

EPAG Minutes
Thursday, September 15, 2011
11:30-1:00
Campus Center 214

Holly Barcus, Kendrick Brown, Terry Fishel, Janet Folina, Kate Hamilton, James Heyman, Ann Minnick, Yeukai Mudzi, Kathy Murray, Jayne Niemi
Sonita Sarker, Patrick Schmidt (chair), Chad Topaz, Chris Willcox

1. Approval of minutes: The minutes from September 8th were approved, including edits from Patrick.
2. Announcement: Encouraged all to attend one of the SLC open meetings.
3. Study Away: Paul Nelson will be visiting on October 6th to talk about study away – Markim 303 is our meeting place that day. (subject to change)
4. Admissions visit: Jeff Allen has been invited and would like to include Lorne Robinson if possible. Fall dates are being considered.
5. Discontinuance discussion: We began our preliminary consideration of the discontinuance of Russian Studies and whether or not to move to full consideration of the proposal before us. We began by reviewing the procedure for discontinuance that was approved by the faculty last spring. We also have in hand Patrick's memo of 8 September 2011 which posed some questions about the factors that might/should enter into a preliminary review in general. The core of that memo suggested the following concerns and considerations:
 - a. Threshold question. Would the discontinuance of the department or course of study be so injurious to the college's mission that EPAG believes it patently irresponsible to contemplate full review?
 - b. Ripeness and maturity. Is the issue coming to EPAG after thoughtful, extended and/or disinterested consideration? Is there any reason to discount the consideration given to it by proposer (e.g. if it is coming from the department itself)?
 - c. Context. Is the current position unsustainable—meaning, are we looking at a department or course of study that is not viable in its present form? Are there any reasons why the issue should not be addressed now or, alternatively, why it must be addressed now?
 - d. Fairness. Are there any reasons why moving to full consideration now would be fundamentally unfair to the faculty or students involved? (Some possible factors could include: key members of the department are on sabbatical and out of the country, or the department is awaiting the results of an external review or a potentially transformative grant application.) Would review now bias or substantially affect a personnel matter in a way that is unfair?
 - e. Timing. Is the committee positioned to give this appropriate attention? Does this come at a poor time in the year or when more pressing items must take priority in the agenda, to the detriment of cautious review of the proposed action?

- f. Sufficient basis. Is there a reasonable basis for believing that full review might lead to discontinuance? If not, are there extremely compelling reasons why review should be pursued regardless?

Two background documents were circulated: a summary of academic year enrollments in Russian courses from 2002 – 2011 (from the Russian Studies allocations request in Spring 2011) and excerpts from a May 2007 memo from then Provost Michelfelder regarding allocations. The shape of the college's curriculum, as at any college, comes down to resources, so choices must be made about what is offered at Macalester. Those choices are deliberated and made at the Allocations committee. Russian Studies has requested allocations three times and each time (2007, 2010, and 2011) the allocations were declined. We took a moment to review the allocations criteria, and discuss the idea of areas of study that are central to the liberal arts, and the role of enrollment numbers in those criteria. There was some discussion about how the study of Russian is embedded in much of history, politics, and literature. The subject is indeed valued. Nonetheless, the allocations requests have not fared well in recent history. So now after this year, there will be 0.4 FTE (TT) in the department. We spoke of three general options now posed by a review. One would be to eliminate the major and minor. Second would be to keep the program and staff it with non-tenure-track faculty. Third would be to retain it, which would mean that a hire in Russian Studies would have to be prioritized in the next round of allocations. So, back to the preliminary review of discontinuance. There was much discussion in an effort to give new folks a background on the history of the department, as well as to allow for everyone to express opinions and comments. From that discussion emerged the thought that the history of the topic indicates that the subject of discontinuance must be undertaken. Many expressed the opinion that the second option is in direct opposition to what other EPAGs have said about allocations and departments in principle. It was noted that with a structured process now in place, there are fewer questions about the fate of the faculty. None of the hypothetical reasons to stop at the preliminary stage seemed applicable here, and given where the program is going to be in terms of allocations, it was also noted that this question is one that the faculty must take up. A vote was taken on whether we should go to full review, and the result was a unanimous decision to undertake such a review.

6. We moved on to the full consideration process as written in the policy. The first next step is to notify the department. No new majors or minors may be declared, starting now. Perhaps we can give them a rough idea of the timeline of conversations, data collection, etc. There was discussion about early/late/multiple meetings with the department and the purpose of those meetings (discussion not defense). We discussed whether the non-tenure-track faculty member should be present at the meeting with the department. We agreed that only the tenure-track faculty should be present for the first meeting with a later opportunity for the non-tenure-track person, perhaps even at the same meeting. We pondered dates and times in October for faculty, student, and town-hall meetings. We would like to finish our work by the end of fall term, write report after the end of fall term and

- bring our decision to faculty meeting in February. Patrick will reshuffle the October 6th study away discussion (see above), and work on the schedule of meetings. He will also send a quick draft for our comments today so he can send notification off to the department. Patrick will summarize for us what information and data he's gathered so far and what yet needs to be done.
7. Next week: Critical theory concentration.

Adjourned at 12:59p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jayne Niemi, Registrar