

Curriculum Committee Minutes
April 8, 1997

Members present: K. Bartanen, M. Valentine, R. Field, K. Hooper, T. Fikes, G. Proehl, C. Mehlhaff, S. Neshyba, M. Morgan, C. Washburn

Meeting was called to order at 8:05 by Curt Mehlhaff, acting chair.

Announcements: Morgan said that the Committee's Web site had trouble with the server, now solved.

Mehlhaff asked whether there is a mechanism to prioritize slots so that majors can get into courses they need. Morgan said that currently, the wait list is the only mechanism. Field added that we've had students change majors from Art because they couldn't get into required courses. Morgan said that what we really need is a program to predict over-enrollments. Mehlhaff said that's a hard thing to predict because of the complexity of prerequisites, etc. This is a very important concern in Theater, especially because of the way major requirements work. Morgan said she will look into the problem.

MSP Physics Department Curriculum Review was approved unanimously.

MSP SCXT 320, Science and Social Stereotypes, approved as a Science in Context core course (8 years and 1 nay)

Discussion ensued regarding Accreditation. Bartanen said that assessing the core during the fallow year seems a natural choice. Fikes asked how often fallow years occur. Bartanen replied that they are anticipated to occur every five years, but that there's been only one so far. Mehlhaff wondered whether there is enough time in the year to accomplish such an objective. Washburn noted that there is always a difficulty deciding what to address, and how. Fikes suggested we should document the process.

In any event, Mehlhaff pointed out, the guidelines call for an assessment at entry and departure. A simple fallow year review does not appear to have the necessary feedbacks. Bartanen noted that part of this is how we define our purpose, and what's missing from current procedure is questions about outcome. One possibility is to have an ongoing feedback mechanism, with data coming in on a regular basis. Mehlhaff wondered if we need another committee to digest the raw data, and have it report to the Curriculum Committee. Fikes suggested the Core advisory groups might take on that responsibility.

Proehl asked how much of the burden could be put back onto the individual professor, and would not create another level of bureaucracy. This would constitute a "localized" emphasis on assessment. Assessment would appear in the documentation in the core review. Morgan replied that that's effectively how it operates now, informally. Washburn agreed that the idea of localizing responsibility is attractive. Currently, departmental comments regarding the core tend to get buried in evaluation of the major. It would be well to separate out the core. Fikes said student evaluations should be designed with core considerations in mind. That way you can track how things evolve over years, with appropriately designed surveys. Mehlhaff asked whether such surveys would be generic, or targeted to each course. Bartanen replied that the question of longitudinal data is important -- tracking student progress over years. Current student evals are more of a snapshot picture of the teacher. Fikes suggested interviews of alums to see what they view as having turned out to be valuable post graduation. Mehlhaff asked Proehl, at what point in time did he envision the localized evaluation happening. Proehl replied it could be on an ongoing basis. One-page summaries at the end of each course, for example, submitted in the fallow year to the Curriculum Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Neshyba