

College of Arts and Sciences – Educational Policy Committee

Gasson 105 – *Monday, May 10, 2010*

Present: David Quigley, Clare Dunsford, Bill Petri, Dennis Hale, Clare O'Connor, Harry Rosser, Beth Wallace, Brian Jacek, Ibby Nathans, Akua Sarr, Barbara Viechnicki, Stuart Hecht, Bill Keane, Michael Martin, Tom McGuinness, Rein Uritam.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 by David Quigley.

The minutes of the meeting of April 8, 2010 were approved after clarification of two issues: no more than three credits of thesis work may count toward two majors; course contracts will be developed for “independently arranged” course, rather than “independent study” courses.

Dean Quigley made a number of announcements:

- Contract documents for the above-mentioned independently arranged courses will be ready and available in August.
- Dean Quigley highlighted again the message from the administration for faculty members to take part in the Commencement and Baccalaureate Mass ceremonies. It was noted that the Trustees see such participation as a very favorable element in the overall tone and mood of these events.
- As a consequence of the upcoming building renovations, the EPC will meet in Fulton 412 during academic year 2010 – 2011. The A&S Dean’s office will temporarily be moved to the first floor of Carney. Altogether, space will be scarce and meeting rooms must be booked well in advance.
- Recently, for various reasons, some disorder has existed in the process of approval of Core courses. The renewed order is characterized by the following. There is a new director, Arthur Madigan, of the University Core Development Committee (UCDC). All Core courses require prior UCDC approval. A new UCDC website will list all Core courses. The UCDC will act in a timely manner, but, also, departments were admonished not to submit a course for approval in late summer, and expect action before the start of the semester!

The major agenda item was implementation of the course to credit system. Dean Quigley thanked all EPC members for their work this year on the course to credit conversion, and observed that, consequently, the past year was notable as one of the most serious and active ones in some time. Students entering this fall, that is, the class of 2014, will be in the credit-based system.

Dean Quigley brought forward, and the EPC discussed, three aspects of the new system: oversight, summer courses, and unintended consequences.

Oversight

The essential topic for discussion dealt with the extent and specificity of oversight and at what level the oversight should be exercised. Specifically, what sorts of questions about courses need to come to the EPC. Clearly, a full-scale revision of a major curriculum needs EPC action. At the other extreme, the introduction of a single course is a topic for the department. The allocation of the curriculum among Core, major, and elective categories is a “big” question requiring EPC deliberation. There are also gray areas.

Various members listed possible issues requiring oversight. New 1-credit or 4-credit courses. A change from 3-credit to 4-credit. “Old” 6-credit courses. Newly emerging “concentrations.”

A question arose on whether a student could bundle together 15 one-credit courses to assemble a full semester’s program; but it was pointed out that in each semester at least three 3-credit courses are required.

Dean Quigley expressed the view that, especially during the first year of the new system’s implementation, there should be review of any newly introduced courses. The final consensus that emerged was that there was need for review of any new course whose structure deviated from the standard format of 50 contact minutes per semester course credit, plus two hours of outside work.

Summer Courses

Members were reminded of the present policy on summer courses. From among courses offered by OIP (Office of International Program), only one course may count as one of the 38 required for graduation, but its grade is not computed into the GPA. Other summer courses can only be taken to make up deficiencies and for enrichment. It was discussed what the policy should be on this limitations in the new credit-based system. Some argued that the OIP course cap be increased to two courses.

A discussion broadened to the unusual questions about summer courses. Some alluded to the “two weeks in Venice” metaphor. Others gave a spirited defense for summer courses as a serious intellectual experience. Some asked if it made a difference if the course was Core, major, or elective. On a numerical note, it was pointed out that, at present, a maximum of 8, out of the 38 courses, can be made up, presumably in the summer. By extension, to preserve similar ratios, and preserve eight semesters in residence, at a minimum of 12 credits each, there will be a maximum of 24 credits of make-up, again presumably in summer.

Unintended Consequences

Members noted what had long been foreseen as a consequence of the credit-based system. Its effects will be different for different majors. The best-known example is science majors, who now can count 1-credit labs and 4-credit courses at “full value”, hence reducing the number of other courses required toward graduation. Whether this is good or bad is a matter of opinion.

A brief discussion arose on the rather narrow topic of internships. At present, there exists “unevaluated” 1-credit, frequently off-campus, internships, on paper requiring 50 hours of student work. It was decided to allow one such 1-credit experience to be counted as one of the required 120 credits.

Looking forward, Dean Quigley listed a number of topics for EPC discussions during 2010 – 2011:

- Course to credit implementation
- Double majors
- Theses (of various kinds)
- 6-credit courses
- Summer course policies and limitations

Other member added:

- Grade inflation (although this elicited laughter and resignation)
- Policy on computer use in classrooms
- Taking of courses during medical leave

Dean Quigley thanked members of the EPC whose term are expiring (Hale, Hecht, Jacek, O’Connor, Uritam) and presented each with an appropriate gift.

The Meeting was adjourned at 11:00.

Respectively submitted,

Rein Uritam