

Approved September 22, 2010

**College of Arts & Science
COMMITTEE ON THE CURRICULUM**

**Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2010**

Present: Greta Binford, David Campion, Diane Crabtree, Jeff Feld-Gore, John Holzwarth, Erik Nilsen, Gary Reiness, Bruce Suttmeier, Rishona Zimring, Ben Osborn, Branden Pursinger, Tamara Ko, recorder.

Absent: Jim Bunnelle

Guests: Lyell Asher, Becko Copenhaver, Herschel Snodgrass, Clark Yeager

Co-Chair Suttmeier convened the meeting at 3:20pm.

I. Subcommittee Membership

Both Professors Nilsen and Campion offered to serve as representative and chair to the ISCC. In terms of interest, Professor Nilsen expressed a desire in getting involved with overseas trips, proficiency in cross-cultural connections, and also has carries a multicultural background. Professor Campion has led overseas trips in the past and would also like to continue his close relationship with the Overseas & Off-Campus Programs office. Both members have also previously served on the course proposal subcommittee.

Given the solid qualifications of both members and a two-year commitment on the Committee, Co-Chair Suttmeier asked if one person would be willing to first serve on the course proposal subcommittee for this year and then chair the ISCC the next year. A random flip of the coin determined that Professor Nilsen would get first choice.

Professor Nilsen will chair the ISCC for this year while Professor Campion will chair the course proposal subcommittee. For the academic year of 2011-2012, Professor Campion will then chair the ISCC while Professor Nilsen will chair the course proposal subcommittee.

Co-Chair Suttmeier determined that the newly appointed member from the MNS division will serve on the course proposal subcommittee.

The second student representative to the Committee is Mr. Branden Pursinger, and will be serving on the course proposal subcommittee.

II. General Education Final Report

Background

Initial reaction from the Committee determined that the final models of general education seem rather distributional and actually very similar to the status quo. Co-Chair Suttmeier noted that

there is also less inclusion of community service in the program than in the proposal distributed by the previous General Education Task Force.

Professor Copenhaver explained that the GETF had begun its process by asking the community for proposals about general education. After reviewing the submissions, the GETF found that they were all very heterogeneous with each document proposal only referring to a specific portion of general education. One of the common characteristics that continuously appeared was in regards to writing (hence the appendix), and the GETF tried to address other suggestions by either incorporating them into the proposal or explaining why they were not ultimately added.

After the initial two models were generated, the GETF then met with department chairs for input. The resulting suggestions and questions were then taken into account, and the last two models were created from those discussions.

All four models carry the same underlying background and goals – increased flexibility, freedom, and clarity. Professor Copenhaver did add that there is maximum freedom in the Orion model, which some department chairs had found to be concerning. However, the GETF believes that students come to the College seeking breadth in their education. If the faculty can provide general guidelines for the curriculum, the students will instinctively do this of their own free will. The general education program should be constructed for these students as opposed to a small minority. The models which provide the least maximum freedom are Andromeda and/or Cassiopeia because they both set restrictions on type of course (e.g., one humanities course must be taken in order to adequately fulfill the arts and humanities requirement).

Professor Asher added that the list structure of the courses applicable towards general education requirements is determined by the respective divisions, which allows for communication and discussion among them. Such meetings will serve to make programs more accessible as divisions can come together and determine what are important pre-major goals for students to accomplish, and will serve to make assessment more manageable.

The GETF's hope is that the Committee will be able to find a way to continue a consultative and inclusive process with departments before formally presenting a report to the faculty. This process would also allow the Committee to gauge possible support for the proposal.

General Discussion

Professor Holzwarth queried what the GETF saw as “sticking points” from their departmental meetings. Professor Copenhaver answered that many faculty seemed concerned about the abundant freedom that model Orion gave to students. Additionally, some faculty members are very dedicated to an operational function of general education that focuses on learning outcomes, competencies, and specified skill sets. However, this may actually leave out an important portion of general education and greatly decreases the available opportunities for students to fulfill requirements.

Co-Chair Zimring added that this current model(s) gives simplicity and clarity to the program requirements, which is an added virtue. Models at other institutions do not necessarily maintain such simplicity.

Mr. Osborn noted that there seems to be increasing talk amongst students about needing to sacrifice breadth of education for mastering necessary skills to obtain a job. While it is important that students are able to come to the College for breadth in their liberal arts education, there should also be a balance between that and mastering a skill set.

Professor Asher responded that the aims of general education are not the same as pre-professional training.

Professor Copenhagen clarified that the proposed model(s) require as many – or even fewer – credits than the status quo, giving students more flexibility in terms of choosing courses. This is especially helpful for students majoring in the sciences, music or art. While undoubtedly an important function, the GETF did not treat “mastery of a specific skill set” as a goal of the general education program.

Co-Chair Suttmeier noted that the proposal seems constrained by resources; was this a restriction on the GETF’s mind for not going further outside the model? Professor Copenhagen responded that the issue of resources was always present; however, it was not the driving force behind choosing a divisional structure. Although a pragmatic choice, the model(s) were also based on principles (e.g., clarity, flexibility, simplicity, and freedom).

The premise for the International, Cross-Cultural, and Diversity element of the model(s) was brought up, which had been strongly supported by some members of the GETF. Although further information could not presently be provided, Director Yeager also pointed out that such a component is included as part of the College’s institutional mission. Co-Chair Zimring surmised that one possible way for the Committee to proceed is to review and evaluate the International, Cross-Cultural, and Diversity component of the current proposals.

Professor Copenhagen stated that it is the expectation of the GETF that the Committee now heads the report and proceeds as it deems appropriate. If the Committee feels that friendly amendments to the report are needed, then such revisions would be welcomed.

In terms of the Mathematical & Natural Sciences requirement, the new model would still require students to either test out of MATH 055 or enroll in it. The GETF considers social sciences as ultimately being included under the sciences, which would actually make the new curricular structure a more rigorous program. Professor Snodgrass added that the MNS division wanted a little change to the divisional requirement, which was strengthened by the proposed revision of making MATH 055 a credited course.¹ Co-Chair Suttmeier said the Committee should follow up with the MNS faculty. Professor Copenhagen emphasized that the appendix for the creation of a quantitative *Exploration & Discovery* course is not resource-neutral.

A committee member was concerned that assessment would become more difficult with this new program; however, Professor Copenhagen stated that in general, social sciences are hard to assess

¹ Registrar Crabtree clarified that MATH 055 is actually a 4-credit course that is currently included in a student’s status. However, the course does not count towards graduation requirements and is not factored into the accumulative GPA.

but that the goal is for the program to become more detailed as assessment is refined. Professor Asher added that he personally felt that a curriculum should not be built around “testable results”. While some departments and/or divisions may lend themselves more readily able to produce self-assessed conceptualization, there is no salient model that will be able to adequately capture both the sciences and humanities divisions.

A writing requirement was brought up in conjunction with general education; Co-Chair Zimring suggested the possibility of the AH faculty convening together to figure out how to adapt writing goals into the four proposals. Professor Copenhaver supported this idea with reservations, noting that the GETF did not view writing as a primary responsibility of the AH division but rather a concentrated effort by the entire faculty. It is an important skill that all divisions should prioritize.

Co-Chair Zimring suggested that the Committee present a plan – without introducing official new business – at the October faculty meeting in regards to upcoming consultation concerning general education. Professor Copenhaver affirms this decision if the Committee has a concrete plan of how it wishes to proceed.

The Committee thanked Professors Asher, Copenhaver, Snodgrass, and Director Yeager for attending the meeting.

III. Next Week’s Agenda

The general education report will be a top priority for next week’s agenda.

Registrar Crabtree predicts that the first batch of course proposals will be ready by the September 29 meeting.

Co-Chair Suttmeier will continue to be in conversation with Director Copenhaver and Administrative Coordinator Joanie May about a possible review for E&D. He asked the Committee to think of possible information that would be needed for the review. Last year’s review for the Ethnic Studies Program will be sent out as a model for the Committee, and Co-Chair Suttmeier added that this may be a nice template for future internal reviews.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:29pm.