Minutes for September 20, 2012 EPC Meeting

In attendance: Michael Martin, Tim Duket, Michael Moore, Clare Dunsford, William Petri, Tom McGuinness, David Quigley, Greg Kalscheur, S.J., Kathy Dunn, Luke Jorgensen, Franziska Seraphim, David Vanderhooft, Rudolph Hon, and C-K Cheung. No student members present. They will attend October meeting.

Meeting comes to order at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of May meeting minutes – prepared by David Vanderhooft. One minor change proposed and minutes approved.

Agenda

1. Introduction of new members (no student members as yet)
2. Minutes
3. Notetaking services
4. Departmental honors programs
5. Proposal for Biology Minor
6. Structure and work of the EPC in 2012-2013

Revised agenda

1. Course Withdrawal Deadline

“Recommendation to the Provost on Course Withdrawal Deadline Date from the University Council on Teaching, Spring, 2012: The UCT recommends that the date for the final withdrawal from a course be moved from approximately two weeks to four weeks before the end of the semester.” And “Please see the attached documents. EPC will discuss this at this afternoon’s meeting in order to report to the “Academic Officers Committee.” (Michael Martin)

David Quigley accepted the addition to the agenda. The EPC can and should address the question of the date for course withdrawals. EPC is asked to send an opinion to the AOC which has already considered the UCT proposal. What does the committee think of moving the date ahead by two weeks?

Clare Dunsford reports from the Academic Officers Council that this will be university-wide; “It is hoped that this recommendation will be enacted across the university” (UCT proposal). Will all the schools agree on a deadline?

Bill Petri challenges an assumption that there is a problem for science departments – faulty assumption. The biggest problem is in Earth and Environmental Sciences, not in Biology and Chemistry; Petri considers this a small problem overall.
Kathy Dunn objected to conclusions in the report that Ws are diminishing with the current deadline; small percentages suggest this; but earlier date will encourage students giving up too soon.

Bill Petri further points out that students come to deans asking for more time and an earlier date will increase this pressure – two more weeks will involve much more work for the deans negotiating exceptions to the deadline.

Michael Moore is not convinced by the UCT rationale; best reason absent; what detracts from work on other courses.

David Quigley asks C-K Cheung from Math and Rudy Hon from EES to weigh in since it seems these departments seek the change; C-K and Rudy reply later (below). Quigley notes that the current deadline allows students to use the fall break at Thanksgiving to make the decision – especially first year first semester students? Quigley wondered if faculty were actually driving this proposal, because he has not heard from faculty on the issue. Clare Dunsford reports that, as it is, there are already a good many requests for Ws after the deadline; the same will continue to happen and perhaps increase.

Bill Petri notes major advising issues in this change; are the interest of students served here? Is it possible to link this with registration for the next semester? Mike Moore – what if we expect advisors to make this a formal part of advising? Keep the deadline as is.

C-K Cheung – Math Department – 13.5% in 2010 were drops in math courses; math department does not have a problem handling it (or seek more).

Clare Dunsford – AOC’s first thought about the UCT proposal was that this change was meant to deal with grade inflation. AOC response was that many students do not have the data to withdraw so soon. Dunsford spoke against this because of knowing that many professors do not give students enough information to act four weeks early.

David Quigley – proposal – we cannot reply by an Oct 11 date.
   1. Student members of EPC not here and we need to hear their reaction;
   2. Let’s invite Bob Murphy (UCT) to find out fully what is their concern; from whom does the push for change come? Quigley suggests EPC is worried about “harm that can be done”.

Rudy Hon offers an additional and last observation. Namely, EES works with some unmotivated and unprepared students taking the Science Core in these Earth and Environmental Science courses. EES expresses a strong desire to make some such change.

2. **Notely.** Vice Provost for Educational Technology produced a “Benchmarking Report on Student Note-Taking services” at the EPC’s request. Note-taking was discussed extensively at the May 7, 2012 meeting and Rita Owens was asked to help the committee obtain more information. The committee read and discussed this report.
Clare Dunsford focused our discussion on what “peer” institutions were doing – namely, Harvard and Simmons in the report. In both places, “notetaking” is dealt with as a breach of academic integrity and is considered a part of an honor code. But many other places do not take this view.

EPC discussion was largely a consensus that note-taking not bad in itself and useful in some circumstances. Strong consensus against commercial benefit from note-taking. Hope expressed that this be part of an honor code. David Quigley supposes BC too large for an honor code as such. No action taken.

3. Two agenda items postponed: Departmental honors programs and the “Proposal for a Biology Minor”.

4. This year’s work: call for two committees, Academic Policy and Honors. Michael Martin will be polling members to join one of these two groups.

Meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tim Duket