basis.

Washburn, recalling Cannon's comments at the last meeting, asked if "interdisciplinary" is merely having a set of cognate courses from varied academic units or is it the definition of "space in between" academic units. Stevens and Mehlhaff opined that introductory and "exit" courses give precise definition to the meaning of "interdisciplinary" in a particular program. Kline offered the view that interdisciplinary programs respond in part to new kinds of scholarly inquiry and explore the connections of different modes of learning. Barnett offered a distinction between "multidisciplinary" and "interdisciplinary" arrangements, the former applicable to a curriculum including courses from many different departments and the latter being specially designed courses as well as a general character of any curriculum that is multidisciplinary.

The absence of any legislation governing "verticality" in an interdisciplinary major was a focus of discussion. Hooper pointed out that the five-year review of an interdisciplinary program would enable faculty reflection on verticality in a program. Kline asked if the "Self-study Guide" for the review should have different questions for interdisciplinary programs. Cannon expressed concern about the absence in some interdisciplinary programs of "enough rigor" and requirements for

upper level course work; no standard requirement exists for courses at the 300/400 level. Hooper added that we would have no way of knowing what upper or lower level would mean in terms of determining the level of rigor of a course; numbering of courses is problematic.

In response to Barnett's inquiry Cannon stated that a possible outcome of this discussion would be the creation of guidelines for interdisciplinary programs that would establish expectations of new proposals: Threshold course(s), upper level courses, a capstone course, and available faculty staff in view. Such guidelines could have attendant "grandfather" arrangements for existing interdisciplinary programs. Proehl offered the view that while special review questions for an interdisciplinary program could ask about these components, one possibility would be to avoid introducing formal requirements but to include in the guidelines for the review process the kinds of questions raised in Cannon's memorandum.

At 6:02 p.m. Stevens M/S/"P" that we adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne W. Barnett
5 April 1999
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