

Approved December 9, 2009

College of Arts & Science
COMMITTEE ON THE CURRICULUM

Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2009

Present: Linda Angst, Franya Berkman, Paulette Bierzychudek, Diane Crabtree, Julio de Paula, Stuart Kaplan, Stephen Tufte, Jayson Estassi, Alex Rihm, Tamara Ko, recorder.

Absent: Jim Bunnelle, Jeff Feld-Gore, Tatiana Osipovich, Rishona Zimring

Chair Bierzychudek convened the meeting at 3:18pm.

The minutes from November 11, 2009 were approved.

I. AFA Committee Recommendation

Continuing discussion from last week, Professor Zimring has drafted a statement to Chair Bierzychudek. The statement supports the Admission & Financial Aid Committee's recommendation that the College not lower admission standards in order to admit more students.

The Curriculum Committee endorses the recommendation by the Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid, made at the November 2009 Faculty Meeting, that the College maintain its current selective admissions standards, rather than lower them in order to increase revenues. The Curriculum Committee joins the AFA Committee in recommending that selective admissions standards be maintained, along with the College's commitment to a curriculum aimed at academically accomplished and ambitious students.

Chair Bierzychudek will present this statement of support on behalf of the Committee at the December Faculty Meeting so that it may be officially entered into the minutes.

The statement was approved unanimously.

II. GETF Report

Professor Kaplan reported that the GETF is currently reviewing the eight responses submitted to the Committee's "Call for Ideas" (a proposal is forthcoming from the Communication Department) and will be working to identify consistent themes.

III. Ethnic Studies Self-Study

The Ethnic Studies Minor Program was asked to provide information under the guidelines listed in the Faculty Handbook for internal reviews of minors. Chair Bierzychudek told the Committee that the main goal is to review the Ethnic Studies self-study as a whole and then determine if the information provided is enough to make an informed decision.

Professor Kaplan queried what guidelines should be used to determine whether a program is successful. In response, the Committee brainstormed a list of qualities one would hope to see, being aware that these qualities can look slightly different from program to program (not necessarily listed in order of importance):

- Trajectory of Student Interest
 - Number of students graduating with minor, trends over time
- Course Frequency
 - Are core classes offered regularly enough so that students can fulfill requirements within a reasonable time?
- Academic Rigor / Structural Coherence
- Integration with Overall Curriculum
- “Fit” with mission of the College
- Does the program provide students with a direction (not necessarily toward a career, but perhaps an academic direction...)?
 - it was acknowledged that this might not apply to all programs
- Consistency / Sustainability of offerings (including their degree of dependence on adjunct faculty)

It was mentioned that assessing student interest based on the number of students choosing the program may not be good practice; e.g., it is uncommon for male students to enroll in Gender Studies courses but this in no way negates the value of the minor. Chair Bierzychudek commented that while these points should be taken into account when measuring the success of a program, the program needs to be looked at as a whole. However, Chair Bierzychudek would question the success of a program if low numbers occurred consistently over the years.

The group was satisfied that interest in Ethnic Studies is strong among students, especially for a program that is so new.

The committee discussed the meaning of “academic rigor;” Dean de Paula stated that we are examining not the academic rigor of individual courses and faculty, but rather whether the collection of courses comes together in an integrated way; it is more about the structure and coherence of the program.

Professor Kaplan queried the broad assortment of course offerings for the program; one consequence of having so many options is that there is little commonality amongst the graduates of that minor. Different students could choose to take completely different academic paths. It can become difficult to control a minor’s trajectory through the program. Chair Bierzychudek pointed out that this diversity could also be looked at as a strength, allowing students to explore many different avenues.

The program’s broad focus (on “ethnic studies”) was noted; was this intentional on the program’s part? At other institutions, most programs had a specific focus (e.g. on African-American studies, or Hispanic studies, etc.). Chair Bierzychudek remarked that Lewis & Clark does not have a large enough core of faculty in any one area to support more focused programs. Additionally, Professor Tufte noted the program’s dependence on adjunct and visiting faculty

members; the self-study had also listed this issue as a concern. Although limited resources may not allow for it, the program would be stronger if it had at least one full-time faculty member supporting it.

The lack of a committed African-American expert in the Ethnic Studies Program was brought up; Prof. Berkman noted that many scholarly treatments of race and ethnicity are rooted in African-American Studies and it is problematic that there is no one at the College devoted to this area of study. Chair Bierzychudek surmised that the program itself is probably very aware of this missing component and would wholeheartedly support hiring an expert in African-American studies if resources allowed it. However, this absence should not be seen as a fatal flaw. Professor Kaplan clarified that African-American history, at least, is being taught in many courses but it is not readily obvious from their titles. As an example, Professor Mitch Reyes' COMM 406 course has a strong focus on civil rights issues and other aspects of African-American history but an outside observer would not necessarily realize this from the course title (Rhetoric, Race, and Resistance).

The committee discussed an issue related to the program description in the Catalog. When the minor program was originally proposed, it was focused on five themes; these themes were used as the guidelines for determining whether or not a course would fit into the program's curriculum. Those five themes were not addressed in the self-study; Professor Kaplan queried how these themes are addressed in the curriculum and how students use them to determine course selection. At the time the minor was being proposed, Chair Bierzychudek said she had expected that courses might be categorized by their themes, and that students would be able to choose courses based on which theme(s) they were interested in. Professor Kaplan wondered if each instructor could describe how their course deals with the different themes. Even if these descriptions were in the form of an internal advising document (i.e. not in the catalog), this would provide useful information to students.

Professor Young had stated in the self-study that there are certain courses not listed as part of the Ethnic Studies curriculum but that are relevant to ethnic studies. However, courses are not included in the minor unless their teacher volunteers the course for the program's curriculum. Some faculty members may not wish to have their courses listed as part of the Ethnic Studies program. Registrar Crabtree noted that the program chair has the option of accepting such courses in response to individual student petitions.

Frequency of course offerings was addressed in the self-study; it appears that all core courses are being offered virtually every year. However, their dependence on adjunct or visiting faculty members makes it hard to predict their availability in the future. Many interdisciplinary programs have come to rely on adjunct and visiting faculty members in areas of study where the College lacks tenured or tenure-track faculty. Viability is a concern for every interdisciplinary program; most staffing for these programs comes from faculty whose appointments were made into another department or program, and their participation in another program is completely voluntary.

The discussion will continue at the next meeting, when the other points in the list of "criteria for success" will be addressed. Also, in preparation for the next meeting, Chair Bierzychudek asked

the Committee if any more clarifying information was needed from the Ethnic Studies program. Professor Kaplan said that although he finds the list of themes useful in understanding the intellectual coherence of the program, he would like to have more information on how exactly the curriculum explores the five themes. He suggested asking Professors Young and Toledano to provide some concrete examples so that the Committee can better understand the relation of those themes to the courses and to the minor.

The Committee echoed Professor Kaplan's suggestion. Chair Bierzychudek will draft an email to Professor Young for this request. (But in fact I met with Elliott Young to convey this request in person. He agreed to provide further information by Monday, Dec. 7.)

The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 9, 2009.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35pm.