

Curriculum Committee Minutes
November 24, 2003

Members Present: Richard Anderson-Connolly, Bill Barry, DeWayne Derryberry, Cathy Hale, Lynda Livingston, David Luper, Sarah Norris, Ken Rousslang, Karin Sable (chair), Joyce Tomashiro, Melissa Weinman-Jagosh, Brad Tomhave, Carrie Washburn

Visitors Present: none

Karin Sable, present, called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

Approval of minutes:
M/S/P approval of minutes from 11/17/03.

Announcements:

We were thrilled to be informed by Washburn that we may have two more meetings this semester. At our first meeting next semester (whose time is to-be-arranged¹-- Bonnie is preparing a grid to facilitate said arrangement), we will need to ~~reappoint~~ appoint a new chair, as our current chair will be “on sabbatical.”

Barry offered the following point of clarification: The admissions staff is recruiting for 2004-5 based on last year’s materials, and they therefore are informing prospective students that we do offer an Asian Studies major. However, this is not incompatible with our two Asian Studies-related motions from last week (see minutes of 11/17/03), since the interdisciplinary emphasis motion (#1) stands alone, while the changes to the Asian Studies program itself (motion #2) do not go into effect until 2005-6.

Barry then made a final comment regarding “emphasis” language:

He looked at ten other schools to find comparables, discovering that two different terms are in use: “interdisciplinary concentration” (which he likened to an interdisciplinary minor) and “coordinated major” (which he characterized as two majors). While the second was closer in spirit, neither was really like what Asian Studies is proposing. In summary, then, he pronounced (not petulantly at all): “I give up. It [“interdisciplinary emphasis”] is a great phrase, and I don’t care what anybody else says. I remove myself from this conversation.”

Connections subcommittee report:

Derryberry had previously e-mailed us the following document pertaining to this discussion:

Colleagues,

The connections subcommittee met to discuss the labeling of connections courses and associated issues brought up in the curriculum committee meeting October 13, 2003.

Motions and actions

Motion 1. All connections courses should all have a connections (rather than departmental) label and should be listed together in one place in the catalog. When a director and advisory committee evolve, they will be included with the listing.

¹ the meeting, not the semester

Departments can acknowledge courses taught by members of their faculty in their section of the catalog, so that their contribution to the core is acknowledged.

Action – That Bill Barry organize a dinner bringing together faculty interested in teaching connections courses. One purpose for this gathering would be to make faculty aware of the need for an advisory committee and to solicit volunteers.

Motion 2 After consideration of issues considered below and until an advisory committee is formed for connections courses, I will move for some form of additional review of connections courses. The options are discussed below. ***{The final form of this motion will be dependent on committee discussion }***

Explanation

After lengthy discussion were considered that there are three interrelated issues:

- How do connections courses retain an individual identity outside of the department? How are colleagues interested in teaching connections courses to learn more about such courses? Where should advisors look for more guidance in counseling students interested in their connections requirement? Where would funds come from for copying etc. for team-taught courses? How can connections best thrive?
- How should connections courses be evaluated for content (difficulty, currency, and rigor of the course; choice of textbooks; reasonableness of the assignments)? For departmental courses this is handled informally within the department. Departments may not even be explicitly aware of this role most of the time. Similarly, for interdisciplinary courses this is usually handled (informally?) by and advisory committee.

For example: If a connections/science in context course is team-taught by a mathematician and a biologist the current subcommittee can determine if the course meets connections guidelines, but can that subcommittee (possibly composed of a historian, a physicist, and a business professor) be expected to evaluate the difficulty, currency, and rigor of the material and assignments? Yet it seems that there must be some (perhaps every informal) standards here as well.

Although the phrase “evaluated for content” may be both too formal and too judgmental, a well-defined group of peers can offer formal or informal guidance and create reasonable expectations with respect to content. The connections subcommittee, as currently conceived, is neither charged with, nor qualified to make these judgments.

- How should connections courses be labeled and listed in the catalog?

Advisory committee?

It was felt that the long-run resolution to both of the first two issues is an advisory committee and a director. Because connections will not be taught for a few years and because only a few courses are currently approved, we do not actually have a pool of self-selected faculty to draw from. It is intended that the connections advisory committee play a role similar to the science in context advisory committee.

We may need to be pro-active in bringing together interested faculty. The initial purpose would be to make faculty interested in teaching connections course aware of the need for an advisory committee. This group would include those who have taught comparative values, those how have taught science in context, those currently involved in connections, as well as others interested in teaching connections courses. It seems reasonable to assume that, once the need is identified, faculty especially interested in the future of this core area would be willing to form such a committee. This will not happen overnight.

Bill Barry has agreed, if this seems reasonable, to arrange a dinner gathering the interested parties.

For now

In the interim, we still need to approve connections courses and to consider both the guidelines (a usual curriculum subcommittee duty) as well as content (usually the role of departments and advisory committees).

We have proposed some possible procedures for the oversight of content in this interim period:

- i) That the connections sub-committee always have a least one member from each of the divisions (science and mathematics, social sciences and business, humanities) and that when a connections course involving their division is proposed, that they commit to additional investigation (talking to faculty, using the internet, etc.) to evaluate the course for content.
- ii) That the person proposing the course ask at least one other person, outside their department and knowledgeable of a key discipline engaged in the course, evaluate the course for content.
- iii) That the department chair and at least one other person “sign-off” on the course, if the department chair feels unqualified to evaluate some parts of the course.
- iv) All these suggests have strengths and weaknesses – Hybrids of the above? Other suggestions?

Finally

In any case, the connections courses should all have a connections (rather than departmental) label and should be listed together in one place in the catalog. When a director and advisory committee evolve, they will be included with the listing.

Departments can acknowledge courses taught by members of their faculty in their section of the catalog, so that their contribution to the core is acknowledged.

(end insert)

Derryberry directed our attention to motion #1, noting that the salient difference between this and an earlier version is in the middle sentence:

When a director and advisory committee evolve, they will be included with the listing.

The subcommittee suggested that an advisory committee for Connections be formed, similar to that which oversees Science in Context (SCTX) courses now. Similarly, the subcommittee suggests that Connections courses be listed together in the bulletin, as SCTX courses are.

Sable inquired about the course approval process: would the advisory committee sign off on new courses, instead of the head of the proposer’s department? Barry and Washburn: yes.

Derryberry noted that the courses we’re considering already exist; the subcommittee is simply trying to determine whether or not they meet the guidelines for the Connections designation. The subcommittee can determine consistency with the core rubrics, but cannot assess the quality of the course (which is not the subcommittee’s role in any case).

Rousslang: Isn’t the department the (quality) watchdog?

Derryberry replied that the department may not be a good watchdog if faculty from different departments teach a given course at different times, or if a course is team-taught. For example, Derryberry is contemplating a course that he would teach with a biologist; which department (maybe neither) would be comfortable signing off on it?

Rousslang: How does it work with SCTX?

Barry responded that the advisory committee, composed of faculty teaching in SCTX, monitor and assess course quality. That committee formed quickly, stimulated by the leadership of Jim Evans. There is, as yet, no volunteer leader for Connections.

Barry also noted that the current debate is reminiscent of that surrounding the freshmen seminars: the Curriculum Committee advised uniform labeling; that recommendation went to the faculty; the faculty decided against it, since it wasn't clear who would vouch for the courses' content. The Connections subcommittee perceived that the preference of the Curriculum Committee was for uniform labeling; hence the current motion.

Rousslang likened course monitoring by an advisory committee to having the fox guard the henhouse—just with a non-departmental fox. He prefers to have department heads sign off on course proposals, since he thinks they are best able to assess quality. Sable objected, since these are *interdisciplinary* courses. Rousslang responded that all involved departments therefore should endorse the proposals. Barry said, “We could do that.”

Barry suggested that after a proposer's department signed off on a course, the Connections subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee could consult with other relevant departments. Derryberry quickly responded that the Connections subcommittee considered such an approach temporary. He then asked if a person singly teaching a course would be expected to identify other potentially relevant departments.

Hale wondered how an interested person would take over a course originally sponsored by another department. She suggested that a group outside of any department would be better able to handle such a situation. Lupher noted that in this case, the course would already exist; the change would only lie in the teacher. What's the problem? Hale responded that an oversight group might be able to *recruit* new faculty to teach an existing course. For example, the SCTX advisory committee not only reviewed courses and approved their content, but also encouraged new people to teach them.

Washburn added that the SCTX committee would work with faculty whose proposals were not quite up to standard. Sable asserted that an advisory committee would have more time to assess proposed courses than would department heads. An advisory committee would give more “form” to Connections, and give us a practical way to accomplish our objectives for these courses.

Derryberry worried that leaving these courses under the management of departments would make them less interdisciplinary.

Derryberry M/S/P motion #1: All connections courses should all have a connections (rather than departmental) label and should be listed together in one place in the catalog. When a director and advisory committee evolve, they will be included with the listing. Departments can acknowledge courses taught by members of their faculty in their section of the catalog, so that their contribution to the core is acknowledged. (1 abstention)

P.S. Barry will organize a dinner for prospective advisory committee members.

P.P.S. The prefix for Connections has yet to be created (per Tomhave).

Derryberry noted that the motion just passed implied that the Connections subcommittee temporarily has the responsibility for evaluating proposed courses' content, since there is as yet no advisory panel. He therefore drew our attention to the three "for now" proposals supporting Motion #2 ((i), (ii), and (iii) above).

Sable asked how long it would take to set up the advisory panel. Barry responded that Connections courses will come on-line when the current freshmen are juniors—the year after next. We therefore don't need to "pass" anything until next September. He suggested we wait until the middle of next semester to reevaluate the situation.

Derryberry added that we've only approved six Connections courses in the last year and a half. One to-be-approved course is already being taught. However, we're going to need more courses to meet demand.

Motion #2 was tabled.

Physical Therapy subcommittee report:

Rousslang passed out the following, which he described as a "slam dunk":

The Physical Therapy Program proposes to add one full-time 8-week internship in the summer between the second and third year. This would be an adaptation of the course currently taught as PT657, Focused Clinical Exploration (.25 unit), a graded class with a 2-week clinical internship. PT657 would then be as pass/fail course (no credit), making it consistent with other clinical courses in the Physical Therapy Program.

Physical Therapy also proposes to increase slightly the on-site clinic component of PT650/651, Integrated Clinical Experience (no credit), to include one full day per week. This clinic would replace the current one-half day per week during spring semester, and four separate weeks in full-time off-site clinics. The four separate weeks spent in off-site clinics would be eliminated.

The third piece of the PT proposal is to increase PT666, Integrated Clinic Experience: On Campus Physical Therapy Teaching Clinic (no credit), the third-year on-site clinic, from 1.5 days per week to 2 days per week. The reason for this is the same as lengthening the 2 week clinic to 8 weeks—they're trying to add clinic days to be more consistent with what other institutions are doing.

(end insert)

Rousslang noted that these proposals were not part of a formal review, but rather initiatives by the program. PT wants to increase the clinical component of its program, making it more consistent with other programs.

Rousslang trusts their judgment.

Tomhave noted that there is a loss of ¼ unit in PT657, causing the program to drop from 15.25 to 15 units. Barry said that's still fine for the graduate degree.

Barry elaborated on the concept: PT is moving a lot of its activities on-site to be more competitive. On-site clinic experiences are much richer, offering students more of a teaching and learning opportunity.

Sable asked if the proposed changes implied any staffing changes. Barry said they do, but that PT has demonstrated that they can accommodate these changes through the self-supporting (fee-charging) clinics.

Washburn wondered if the changes would increase students' expenses. Barry acknowledged that the clinic fees would increase, but reminded us of the eliminated quarter unit. He's not sure if the net result will be an increase or decrease in cost for students. However, the overarching motivation for the change remains the need to stay competitive. Rousslang added that feedback from students indicated that they wanted a strengthened clinical component.

Rousslang M/S/P the changes to the Physical Therapy program outlined in his handout (see above).

SIM subcommittee report: postponed

Consideration of graduation requirements:

Foreign Language Requirement

Tomhave requested guidance about the implementation of the graduation requirement requiring two semesters of foreign language. Can those units be pass/fail (P/F), or must they be graded? His working assumption was that they should be graded, since they are required. He noted that P/F is expressly prohibited for university core courses, and is strongly discouraged for courses in a major (although departments can decide to accept it). A student must make at least a D- to receive credit in a graded course (including those in the core); P/F courses require at least a C-.

Sable: Do we grade proficiency exams? Tomhave: No, they're essentially pass/fail.

Barry suggested that since the foreign language requirement can be fulfilled in several different ways, some of which don't require taking our courses, we may not really need a grade. However, the P/F option is really designed to encourage students to take chances (an intention that really doesn't apply here), and requiring a grade would keep treatment of this graduation requirement consistent with that of the core.

Hale commented that since a D- will suffice for (graded) credit, it's "not much of a graduation requirement." She wondered if we could require a higher standard for passing—perhaps a C-? Barry noted that students have other reasons for avoiding D- grades (GPA!).

Anderson-Connolly suggested that having P/F students in a class could create a negative externality if they are less inclined to prepare than are graded students. (Should we ask the Foreign Language Department for input?)

Sable wondered if we really could assume that students had demonstrated "proficiency" if they've merely passed these classes.

Barry M/S/P that courses taken to fulfill the foreign language graduation requirement be graded.

upper-division requirement

Tomhave next drew our attention to the upper-division requirement: students must take three upper-division courses outside their first major. Must these be graded, or if P/F acceptable? The registrar is inclined to assert that these courses can be taken P/F, since that appears to be consistent with the faculty's intention that these courses foster exploration.

Barry reiterated that the P/F option is meant to encourage students to take chances. However, he views lower-level courses as more appropriate for "exploration." Barry recalled Nick Kontogeorgopoulos's eloquent characterization of this requirement as a "rigor requirement, not just a distribution requirement." Allowing P/F grading for these courses could undermine this expectation of rigor. Rousslang agreed, noting that there is a "general feeling among faculty" that P/F grading can undermine the quality of courses. Livingston said that was certainly her experience.

Tomhave said that there aren't very many students taking courses P/F—it's often used to take ceramics or additional courses in the major. He estimates that 1/3 of students use this grading option to explore; the other 2/3 are "abusing" it.

Tomashiro wondered how this requirement will play out—what about prerequisites? For example, she can't imagine many students fulfilling this by taking 300+-level biology or chemistry courses. Indeed: Tomhave noted that 200-level science courses having two prerequisites will fulfill the requirement.

Washburn reminded us that the decreased number of units in the new core means students can "ratchet up" their exploration of other areas. (This goal of upper-level exploration is currently mandated in the [defunct] Comparative Values and Science in Context requirements.) We want to encourage students to take advantage of their newly found flexibility by exploring, instead of having "spikes" in their own majors.

Anderson-Connolly M/S/P that courses taken to fulfill the upper-level graduation requirement be graded. (1 abstention)

The committee celebrated its achievements by **adjourning at 8:59 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda S. Livingston