

EPAG Minutes  
Thursday, September 29, 2011  
11:30-1:00  
Campus Center 214

Kendrick Brown, Terri 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: Ann will write up the sentence we endorsed which more thoroughly describes our conversation about the Writing report. With that addition, the minutes are approved.
2. Announcements: Russian Studies representatives will visit us next week. Patrick has discussed with them who should or could be there. Professors von Geldern, Martyn, and Hammarberg would be very helpful as we collect input and background for the entire committee, but particularly for new committee members. Patrick has already received some input from students and alumni, and will establish a formal venue for further input from those groups.
3. Course changes: Jayne described the process in which she is the first reviewer and that questions about individual proposals are welcome. The current course change requests were approved.
4. Library review: A draft of the letter had been previously circulated via email. Comments, corrections? Once the few minor corrections are made, Patrick will deliver the letter to Terri, as is the custom.
5. Prep for Russian Studies visit: Patrick distributed two documents: The Global Curriculum: How Macalester Supports the Study of Diverse Societies and Languages and the Information Collection list. Both of these should inform us, not just about numbers but about the question "What is the role of Russian Studies in the curriculum?" We discussed the kinds of things we want to learn from the first meeting with the Russian Studies faculty. Even if the major were discontinued, the study of things Russian would not disappear from the curriculum. How would the Russianists imagine that? We hope to ask "if discontinued, then what would your best case scenario be?", as well as the "if not discontinued" scenario. What are models that they know of that succeeded elsewhere? Of the three components, namely literature, politics & history, language, how do they see the balance of these three? This is relevant to languages as a whole, not just Russian, we note. From their conversations with students, what is their impression of student needs, wants, and desires? What are they telling students? Patrick and Jim will be meeting with the students tomorrow. Do they want us to know anything in particular, or do they have questions for us? We reviewed the information collection document.
6. Writing: We reviewed the state of the text and motion language that Kendrick had prepared, and whether we want it to go to the October faculty meeting for endorsement, along with announcement and endorsement of other ongoing efforts. The text and motion language as drafted reflects some of the GERC recommendations. It makes explicit what is actually happening. Comments

included a wish to simply calling it the Writing requirement rather than changing it to AW, even if we focus on argumentative writing. We discussed the cap on enrollment in W courses at 20 and whether that is realistic given our competing needs. Is there a worry that the faculty will throw the small changes out because they want big change? Can we move incrementally as we develop the expertise to do something bigger? In this context Chad circulated a set of questions and considerations to help inform our discussion of what we want to see done in terms of Writing. We wonder whether the 15 percent of class devoted to writing instruction will be controversial. The spirit of it was to provide a guideline for what a reasonable amount would be. Time devoted specifically to writing instruction is thought to be very important for students. Some wish to think about further developing courses that are earmarked for students who need more support and academic writing instruction than others. We talked about help for instructors on what it is to teach writing. How does the amount of writing, number of writing courses for our requirement compare to our peer institutions? There has been some investigation of this. Some do it by course and others do by portfolio and there are other models as well. Adrienne has more detail on this information that was collected and it can be shared with all of us. We are agreed on two things in the language document – keep it as W, and use a recommended amount rather than a reasonable amount when describing class time devoted to writing.

More discussion: Is the 20 number as enrollment cap reasonable? Twenty was what came out of much discussion at GERC. Is it possible in each class to differentiate between those students who have already met W and those who have not? We commented on the level of awareness among students about whether courses meet the requirement or not, and whether it matters that they are aware at the time they are taking it. Comments were made on the value of taking courses across the 4 years that build writing skills – not just one course. Also noted was the perversity of incentives. The level of W courses matters. We returned to the discussion of students who might need more help – and even among those there are a disparate set of skills. Kendrick stated that he is pushing for clarification of the requirement so that he can do more than a snapshot, but a more longitudinal assessment. Do we agree that the document is adequate? Not unanimously. Do we agree that this incremental step will be okay? Mostly yes, but with serious concern that we are codifying a faulty system. We talked a bit more about this. There is support for the requirement, but the structure may not provide enough support for the students who really need it. Ann shared some information about the pilot experience so far. It seems that making support available is not enough – making students use the support is what we need. We talked a little bit about our own College Writing course, and other W courses. It's clear that we're not ready to make a motion to the faculty. How can we get closer to a next step for a larger effort? Perhaps we can identify a short list of long-term goals and what it might take to get there. Several people mentioned the efforts of the Serie Center. We want to identify a subcommittee to take over the short-term/long-term goal project. Volunteers should identify themselves to Patrick.

7. Critical Theory concentration proposal: Sonita has some comments she'll share via email, and is willing to act as translator for those of us who don't have background understanding of the field.

Adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jayne Niemi, Registrar