

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY
MINUTES**

November 25, 2009

Wednesday, 11 am-1:30 p.m., Kerr Hall, Room 307

Present: Holly Cordova (NSTF Rep), Cormac Flanagan, Jimin Lee, Roxanne Monnet (Staff), Eric Porter, John Tamkun (Chair), Peter Young.

Absent: Pam Hunt-Carter (Registrar, *ex officio*), Michael Morrissey (SUA Rep), Matthew Palm (SUA Rep), Eileen Zurbruggen, a provost representative has not yet been assigned to CEP.

Guests: Margie Claxton (Associate Registrar), Michael McCawley (Associate Director of Admissions).

I. Announcements and updates.

At the recent Senate Meeting the desire to hold some furlough days on instructional days was raised again. Chair John Tamkun voiced at the meeting that the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) did not support such an action without their having had the opportunity to give feedback on the potential implications. At an upcoming meeting, CEP will consider a letter on an associated topic, that of reading days, submitted by Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education (VPDUE) Bill Ladusaw.

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) plans to further the conversation on a possible change to the future of narrative evaluations and will provide a proposal to CEP for consideration in early winter.

Chair Tamkun and VPDUE Ladusaw have been working on a short on-line survey to department to better understand the plans for general education course capacity. This survey is offered partly in response to divisions and departments who have wanted an understanding of what are the capacity needs for certain designations. CEP supported the survey idea but expressed the concern that it not take much time for departments to complete.

II. Report on Undergraduate Education Effectiveness Task Force.

CEP discussed the report of the Undergraduate Educational Effectiveness Task Force. The Committee agreed that clearly defined educational objectives--coupled with appropriate learning assessment programs--have the potential to significantly improve the quality of undergraduate education at UC. CEP also welcomes the Task Force's recommendation that "the responsibility for assessing student learning resides with the faculty; should be discipline specific and locally (campus) defined, with Senate oversight and participation; and supported by the required administrative resources and infrastructure for effective implementation."

Although the Committee's overall impression of the report is favorable, members are concerned that an increased emphasis on assessment may place an unreasonable burden on overworked faculty and staff. The assessment process should be kept as simple as possible without resorting to standardized tests. It would be preferable to integrate assessment with required coursework, including papers, exams, projects and performances. For some disciplines, the analysis of pass rates and grade distributions in specific courses--together with surveys of graduates and alumni--may provide an adequate assessment of learning outcomes.

CEP also had concerns about the section of the report dealing with reporting and accountability. The committee understood the need to share information about UC's educational effectiveness with the general public. However, an excessive focus on accountability may have unintended negative consequences. For example, departments may feel pressured to provide positive information about their programs for public relations purposes. If departments fear the consequences of unsatisfactory assessment outcomes, they may be reluctant to set ambitious educational objectives for their programs and conduct rigorous assessments of their effectiveness. They may also be reluctant to admit students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds to their majors. CEP therefore believes that the departments should be evaluated primarily on the rigor of their assessment process and how it is used to improve the quality of undergraduate education.

III. GE Topics.

CEP discussed the idea of double designations on courses from which students would choose from designations. The Committee understood the intellectual rationale in support of this option. However, practically speaking, a number of issues outweigh the benefits. In reflecting on Art Division Dean David Yager's visit last week, the Committee discussed whether to support that certain courses which were found to integrally satisfy two GEs equally should be given double designations or allowed to have student choice options. The Committee believes that cases could be made in most, if not all divisions, for courses that would qualify.

The Committee expressed understanding for the dilemma this posed for some faculty who were uncomfortable with being made to choose when they found their courses to equally satisfy two designations. It was noted that there is not a requirement to propose GE designations and that these faculty to opt not to do so. Alternatively, the choice could be made to balance the department's curricular offerings.

Catalog text could be developed by departments to make clear that just because a class does not carry a designation does not mean that the course does not carry content that would fall within that designation. The next catalog will carry both the old and new GE designations, which gives an opportunity to explain the change from multiple designations down to one.

Issues with student choice designations include:

- Incentive toward "gaming" the system by students choosing choice designation courses just for the option of choice, rather than with a focus on the content of the course, and for departments to offer them to attract enrollees also with a focus on the option of choice. Last year

the decisions were made around a philosophical decision around why students select courses (and department to offer them).

- Potential issues will tracking course capacity by now knowing for which GE students take courses (a problem with the current system).
- Concurrently run courses, each carrying one GE designation from which students would choose, seem likely to cause enrollment confusion, student petitions requesting to switch between sections, and potentially angry students and parents about students not being allowed to satisfy two designations with that course. CEP decided not consider this option--at least not for 2010-11 and possibly beyond.

IV. External review discussions.

CEP held the following discussions in response to departmental external review self-study documents and to identify whether questions should be added to the draft charges for the external review committees (ERC). CEP decided to ask in all Physical and Biological Sciences (PB Sci) reviews what has been the impact of the centralization of undergraduate student advising in that division.

Chemistry & Biochemistry External Review: CEP will request that the following questions be added to the Charge for the External Review Committee.

1. Could the ERC comment on the organization and administrative oversight of the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Program?
2. Could the ERC comment on the effects of the recent reorganization of undergraduate advising, which is now administered by the PBSci Division rather than by individual departments?
3. The survey of Chemistry majors finds that "... the majority of Chemistry students at UCSC were not satisfied with the quality of lower-division Chemistry courses and the availability of courses needed for their graduation." CEP would therefore like the ERC to comment on the structure of the lower-division courses, which serve both as foundation courses for the major and as service courses for major in other disciplines. Are the content and scope of these courses appropriate for both audiences? Does the ERC have any suggestions for improving student satisfaction with these courses?

Earth and Planetary Sciences: CEP will request that the following questions be added to the Charge for the External Review Committee.

1. Could the ERC comment on the proposal by EPS to develop a B.S. in Environmental Science, in collaboration with the Ocean Sciences and Environmental Toxicology Departments?
2. Could the ERC comment on the effects of the recent reorganization of undergraduate advising, which is now administered by the PBSci Division rather than by individual

departments?

3. In the Undergraduate Survey most Earth Sciences students noted a high quality of UCSC instruction. However, the survey also finds that "Santa Cruz Earth Sciences majors reported, on average, lower incidents of research experience. Compared to similar majors across UC, they were less likely to have taken at least one student research course, ... ". Could the ERC comment on why the department doesn't offer more research opportunities for undergraduates, given that the department is quite large and has an excellent research profile at the graduate level?

V. Talking points for VPDAAC consultation on UNEX.

CEP decided that it would be better to discuss the topic of expectations for faculty advisors to University Extension certification programs after the visit of Vice Provost and Dean for Academic Affairs Alison Galloway.

VI. Applied Math and Statistic BS proposal.

CEP considered the proposal to establish a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in Applied Mathematics and Statistics (AMS).

The Committee was impressed with the structure and organization of this proposal, the clear curricular development, the re-use of existing courses where appropriate, and the capstone senior thesis requirement. Overall, CEP found nothing substantive to comment on and is enthusiastic about the new major.

CEP supports approval of this major, pending approval of the revised course AMS 156 which is proposed to satisfy the Disciplinary Communications (DC) requirement. CEP will respond separately to the DC proposal and regarding GE proposals submitted by AMS.

Committee on Planning and Budget reviewed the proposal and found no reason to comment.

In the context of the current fiscal climate, it is not clear to CEP when AMS will plan to start offering this new major. CEP will note in its letter that there is an agreement that offerings of new majors need to be published in the on-line course catalog at least one quarter in advance of their being available to students.

So attests,

John Tamkun, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy