

Curriculum Committee

Minutes of the March 31, 2017 Meeting

Present: Rob Beezer (Secretary), Peggy Burge, Martin Jackson, Chris Kendall, Alan Krause, Carson Nies, Elise Richman (Chair), Leslie Saucedo, Jason Struna, Brad Tomhave, Bryan Thines, Justin Tiehen, Benjamin Tromly, Nila Wiese.

Visitor: Seth Weinberger.

RICHMAN called the meeting to order at 3:00 in the McCormick Room. The minutes of the March 10, 2017 meeting were approved with one change.

Announcements RICHMAN reminded the working groups, with greater specificity, that her final report will be due to the Faculty Senate on April 28, so she would like final reports from Working Groups by April 21.

SAUCEDO clarified that her remarks last week about science labs were rather specific to the Biology department. Their offerings in the core often happen in both Fall and Spring semesters, so they already accommodate the different lengths. However, other disciplines such as Chemistry and Physics, tend to offer the majority of their courses always in the same half of the year, so a shortening of the Spring semester might necessitate greater changes.

JACKSON announced an Accreditation Peer Review visit for April 18 and 19, and so solicited volunteers from this committee to participate.

Working Group 1 Report TIEHEN admitted their group has been inactive. The Biology department curriculum review continues, and a course proposal for the KNOW requirement is pending.

Working Group 2 Report TROMLY moved approval of their review of the German Studies Department curriculum review.

Changes include allowing 100-level courses to meet major requirements, Advanced Placement (AP) credit, some classes in English, and less emphasis on a literary program. The changes are meant to make it easier for a student to complete a major and provide greater appeal to their interests. A rotation of upper-division offerings has been devised to allow staffing with just two faculty.

There was discussion of a study-abroad requirement (with waivers possible in some cases), which JACKSON and TOMHAVE decided was not without precedent in various other majors.

The question of variable AP credit, based on score values, has been divorced from this motion, and is being considered by the Academic Standards Committee. **Action:** Approved.

Working Group 3 Report WIESE reported that their review of the Social Scientific Approaches core area continues. Their draft language for “Question 3” is on today’s agenda.

Working Group 4 Report In the absence of HOOPER, who is serving as an announcer for the Geography Bee, SAUCEDO proudly announced that the committee had no more pending business, and dared the Chair to assign them an extraordinary task by declaring their work “DONE” for the year.

Freedom Education Project Puget Sound Professor Seth Weinberger returned to the committee to provide responses to seven questions about the Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS). Professor Robin Jacobson was unable to attend.

1. Is it sustainable?

Weinberger explained that FEPPS had been running their program for 5 or 6 years, has 3 or 4 professional staff, including a fundraiser, and has received substantial grant support. With no guarantees offered, he thinks the project has sufficient resources.

2. It was suggested that it would be informative and helpful to have course syllabi pertinent to the Liberal Studies Major (as opposed to electives).

Weinberger offered that it might be more helpful to provide an extensive rubric, such as for the SSI seminars, since content areas may vary from one semester to the next. SAUCEDO said she thought the descriptions for the SSI course were syllabi, just more like generic templates. It was agreed that FEPPS will begin by developing generic course templates for the core courses (introduction, bridge, senior seminar), leaving open the possibility the committee could later ask for more detail.

3. TOMHAVE has suggested changing the title and nature of the Liberal Studies Major to a Bachelor of Liberal Studies in an effort to provide it with more autonomy from the university’s graduation and core requirements.

Weinberger described how the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI), which FEPPS is part of, considers it important that graduates receive a degree that is not distinct from what other graduates of university receive. So FEPPS would prefer to award a UPS Bachelor of Arts with a distinct major, and hesitant to grant a Bachelor of Liberal Studies.

4. Could academic advisors identify courses that fall outside of the theme based major that could count as upper division courses outside of the major? There was concern expressed by some about veering from this requirement and while others expressed a desire for more information about how the spirit (so to speak) of requirement is met by the Liberal Studies Major.

FEPPS has solved this problem by now planning to have students form a contract major in the middle of their program (at the time of the bridge course), so that then any course *not* in the contract could be considered as “outside the major.” This is not without precedent, as this is how this requirement is handled for existing contract majors (e.g., STS, SIM).

5. Do the AA core courses inform/relate to the theme based major?

No. Though since so many of the AA courses are taught by UPS faculty and are identical to their UPS courses, the preparation of the FEPPS students might look more like that of a UPS student, rather than that a Tacoma Community College (TCC) student, despite their preparation being certified by an AA degree from TCC.

6. Are independent study courses possible?

Given the constraints imposed by the prison setting, it is extremely difficult to organize regular one-on-one meetings of faculty and students.

7. Are there any lower division courses offered?

FEPPS will need to offer lower-division courses in art history, SSI 2, and foreign languages, so students can fulfill the UPS core curriculum. Other lower-division core courses will have been met by the AA degree. It is possible that certain lower-division courses will be needed to provide background for other courses.

Questions to Weinberger included,

- BEEZER asked about the number of courses being offered. Eight per semester is the estimate.
- SAUCEDO asked how many UPS faculty are involved. About two-thirds of the instruction is by UPS faculty, with 23 all-time from a pool of 35. SAUCEDO encouraged Weinberger to make this aspect of the program well-known, since having TCC as the degree-granting institution for the AA gives a different impression.
- JACKSON asked if faculty use this as evidence of community service in their evaluations and how the Faculty Advancement Committee (FAC) views it. Weinberger did exactly this in his most recent evaluation, and has no news of the FAC viewing this negatively.
- TROMLY asked about the use of the Internet for research, and opportunities to practice research skills generally. BURGE replied that there were exercises they could do to simulate the evaluation of sources, and acknowledged the importance. Weinberger mentioned investigation into mirroring all of STRUNATOR on-site, and some experience with student teaching assistants retrieving and delivering library materials.

JACKSON mentioned that this sort of research was a major component of the SSI 2 courses. Weinberger acknowledged that this was a big obstacle, along with delivering laboratory science courses. He was optimistic that a solution could be found. In response to a question from SAUCEDO, it was made known that filtered Internet access is available in prisons in other states. It was not known if the prohibition is statewide in Washington or local to the Washington Corrections Center for Women.

Discussion of Question 3 will be carried over to the next meeting. RICHMAN, Professor of Art, adjourned the meeting at 3:58 P.M. The next meeting will be on April 7 at 3 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert Beezer