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Academic Policies Committee Minutes of the Academic Senate 2010-04-07

University of Dayton. Academic Policies Committee

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UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE
OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE
April 7, 2010
LTC Forum, 8 – 10 AM

Attendance: Benson, Bickford, Donnelly, Frasca, Gauder, Hess, Huacuja, Jain, Liu, White.

Guests: Amin, Cadegan, Doyle, Farrelly, Fischer, Fitz, Gratto, Hughes, Inglis, Kinnucan-Welsch, Martorano-Miller, Pair, Palermo, Pestello, Pierce, Poe, Santamarina, Whisnant, Whitaker, Wilkinson, Yocum.

1. Approved minutes of APC meeting March 19, 2010.
2. Announcements: The next meeting of the APC will take place Friday April 9 from 3 – 5 PM in the LTC Studio room 42. The APC will meet again Tuesday April 13 from noon to 1:30 pm at LTC TeamSpace. (NOTE: this is a reschedule of the April 16 meeting.) You are welcome to bring a bag lunch; drinks and dessert will be provided.
3. Old Business:
 - a. Resolve criteria for the Inquiry and Integrative courses
The straw vote taken at the March 26 Academic Senate meeting was to cap the number of credit hours for the Common Academic Program, but did not include any recommendation as to how to set the cap. Concerned that the Inquiry course might be dropped without any discussion, Allen McGrew proposed additional criteria for the Inquiry course: “Students will be explicitly challenged to articulate a metacognitive comparison of the dominant methodologies and modes of inquiry in his or her major field of study with the dominant methodologies and modes of inquiry of the domain of knowledge that he or she is exploring.”

Frasca noted that today’s considerations for this topic omitted the suggestion put forth by Biers at the Senate meeting, that students be able to take either an Inquiry OR Integrative course, thus reducing the Crossing Boundaries component to 9 credit hours. Huacuja observed that the APC has already deliberated on this issue and voted against this consideration.

Donnelly noted that McGrew’s suggestion was helpful, that it was almost an expansion of criteria A. Benson agreed that the suggestion would be helpful in determining what the courses might look like, and observed that a “comparative reflection” component might be more manageable for students to accomplish.

Jain distributed a handout that defined “inquiry” and included examples of the inquiry process. He noted that inquiry should be included with every course and that there was no need for a separate course. Jain recommended that the Inquiry course be dropped from the Common Academic Program. White noted that what will set the Inquiry courses apart will be in the course & knowledge construction, as introductory courses are not always about inquiry. Lower level courses introduce students as to how knowledge is

constructed in a discipline, while the Inquiry course is more about a delivery system. In an ideal world, all courses would be inquiry-driven, but it is not the case. Donnelly noted that part of the reason for retaining the Inquiry course was so that students could take courses from the professional Schools, which are not commonly part of the General Education curriculum. Huacuja noted that the early Common Academic Program document from 2008 contained research showing a trend of moving towards Inquiry-type classes in higher education.

Hess called to question committee support for the McGrew suggestion: is there support for keeping the Inquiry course and does the committee accept the additional criteria suggested by McGrew? Benson noted that some of the wording in the criteria should be refined to be sufficiently broad enough to include a variety of courses, like Languages. The current wording implies a certain pedagogy and course design, particularly the phrase “by immersing themselves in a project characteristic of that discipline.” One suggested change was “by examining a project or experience appropriate to the discipline.”

Yocum noted that the original intent for the Inquiry course was to help students understand ways of knowing. The use of “Inquiry” might be misleading, but the intent of the project component was that students would be engaged in that discipline and that they would think through their own discipline more explicitly. Bickford also observed that the Inquiry course value would be not only in learning how others “do” that discipline, but also in how one also “does” one’s own discipline. Jain wondered that if the topic was so important, why not teach inquiry from the very beginning. It was noted that students need an introduction first, and that many arrive as Undeclared majors.

Frasca cautioned that the Common Academic Program places constraints on all students. If the professional Schools and the College are all right with the constraints, then they should be implemented within the appropriate unit, but they should not be imposed on all students. Yocum noted that when students start at UD, there are constraints already.

Hughes observed that Inquiry course criteria uses the phrase “domains of knowledge,” which, in the past, worked to the exclusion of interdisciplinary courses like Women’s Studies. She would be concerned to see the use of that phrase and its implications continue. Hess noted that prior discussions used the term “unit,” and that the current terminology was employed to avoid issues associated with that term; this language will also need revision.

Vote: To adopt the spirit of the McGrew wording for additional Inquiry course criteria, recognizing that the language needs modification.

In favor: 8

Opposed: 0

b. Institute a cap on CAP hours to no more than 42.

Donnelly noted that the proposal contains a fair amount of double-counting, but it would be hard to cap the hours at 42 without dropping the lab and another 3 credit hour course. This request for a cap is largely driven by the professional Schools, which already have

lab requirements; 43 credit hours seem far more feasible. Jain and Frasca, from SOE and SBA respectively, approved the 43 credit hours idea.

Cadegan noted that the Humanities proposal was aware of the credit hour constraints, along with the 12 credit hour upper level Crossing Boundaries courses. These challenges are why the proposal includes provisions for double counting for course majors and could count as upper level Philosophy, Religion, and History courses. Whisnant inquired if it was possible for one course to double count as 2 upper-level Crossing Boundaries courses, e.g., Practical Ethical Action AND Inquiry? Benson noted concern that if the upper level Crossing Boundaries courses are just Humanities courses, then the likes of the Language courses would be squeezed out.

Frasca observed that a perverse set of incentives is being created in terms of CAP requirements and allowing for the possibility of double counting. He noted that the current Cluster problems highlight the double counting issues. Kinnucan-Welsh noted that support is needed for faculty to develop a pedagogy that addresses the outcomes. This CAP proposal is a change wherein knowledge moves away from a delivery of content to knowledge created by students immersed in action. Palermo observed that the revision of General Education was to address the comprehensiveness of the University. The Clusters failed in the end because they were based on the presumption that the professional Schools would develop more courses than actually occurred. The CAP proposal is an opportunity for the professional Schools to participate in student education.

Hess wondered if it was accurate to say that reducing Crossing Boundaries credit hours would reduce involvement by the professional Schools. Frasca pointed out that even with 12 credit hours required for Crossing Boundaries, students could still choose to take all of the hours within just the College. Hess expressed concern that the double counting would dilute CAP outcomes.

Fitz noted that reducing CAP credit hours will drive students toward the Humanities courses and leave out incentives for the professional Schools. He recommended that the 12 credit hours for Crossing Boundaries remain, but that incentives be provided for the College and the Schools to work together. Farrelly noted that much of the current discussion contains idealistic arguments, but such was also the case for the Clusters—and look what happened. Doyle observed that the SOE accreditation requires 96 credit hours, plus another 17 credit hours in the Humanities; more leeway is needed from CAP.

Benson recommended that the 4 Crossing Boundaries courses stay. He noted that the College can make a promise that the Engineering students can take the CAP courses with no additional credit hours, but that this promise would require cooperation. However, if the Senate message with the straw vote was to cap the hours without such cooperation, then courses would need to be dropped from the CAP proposal. For example, the College would work with Chemical Engineering to review the College courses and facilitate requirements such that students get through with 43 credit hours; Margie Pinnell is gathering such evidence already. It was noted that courses would need to be revised in tandem with departments for which the credit hours load is a concern. Benson noted that the College would work with specific departments to address specific concerns, and tackle specific problems where they are.

Jain requested that the CAP proposal contain a commitment in writing to the 43 credit hours. Benson cautioned care with such text, as this commitment also contains an expectation of cooperation between the College and the professional Schools. Fitz noted that the Humanities requirements should be open to other departments, so long as there is quality control. Hughes also noted that beyond the upper level Humanities requirements, all courses that meet the stated CAP criteria should be considered.

Donnelly observed that the Benson wording reduces the Crossing Boundaries component from 12 to 9 unless recognized by the professional Schools. Benson noted that he was thinking of the science and math courses taken by Engineering students; there is likely overlap between the requirements for the major and the CAP requirements. Jain noted that the CAP requirements would be used for electives and eliminate possibilities for minors.

Hess called to question committee support on the CAP hours cap. Current options include the following: 43 credit hours, rejection of the Senate straw vote of a cap, and the middle ground outlined by Benson.

Concern was raised as to whether the committee needed to entertain the Inquiry OR Integrative proposal. Donnelly pointed out that if the committee seeks to retain the 4 Crossing Boundaries courses AND retain the cap on credit hours at 43 in the spirit of Benson's suggestion, then it is a moot point for the OR proposal.

Hughes noted that she sees CAP as a Venn diagram that overlaps with the major requirements. CAP embraces the major, but it is more about the hours required outside the major. Farrelly observed that accrediting agencies will want to see CAP requirements/courses outside the major.

Vote: To maintain the current CAP requirements of the Mar. 15 document with commitment so that students can complete CAP requirements without taking any more credit hours outside the major than they are currently required to take.

In favor: 8

Opposed: 0

4. New business: The APC will meet again to continue discussion of the April 7 agenda on Friday, April 9 from 3 – 5 pm at LTC Studio.

The APC adjourned at 9:55 AM.

Minutes submitted by Heidi Gauder