

Approved April 14, 2010

College of Arts & Science
COMMITTEE ON THE CURRICULUM

Meeting Minutes
March 31, 2010

Present: Linda Angst, Franya Berkman, Paulette Bierzychudek, Jane Hunter (for Julio de Paula), Stuart Kaplan, Tatiana Osipovich, Stephen Tufte, Rishona Zimring, Jayson Estassi, Alex Rihm, Tamara Ko, recorder.

Absent: Jim Bunnelle, Diane Crabtree, Julio de Paula, Jeff Feld-Gore

Guests: Hanako Conrad, Temesghen Habte, students

The minutes from March 17, 2010 were approved.

The meeting was convened at 3:47pm.

I. E&D Literature Modification Recommendation

Ms. Conrad informed the Committee that she is currently working with a group of students who are interested in modifying the E&D literature selection by including a reading about an underrepresented voice.

Professor Zimring said that, in addition to E&D, there are many other classes where such readings are present; she asked Ms. Conrad what students could do now to encourage these discussions or to bring them up in classrooms when deemed appropriate? Mr. Habte responded that they want to maintain the level of academic freedom for professors and as the goal of E&D is not clearly articulated, there is still much room for further discussion.

Ms. Conrad mentioned the possibility of revising the international studies general education requirement to require that students take a course from a different perspective (e.g., from Ethnic Studies), but that is a longer-term proposal. Diversity is a subject that professors should bring up because students would be less likely to initiate a conversation on this topic. In response to questions, she added that the term “underrepresented” is purposely ambiguous to permit flexibility for professors’ curriculum choices; the selected reading could either be by an author who is not a member of the dominant culture or about individuals who are not in the dominant culture.

Professor Zimring said that it is important to bear in mind what the “dominant culture” may mean to some; she herself, as a student, was not shaped by white male voices as much as previous generations may have been. Ms. Conrad replied that they are really looking for a representative show of diversity and that many students are unengaged in E&D because they cannot identify with the authors. Chair Bierzychudek also mentioned that students coming together and reading something outside of the class would be a huge show of intellectual initiative.

Mr. Habte said that this addition would bring about the greatest good without a tremendous amount of change. Professor Angst said a lot of faculty members would welcome having that underrepresented voice in the curriculum.

Dean Hunter suggested that students should proceed by talking to the individual faculty who teach in E & D and that they might be more successful if they altered their language from a “requirement” to a “suggestion.”

II. ISCC Report

Professor Angst reported that Professor Freddy Vilches’ leadership for the Cuba program had been approved and that he has been asked to provide information about the curriculum. He might add a course in Latin American music, for example.

Registrar Crabtree had previously asked the Curriculum Committee to develop a process (form) for students applying to non-L&C-sponsored overseas programs that would be analogous to the process of applying for L&C programs. The ISCC is now wondering: what is its role in terms of approval? Does the ISCC have any authority over this form? ISCC stated that the form was originally created to parallel the LC-sponsored program process but are now wondering if the Committee wishes the ISCC to monitor the form. Professor Tufte stated that the form was originally created to help determine whether such programs had the same level of academic rigor as LC-sponsored programs. Due to practical and financial reasons, the College would prefer to keep its students in its own programs.

Chair Bierzychudek said that if the Committee is interested in academic rigor, then the programs themselves should be studied, not the applications from students. A possibility would be finding programs that would otherwise not be approved and publicizing such a list for students. Other institutions do preapprove programs but doing this may run counter to the College’s prioritization of LC sponsored programs.

The Committee was confused about the purpose of this form, especially with Diane Crabtree absent. It opted to obtain more information from Registrar Crabtree and Professor Stepan Simek, who was involved in this conversation last year.

III. GETF Report

Professor Kaplan reported that the Task Force will review feedback from divisional meetings and then plan the process of drafting a recommendation(s) to the Committee.

IV. Course Proposal Subcommittee

History Department

This proposal adds HIST 198 History of Modern Africa to the curriculum of fall 2010.

This proposal was unanimously approved via email vote.

E&D Situation

As a follow-up to a previous conversation, the Subcommittee has brought a set of questions and points for brainstorming and discussion purposes only and affirmed that they are still open for modification. *The opening paragraph of the drafted statement is included in the minutes to give a general idea of the topic of discussion.*

The Course Proposal Subcommittee has expressed concern that departments may be adding new courses and/or sections without taking into consideration the impact on staffing the College's full-year core curriculum. The Curriculum Committee has unanimously agreed that this concern is valid, and that departments should take into consideration how the addition of new courses may require not only the decrease in the frequency with departmental courses are offered, but also decreased contribution to the first-year core curriculum. However, we remain skeptical that departments are contributing to the first-year curriculum enough that the curriculum will be staffed primarily by regular faculty. Indeed, we understand that since the first-year curriculum is currently staffed by 2/3 "flexible" or "contingent" instructors (part-time, adjunct, visiting), not only is a net addition of new courses not feasible, a reduction of courses may be necessary in order to re-staff the first-year curriculum with more full-time faculty.

Professor Angst informed the Committee that the SOAN Department is constantly creating new courses and she does not see such additions as impinging on her ability to teach E&D; however, she may have to teach some SoAn courses less frequently. Chair Bierzychudek commented that if the current situation is taken as the status quo, then for reasons Prof. Angst describes, it will not get worse. However, if the current % of fulltime faculty teaching in CORE has decreased over time, then more resources need to be returned into CORE in order to re-establish it as a program taught primarily by continuing faculty.

Mr. Estassi asked if student satisfaction with full-time faculty versus visitors/adjuncts has been researched. Associate Dean Hunter responded that a major study was performed by former Dean Curtis Johnson eight years ago in which an enormous disparity was revealed between the general quality of adjunct and regular full-time faculty members. In terms of the current E&D faculty, there is no huge disparity in teaching quality between the two. However, Chair Bierzychudek remarked that even if student satisfaction is not found to be significantly lower, it does not necessarily mean that there is no problem with having E&D staffed primarily by adjunct faculty.

Professor Tufte's impression with teaching E&D is that it is voluntary and up to the departments' discretion for divvying up resources. The Office of the Dean determines when adjuncts need to be hired; he wondered how exactly that process works. Associate Dean Hunter answered that hiring takes place primarily when fulltime people go on leaves, sabbaticals, overseas or are released from courses by grants – there are a lot of faculty away each year. She and Dean de Paula are approached yearly by department chairs that they do not have enough people to offer their curriculum. E&D becomes the easiest role to hire for because it is not a specialty course.

Professor Kaplan reminded the Committee not to automatically assume that visiting faculty do not do as well in E&D as full-time members. During his first period of teaching Inventing America, it was very difficult to get full-time faculty members to

teach and that brewed a lot of resentment. The true question is how to make E&D more attractive so that faculty members will want to teach it. Depending on where discussion leads, it may be most productive to invite Director Rebecca Copenhaver to a future Committee meeting.

Chair Bierzychudek noted that it seems departments have three concerns: provide courses for own department majors, provide courses for satisfying general education requirements, and then provide for E&D. Most departments probably think of their responsibilities in such an order. Putting more resources into E&D might require an assessment of under-enrolled courses that need to be dropped from the curriculum and replaced by E & D.

Associate Dean Hunter reported that she and Dean de Paula do often have conversations with department chairs about under-enrolled courses but that no official policy has been determined. Professor Angst said that different norms exist for departments; what may be considered as under-enrolled for one department may be “normal” for another one. Dean de Paula is considering convening a task force to look at the issue.

Professor Tufté queried about the mechanism for “refreshing” E&D. It would be nice to be able to discuss all of these questions at once.

Professor Zimring said that a constant reliance on adjunct faculty is not a localized problem; if the College strongly believes that this core program should be taken by all incoming freshmen, then it should not be taught by contingent faculty. How can the College make E&D more appealing to more faculty members? Professor Zimring is worried that the situation is perpetuated by the full-time faculty becoming used to teaching a wide range of 200/300 level courses because there is this able body of faculty ready to step in for them at the 100-level.

Professor Berkman commented that there seems to be this identity crisis about core courses. While its presence is proof that the College values the first year experience, the E&D program has been contested and criticized. The underlying problem may be deeper than just faculty allocation.

The Committee unofficially brainstormed ways of increasing the allure of teaching E&D, from constructing a freshmen seminar model to recruiting a core full-time body of members to teach E&D. However, Professor Kaplan said that the Committee is assuming that E&D in its present form is unattractive and ineffective, which is not necessarily the case. It is a better course now than when it was Inventing America; there used to be much more dissatisfaction with it.

Chair Bierzychudek will research when E&D’s review is due; if the review is next year, then the Committee will invite Director Copenhaver to participate in discussion, who has already expressed interest in such a possibility.

V. Law School Collaboration

Chair Bierzychudek had emailed the Committee a draft statement in response to Associate Dean Hunter's query about the possibility of working with the law school in providing courses to their students and vice versa. No one had emailed her with any suggestions or modifications, and so she will finalize the draft before answering Associate Dean Hunter.

VI. Celebratory Gathering

Chair Bierzychudek suggested the Committee to get together outside of the usual meetings in celebration of the semester nearing its end and in honor of Mr. Estassi and Ms. Rihm's contribution to the Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.