

Educational Policy and Governance (EPAG) Committee Meeting Minutes

22 September 2011

Present: Holly Barcus, Kendrick Brown, Terri Fishel, Janet Folina, Kate Hamilton, James Heyman, Ann Minnick, Jayne Niemi, Sonita Sarker, Patrick Schmidt (chair), Chad Topaz, Chris Willcox

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Sept. 15 Meeting – minutes approved as distributed.

2. Announcements

- a. Patrick inquired about possible dates for the initial meeting with the Russian Studies faculty, which depend on several factors, including the upcoming review of the Chemistry department. It was decided that Patrick would make further inquiries to settle the question.
- b. Chad announced that he is getting data from the registrar's office in order to proceed with the class size data project. Chad will email the questions he is working on so that others may consider if they would like to suggest additional questions.

3. External Review of Library and Media Services – [recorder recused herself at this point.]

The chair will prepare a letter, share with the group, and then deliver a letter to the Library Director.

4. Critical Theory Concentration Proposal

Patrick provided some background information on concentrations that are relatively recent additions to the curriculum. Concentrations are a means of enriching scholarship, broadening the student educational experience by providing different methodological perspectives, and enabling the college to explore new cutting edge areas of study. Concentrations are relatively low cost endeavors. Four concentrations have Mellon Funding:

- Community and Global Health
- Global Citizenship (which has been eliminated)
- Human Rights and Humanitarianism
- Urban Studies

The other concentrations are:

- African Studies
- Legal Studies
- Middle Eastern Studies and Islamic Civilizations

A clarification and revision to the proposal was shared as follows:

“Of the five courses required for the concentration, at least three (3) courses must come from the list of Core Courses; up to two (2) may be chosen from the list of electives. No more than twelve (12) of the twenty-four (24) credits counted toward the concentration may be taken in any single department. All courses and the activity in which the students will produce the major research paper (see next paragraph) should be chosen with the assistance of the program advisor.”

Discussion included an explanation of “critical theory,” which is the study of how ideas came to be and inform our practices, and the prior place that critical theory had in the HMCS major before they moved to a tighter focus on Media and Cultural Studies. This proposal has little overlap with other concentrations, and many or most of the courses are long-standing courses in

the curriculum. It was suggested that if overlap is not a concern, and that concentrations are meant to be experimental, we should err on the side of innovation. It was decided that the concentration proposal should be brought to the faculty for approval. It will be presented at the October meeting.

5. Writing Requirement and the Program

- a. Background and the W Report
- b. The Associate Dean's Proposal
- c. Other Options

Patrick sent out a copy of the writing report from February of this year and a draft with changes by Kendrick for the W requirement. Discussion focused on whether we addressed the issue in small incremental steps, or we tackle the bigger issues. Many colleges have full-fledged writing programs and the question was raised as to what do they look like and do they offer a better solution. It was suggested that this is not a mutually exclusive situation. Ann shared information on the current pilot program to address a means to help incoming students who demonstrate a weakness in their writing. It is important to remember that the "W" report captured student writing at one moment in time and that additional information about student writing is needed as we consider how to address the more resource intensive recommendations of the report. It was agreed that next week we will look at Kendrick's revision of the "W" requirement, with the hope that we could make progress on short term goals, even as we continue to investigate and deliberate on the longer term ones.

Adjourned at 1 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Terri Fishel, Library Director