

Approved January 20, 2010

College of Arts & Science
COMMITTEE ON THE CURRICULUM

Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2009

Present: Paulette Bierzychudek, Jim Bunnelle, Jeff Feld-Gore, Jane Hunter (for Julio de Paula), Stuart Kaplan, Stephen Tufte, Rishona Zimring, Tamara Ko, recorder.

Absent: Linda Angst, Franya Berkman, Diane Crabtree, Julio de Paula, Tatiana Osipovich, Jayson Estassi, Alex Rihm

Chair Bierzychudek convened the meeting at 1:05pm.

The minutes from December 09, 2009 were approved.

I. GETF Report

Professor Kaplan reported that the co-chairs of the GETF are himself and Professor Rebecca Copenhaver. The GETF is currently in discussion about a myriad of issues and have taken no specific action except to endorse the Informational Literacy recommendation.¹

Discussion is currently focused on how writing skills may be improved in the general education program. Other items of discussion included the Creative Arts and International Studies requirements, and surveys are being drafted for students and faculty to gauge feedback. The faculty survey is especially geared towards determining possible solutions/recommendations from them in terms of writing and to get a sense of different model structures for general education.

Associate Dean Feld-Gore mentioned that even from a Student Life perspective, writing is a skill that needs to be improved.

It was commented that it would be difficult to separate a discussion of writing from a discussion of the *Exploration & Discovery* program; is that program currently on the table for discussion? Professor Kaplan reported that *E&D* is not on the table for discussion and that any change would be separate from the program.

II. Ethnic Studies Review Response

Chair Bierzychudek had previously emailed Committee members a draft response to Professor Elliott Young for the Ethnic Studies Minor review and has received little feedback. A few members had commented via email that the draft response captured the discussion relatively well although Chair Bierzychudek hopes to receive a few more editing suggestions.

Professor Zimring suggested adding current numbers of student minors in comparison to numbers in other minors at the College; this may be harder information to obtain but Chair

¹ Refer to the GETF minutes for December 16, 2009 for a detailed description

Bierzychudek will try to find out. Professor Zimring also suggested revising the statement about how the breadth of the program is being “driven in part by necessity” because it does not convey the degree to which this design is purposeful; some programs purposefully choose to be broad vs. narrow and this decision is not necessarily contingent on resources. She also remarked that the response did not convey previous remarks about connecting Professor John Callahan to the program for literary materials.

Professor Tufte also found the drafted response to be satisfactory but will also send a few language edits to Chair Bierzychudek.

Chair Bierzychudek aims to get a response back to Professor Young before January 28, 2010, when he departs for Cuba.

III. SQR Motion

Now that the SQR motion has been referred back to the Committee for further consideration, Chair Bierzychudek asked for direction on the next step. She asked for individual opinions of the last Faculty Meeting and for the Committee’s perception on which obstacles to passage need to be addressed.

Professor Tufte commented that it was surprising that some science faculty members did not support the SQR motion. The issue of timing is also pertinent as it seems a little awkward to some faculty to change one piece of the general education program now but then change it again later if the GETF should make such a recommendation.

Professor Zimring found the Faculty Meeting to be informative and feels even more strongly that the Committee should be able to recommend individual items for consideration. However, timing is a bit awkward now because if the motion were to be vetted and implemented, more than half of the academic year would have already passed. Advising becomes more difficult when the new requirement would only apply to one cohort of entering students. Professor Tufte also worried that discussion of the SQR motion may be detracting from the overall issue of general education and is sensitive to the points about advising.

Generally speaking, members echoed the same sentiments; since not many faculty at the meeting expressed strong support for the motion, is there enough momentum to continue on the discussion? should we still pursue the SQR motion? Associate Dean Hunter commented that if the MNS faculty were to be united on this change, that would greatly influence momentum.

Chair Bierzychudek viewed the Faculty Meeting as being constructive; it revealed that many faculty members are in favor of a distribution model for general education. She also expressed surprise that some MNS members seemed to not be very informed about the motion; she had discussed the motion with MNS chairs so that they would then pass the information to their departments, but apparently this did not happen. In terms of expected complications with advising, she herself finds that other programs have different requirements applying to different cohorts (e.g. ENV5), and the degree audit of WebAdvisor is specifically designed to help faculty navigate these changes. On the timing issue, if the Committee is convinced that the new SQR

requirement is a positive change, then implementing such a change would not be adverse even if it was only for a year.

Chair Bierzychudek commented that the change may not necessarily last only a year; much discussion has been given to this topic and it would be surprising if the GETF came up with a significantly different proposal. The proposed SQR motion is an improvement over the current requirement and concerns can be addressed with some small modifications.

Even if the Committee were to not move forward with the SQR motion, the work of conferring with departments and refining the motion would still need to be continued by some group, i.e. the GETF. The Committee may determine that it is counterproductive to the general education discussion to continue debate on this particular piece; however, the next Faculty Meeting will not occur until February and so the Committee will still have some time for discussion.

It was queried how the GETF would proceed if given the draft of the proposed SQR requirement as a starting point. It is dependent on how the draft is presented to the GETF; if the Committee is able to tell the GETF that the MNS division is solidly supporting the new requirement, the GETF will not likely overlook the issue.

It was proposed that the Committee move forward with the task in February with Chair Bierzychudek having done consultation work with members of MNS departments that have reservations. The Committee will formulate a new version of the motion that takes into account all feedback. If that motion is not approved in February, then the Committee will drop the motion.

Chair Bierzychudek added that if the entire Committee fully supports the motion, it is important for the faculty to know that this is the case. Committee members should be prepared to speak in support of the motion at the February Faculty Meeting.

It was questioned whether a revised motion would be considered a “new” motion, delaying a vote until the March Faculty Meeting. This matter was not decided.

Before the next meeting, Chair Bierzychudek will talk to individual MNS members to determine the degree of consensus within the division.

IV. Other Business

It was questioned what business the Committee should expect in spring semester. There will be more new course proposals, and consideration of overseas programs. Also, the Board of Trustees have informed the deans of the three schools that they would like to see more possibilities of students taking courses from the other schools. More information will be forthcoming.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06pm.