College of Arts and Sciences  
Educational Policy Meeting  
Thursday, October 23rd, 2014

In Attendance:  

1. Welcome and announcements:  
The next meeting will begin at 4:30 instead of 4:00.

2. Approval of Minutes from May 18, 2014:  
William Petri suggested a correction to the last item in the minutes: his proposal to offer alternatives to the language requirement concerned the specific case of students with a certified learning disability, who currently can waive the requirement. Minutes were accepted with the emendation.

3. Discussion of Foreign Language requirement in A&S:  
Gregory Kalscheur began the discussion by asking whether there is any concrete action that could result from the previous meeting’s conversation regarding the language requirement. One suggestion was to encourage students to go further in their study of languages by offering an award or other form of recognition to those students who continue their language studies significantly beyond the language requirement. Another suggestion was to standardize what constitutes language proficiency, as the standards vary greatly among the language departments. A member of the original subcommittee on this issue noted that the language departments were receptive to the idea of a general standard for proficiency. Whether the job of coming up with such a standard should be performed by the committee rather than the language departments themselves is less clear.

Regarding the possibility of broadening the requirement to other forms of cultural exploration, one member noted that the nature of the current core is not well-suited for the kind of interdisciplinary offerings that comprise classes in cultural exploration. Broadening the requirement to include other forms of cultural exploration would also impact how the A&S language requirement relates to the university’s cultural diversity requirement. It was also noted that if the language requirement were dropped or diluted, fewer students would take language classes and thus fewer language classes would be available, especially in less popular languages.

The committee agreed that while there is general faculty support for a language proficiency requirement, there is not yet a clearly articulated reason for the support, a point that led to remarks regarding the value of the requirement. College-level language instruction allows students a deeper understanding of languages than high school courses. However, it isn’t self-evident why languages required a standard of proficiency, considering that a variety of aptitudes is found in most fields of study.
This question led members to consider whether proficiency should be the criteria to measure the gains made by fulfilling the requirement.

A member noted that one challenge language courses face is the level of engagement they can allow because they focus on grammar and vocabulary instead of immersion. Whether this method is appropriate hinges on whether the language requirement is for the sake of skill acquisition, cultural engagement, or some other purpose. A member suggested that the School of Education could conduct a study, commissioned by the committee, to measure and identify the benefits of the language requirement.

We returned to the question of whether concrete action can or should result from the committee’s efforts. Given the variation in standards among the language departments, as well as the disparate nature of the languages themselves, a universal standard for proficiency is perhaps untenable. However, identifying what the standards are for each department, as well as expanding the standards of proficiency, would be beneficial. The committee also supported the idea of awarding those students who develop a “super proficiency” in a language. One member noted that such a program existed at one time, which was run by Adrienne Nussbaum. The suggestion to replace substitutions for waivers to those students with certified learning disabilities was supported as well.

We concluded the conversation by agreeing that the committee should work on the following: 1) Articulating a vision for the language requirement, 2) Expanding what counts as proficiency (perhaps provide different standard options) as well as establishing what counts as proficiency for each language department.

4. **Discussion of proposal for departmental minor in English:**
The proposal contained two parts: to modify the requirements for majors and to offer a minor in the field. Because departments have the authority to change major requirements, the committee focused on the institution of an English minor. A member suggested that the department should make explicit whether core courses count toward the minor, and there was some discussion about how the minor would impact departmental resources. The committee voted, and the proposal received unanimous support.

5. **Committee Assignments:**
Michael Martin will send an email on Monday to the committee with the new committee assignments.

Submitted by: Mary Troxell