

## Curriculum Committee Minutes

February 11, 2015

**Committee members attending:** Richard Anderson-Connolly, Rob Beezer, Luc Boisvert, Nancy Bristow, Gwynne Brown, Jane Carlin, Jim Evans, Lisa Ferrari, Sara Freeman, Lisa Johnson, Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, Alan Krause, Julia Looper, Janet Marcavage, Elise Richman, Brett Rogers, Allison Simmons, Brad Tomhave

**Also attending:** Lisa Hutchinson

**1) Call to Order** at 8:02 a.m.

### **2) Remarks from the Chair**

Freeman commented that this is the first of three weekly meetings, as March is a busy time. Members are welcome to put things on meeting agendas. Freeman and Ferrari have been pushing back against departments under review that are requesting extensions on deadlines, in order to make enough time for WGs to do their work.

Time permitting, Freeman hoped to add two items to the “New Business” portion of the agenda. First: the proposal brought before the full faculty at the 2/2/15 meeting to shorten spring semester to 67 teaching days in order to bring it into balance with fall semester. Steven Neshyba called Freeman before the faculty meeting to communicate about it, since the proposal will cross the CC’s path at some point. Second: a question from WG1 about syllabi presented in foreign languages.

**3) M/S/P** to approve the minutes from the January 25 meeting with one minor fix.

### **4) Working Group Reports**

**WG 1:** Bristow reported that the WG is well along in its Hispanic Studies review and will begin the Asian Studies review at a meeting next week. Bristow met with Tomhave to discuss the issue of allowing community college quarter credits to be counted as equivalent to a semester of 101. Tomhave suggested a meeting with heads of FL areas. The WG is also waiting on a document from Music about extending a major to 16.5 units; this will come to the full CC.

**WG 2:** Kontogeorgopoulos reported that the WG is continuing its discussion of the core as a whole, which happens every 5 years. The WG has created a brief list of questions to help assess the faculty’s opinion of the core’s “coherence and appropriateness” (as per the charge). Kontogeorgopoulos will meet with Ellen Peters next week to get help with the distribution and

design of the survey. Once the data is collected, it will be possible to assess whether there is enough desire among faculty to make changes (in whole or in part) to the current core, which is more than ten years old. If it does appear that the faculty wish to revise the core, the CC should request that the Senate convene an ad hoc committee to use the survey data, work with Institutional Research (which has additional data of its own), conduct focus groups, and spend the year developing a proposal for the faculty to vote on. This would constitute the yearly service commitment for those serving on the committee. In short, if faculty agree that the core should be revised, this is far too large a task for a 3-person WG to accomplish.

Kontogeorgopoulos reported that the WG has also continued its work on the proposal for the Environmental Policy and Decision Making (EPDM) program to offer an 8-unit major (designated ENVR) in addition to the current minor being offered. **M/S to approve the ENVR major.** He provided plentiful information, as the major being proposed is novel for Puget Sound:

- The proposal was very thorough, and the program was very responsive when asked follow up questions by the working group.
- One distinguishing feature of this major would be that would be a "linked major" rather than a "stand-alone" major. Students would choose a primary major, and only then could they choose ENVR as a major. So, it would be a double major, and one could not major in just ENVR alone. Students would be allowed to choose any major at Puget Sound as a primary major, and then would choose an EPDM advisor and then sign up for the ENVR linked major.
- EPDM provided the following rationale for the linked major so that others in the future can see why a linked major was proposed, as opposed to a traditional stand-alone major:
  - a. The linked major is designed with program capacity in mind. Due to limited resources (especially dedicated teaching units), EPDM was worried that offering a stand-alone major would put pressure on faculty and departments to staff the program, which might become a problem if demand grows and there are many majors. For example, if a lack of space in required courses becomes a problem, students who cannot finish their ENVR degree will still be able to get a minor and will still have a primary major in another subject.
  - b. Because it is linked and can only be a secondary major, the creation of an ENVR major will not take majors away from other departments.
  - c. The EPDM faculty members felt that it was unclear what a stand-alone ENVR major would look like, because there are so many ways to define it. They felt that without some grounding in a particular discipline, it would remain poorly defined and would lack disciplinary depth. Rather than defining what ENVR means, and having it only mean one thing, they thought it would be better to anchor it to another major rather than having the ENVR major stand alone. This is the reason that the other 4 NW Colleges have some sort of coordinating mechanism for their environmental studies majors, whether it is disciplinary tracks, or the requirement (at Reed) to choose a home department outside of Environmental Studies.

- d. EPDM faculty feel that students should graduate with the depth of understanding that comes out of specializing in a traditional major during their time at Puget Sound. Complementing an ENVR major with another major positions students much better for both employment in an environmental field, and graduate school. While this is potentially true of many majors, the linked majors guarantees that students have depth in a particular field while also majoring in ENVR.
- Since the idea of a linked major is brand new, and there are no other such majors at Puget Sound, the working group acknowledges that a new category is being created, and we note that this is not an easy decision in light of the confusion about emphases and minors. However, unlike interdisciplinary emphases, which may not be as clearly defined as they could be in relation to minors, the linked major is very straightforward to understand in terms of its definition: it is a secondary major that must accompany a primary major. Nevertheless, it is with some trepidation that we approve a new category, and note that it will be important to monitor and assess how this new linked major works in practice once implemented.
- Beyond the “linked major” topic, the EPDM program gives several compelling reasons to offer a major:
  - a. Enrollments in ENVR courses are strong. For example, enrollment in ENVR 101 (Introduction to the Environment), which is not a core course, has been running at an average of 108% in the past three years, since it started to be required [104 students for 96 spots].
  - b. There has been an average of 20.4 ENVR graduate per year over the past five years, indicating a robust level of demand for the existing minor.
  - c. The initiative for this major proposal came from an Andrew Mellon grant submitted by President Thomas in 2011. This grant was meant to fund the development and implementation of a major in ENVR. President Thomas noted in the grant that the College Board, and the consulting firm, Hardwick Day, determined that a significant proportion of prospective students perceive Puget Sound as a less attractive option than many of our peer institutions in part due to the absence of an environmental major.
  - d. The decision to offer a major, and a linked major in particular, came after several years of discussions and consultations. In addition to the core EPDM faculty, 23 affiliated faculty were interviewed for their input. These discussions and consultations have been taking place since September 2011, after EPDM learned about the success of the Mellon Grant.
  - e. Based on feedback from alumni, employers, and graduate institutions, offering a major makes a big difference for students hoping to work in the field of environmental studies. For students hoping to work in an environmental field, having only a minor positions them unfavorably to other students from institutions that offer an environmental studies major.

From the discussion that followed Kontogeorgopoulos’s report:

- The major would include the following courses: ENVR 101 (Introduction to the Environment), ENVR 201 (Tools and Topics in Environmental Policy), ENVR 202 (Tools in Environmental Science, .5 unit), ENVR 203 (Topics in Environmental Science,

.5 unit), 4 units from lists of Policy and General Electives, and ENVR 400 (Senior Seminar).

- No double-counting would be allowed (or possible) with the ENVR major: only two Connections courses would overlap with the core.
- The minor offered by EPDM is also designated “ENVR.”
- The ENVR major would be only 3 units larger than the minor, but it also includes an experiential component.
- This was developed as a major rather than an emphasis in part because the Mellon grant was to develop a major. Also, a major (or minor) is clearer to employers and grad schools than an emphasis.
- Members expressed concern at the possibility that a student might declare an ENVR major but, because of staffing constraints and limited course offerings, end up having to settle for a minor. One member noted that there are a lot of choices in terms of what classes would count toward the major, so it might be more a matter of a student not being able to take the exact courses they desired than of not being able to finish the major at all.
- There are staffing questions involved in any creation of a new major.
- Perhaps programs that currently offer emphases would want to switch to linked majors, once this precedent is set by ENVR. Having emphases turn into linked majors would take care of the confusion over what emphases are. It was noted that this is part of the definitional issue that the CC has been working on and will need to communicate broadly about, and not for EPDM.
- There are pedagogical reasons to offer a major instead of an emphasis, including depth and disciplinary coherence.
- Students would be able to choose any major to link ENVR to, because there are so many fields that overlap meaningfully with environmental studies, but this would be an issue for advisors to take up with students interested in ENVR.
- The CC needs to define categories like “linked major” and “emphasis” not only for ourselves and for the campus community, but for graduate schools and employers.
- The faculty in EPDM all have backgrounds in other disciplines. Only two faculty members were hired directly for EPDM; the other participating faculty belong to other departments and teach electives in EPDM. In addition to staffing issues, there are disciplinary issues why students need an anchoring disciplinary major in addition to their ENVR major. Environmental studies is a broad-ranging field; this is why other schools also link their environmental studies majors in various ways.
- A member asked whether this required double major really constitutes an 18-unit major. Certainly students choose to double major all the time, but in this instance they would be forced to take 18 units, which would limit their other choices.
- Should the CC be concerned, when deciding whether to approve a new major, whether this will lead to fewer students choosing existing majors? The ENVR proposers seem keen to note that the new majors won’t draw students away from current majors, but is this necessary?
- Kontogeorgopoulos noted that EPDM is applying for a new joint tenure-line position with IPE to create more possibilities.

After lively and wide-ranging discussion, **M/S/P to table the motion.** Members were urged to look at the materials in the WG2 folder on SoundNet and to e-mail Kontogeorgopoulos with any

questions. The CC will try to vote at the next meeting if possible. Kontogeorgopoulos was congratulated for his detailed and fascinating presentation.

**WG3:** Looper reported that the WG will meet tomorrow. Looper talked to Ferrari yesterday about the Math Approaches Core review.

**WG4:** Rogers reported that the WG met last week for stimulating conversation. It is working on the Theatre Arts and BMB reviews. The WG is also working on revisions to the Curricular Impact Statement and hopes to bring those to the CC soon.

#### **(5) Associate Dean's Report on Curriculum Actions**

Ferrari summarized the report of delegated actions. There was a discussion of the change from "Gender Studies" to "Gender and Queer Studies," which did not involve the CC because the structure and curriculum didn't change.

#### **(6) Old Business: Plans re: Interdisciplinary Minor and Emphasis**

Freeman said it's worth having a meeting of the heads of interdisciplinary minors and emphases (and maybe linked majors!) to hear from them on this topic, but not to do a big survey or research project on it. The results of that meeting will be shared with the CC and then the Senate. The third step will be to adjust the document that describes emphases, create guidelines for proposers of new interdisciplinary programs (and maybe linked majors!), and create an internal document to help future WGs tasked with evaluating interdisciplinary programs (and maybe linked majors!). At the meeting, members of the CC can inform the heads about the "linked major" concept and hold a discussion about possible implications of that new possibility. We will add to a future agenda: how to monitor a linked major.

In discussion, a member asked whether it was the CC's job to define and monitor the differences between minors and emphases (and maybe linked majors). There was some agreement that the difference between/among these should be up to programs themselves to designate, but that guidelines would assist with communication between programs and the CC, and aid in the work of WGs.

An ad hoc group consisting of Freeman, Tomhave, and Brown will host the meeting, perhaps 3/24/15 at 5 p.m. or so, likely with a tasty bottle of Malbec. All CC members are invited to attend.

**(7) New Business: Unit Limits for Majors**

Rogers noted that WG 4 is reviewing a department whose major is at 10 units. Last year the CC affirmed the 9-unit limit. Rogers seeks the input of the CC as to how to proceed.

A member commented that it would be preferable to end meetings earlier so that faculty who teach at 9:00 can be present for the entirety of the meeting.

**(8) M/S/P to adjourn at 8:59:30.**

Submitted by Gwynne Brown, with generous help from Nick Kontogeorgopoulos