

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, October 14, 2015
11 am-1:30 p.m., Kerr Hall, Room 307**

Present: Doris Ash, Faye Crosby, Matt Guthaus, Erica Halk (NTSF Rep.), Seamus Howard (SUA Rep.), Tonya Ritola, Vanessa Sadsad (SUA Rep.), Tchad Sanger (Registrar, *ex-officio*), Felicity Schaeffer, John Tamkun, (Chair), Susanna Wrangell (staff).

Absent: Dee Hibbert-Jones, Sean Keilen (Provost Rep.).

Guests: VPDUE Hughey and Associate Registrar Claxton.

I. Announcements

Chair Tamkun introduced guests VPDUE Hughey and Associate Registrar Claxton to members. There was an Executive Committee meeting this week and among the issues for CEP was enrollment management. Major Qualification Policies cannot be used to lower enrollment based on resources but on qualifying via the qualification courses. As a result of these policies, departments are seeing increased enrollments but capacity is an issue for many departments. At what point does the size of a program become too large for departments to manage their majors? UCSC does not have a definition.

There was an update on the undergraduate lower division writing curriculum. Later this week the Chairs of CPB, CEP, the Writing Program and Council of Provosts will meet and discuss the next steps in creating a standardized program of writing and college courses.

The Office of the President (UCOP), has required all campuses to review their upper division requirements with the desired outcome of 45 credits for 75% of the majors on each campus. A joint Senate/Administrative announcement will be sent to departments later this week.

Consent agenda items were approved and the review of the draft September 30, 2015 minutes was deferred to next week.

Registrar Sanger updated the committee on the addition of a warning message for the C- grading option. The message will be placed on the instructor grade submittal page. This message will caution instructors on the C- grade option, which does not count for general education or minor requirement credits and is repeatable for credit like the D and F grade options. CEP will draft a message to send out to faculty in November. Student representatives will send something out to their constituents as well.

II. External Review: Stage 1 Biomolecular Engineering Department (BME)

The BME Department is one of the most visible internationally recognized research units on campus. They offer two Bachelor of Science degrees: one in bioinformatics and bioengineering. The minor in bioengineering is popular with biology double majors. This major services a small population of students. Members are concerned with the difficulty in declaring and time to degree. The average time to degree is 15.5 quarters and the program is not ABET accredited.

Questions for consideration:

- As the department is not subject to ABET accreditation, could the faculty significantly prune the requirements without impacting the quality of the program?
- Half of the undergraduate courses are taught by Lecturers. CEP members are interested in learning if the department has a long term sustainable plan to offer the undergraduate curriculum with a balance of ladder rank faculty and lecturers.
- Does the Department have plans to grow, and if so how, what steps will be taken to address these issues?
- The BME department offers electives for other departments but often limits the enrollment in these courses. Is this causing problems for other departments?
- Does the department offer TA training?

Members understand the department would like to increase enrollments and CEP encourages the department to address issues of gender equality. CEP recommends the department actively recruit these populations of students as a way to grow the major.

III. External Review: Stage 2 Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department (EEB)

The Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department (EEB) external review was scheduled during the spring of 2014 and the External Review Committee (ERC) report was submitted in summer of 2015. Many of the issues may have been solved since the review. CEP members will focus instead on an update of our earlier concerns. The report implied the qualification policy was adopted to manage enrollments; this is not an appropriate use of such policies. Successful completion of the lower division qualification courses prepares the student to be successful in the upper division and graduate in a timely manner. CEP is concerned over a possible violation of policy since the department never responded to numerous information requests from CEP on data for their qualification policy requirements. Members would like an update on the course availability for undergraduates as two years ago the UCUES surveys indicated a high degree of dissatisfaction.

Here are the questions:

- What has occurred with advising? Is it appropriate for the divisional advising department to manage the major?
- How will the planned move of the EEB Department to the Coastal Campus affect the well being of undergraduate students and offering of courses?
- How will advising be affected by the move to the Coastal Campus?
- What is the outcome of the Disciplinary Communication (DC) curriculum and TA support?
- Members are concerned that this campus jewel has problems with curriculum for both undergraduate and graduate student due to understaffing. It is mentioned in the Dean's comments that any faculty hire would have to be a Target of Excellence (TOE) recruitment exception, where are we now?

IV. Course Approval Process Follow Up moved forward due to lack of time

V. Course Evaluations

VPAA Lee has requested Senate participation in establishing a campus policy and process to improve feedback on course evaluations. CEP members agreed that the present configurations for course evaluations are not optimal. First, members expressed concern about CAP's requests for cumulative teaching tables, given that administrative staff bear the workload of compiling such tables. Members

question whether or not such work is a good use of institutional resources. Second, because course evaluations play a significant role in faculty's performance assessment when they undergo personnel reviews, members discussed the efficacy of course evaluation data. Of particular concern to committee members is the language used on course evaluations: some questions ask students to evaluate criteria that are incongruent with the course outcomes; some questions raise concern about students' ability to interpret the criteria accurately; and some questions invite students to respond to faculty's likeability, as opposed to faculty's pedagogical ability. In other words, members expressed concern about how well course evaluations reflect faculty's ability to teach courses successfully and how well the current

Further, members discussed how students' perceptions of gender, race/ethnicity, age, and language status influence students' responses within course evaluations. Members offered that current research demonstrates how course evaluations negatively impact such populations; these biases raise significant concerns about the degree to which CAP and DivCAP take course evaluations into consideration during faculty reviews.¹ Because this topic influences—and potentially harms—a significant number of faculty and instructional staff, members encourage revision of the current evaluation forms.² CEP would like the Senate Executive Committee to address this topic at a future meeting.

One possible solution for addressing the issue above is separating course evaluations into two parts: a course-specific question set that invites students to self-report their class performance, and an instructor-specific question set that invites students to offer suggestions for faculty improvement. CEP members pointed out that if these two issues were not folded together, students' self-reported data might be more useful in curricular planning. Such a revision would disaggregate instructor and course data, allowing UCSC to generate helpful information for individual courses while also protecting under-represented faculty populations who might be influenced by student biases. Careful and targeted language would have to be agreed upon by the overseeing committees or the office of record.

Other issues were also addressed regarding departmental and institution-wide data-gathering opportunities. First, members discussed the value of aggregating departmental or program-wide course evaluation responses and presenting the data alongside an individual faculty member's responses, an approach used by many institutions across the country. This approach would allow faculty to see how well they compared with their department's mean, as well as UCSC's overall mean. Such datasets are relatively inexpensive and could benefit faculty as they use evaluations to improve teaching.

Second, members discussed the possibility of including a question set within evaluations that fulfill a general education (GE) requirement. While a standardized approach to including such a question set might not work for every discipline and/or course, CEP members, overall, consider such data gathering

¹ See, for example, Lillian MacNell, Adam Driscoll, and Andrea N. Hunt, "What's in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teachers" (2015); Philip B. Stark and Richard Freishtat, "An Evaluation of Course Evaluations" (2014); and Therese A. Huston's "Race and Gender Bias in Higher Education: Could Faculty Course Evaluations Impede Further Progress Toward Parity?" (2006). Each of these studies confirms that students' biases against women, people of color, and non-native speaker status greatly influence how faculty are evaluated.

² According to the IRAPS 2014 Personnel Profile data set for all teaching faculty on campus, females comprise 43% of the total population, and people of color comprise 23%.

potentially helpful. Again, this kind of revision would require careful and targeted language, specifically language that is student-friendly. Often, students are unaware of the exact GE a course fulfills; as a result, CEP student representatives suggested that faculty should include GE outcomes on their syllabi and make these outcomes understandable for students. That way, students would have consistent messaging about their course requirements and would also fully understand what each course requires of them. This suggestion must be taken into consideration if course evaluations include a GE-specific question set.

VPAA Lee points out that there is a need for creating a standard evaluation form and a central location for evaluation storage for future referencing. These changes could link data on learning outcomes and easily aggregate course data that could be compiled for external reviews. In other words, standardizing course evaluations and including a GE outcome question set could yield helpful data and allow us to easily collate student data and individual responses, thereby producing an easier process for synthesizing course evaluations and for collating entire departmental-wide and/or institution-wide course evaluation data.

Finally, members briefly discussed how to improve student response rates for online evaluations. Making the evaluation of the course part of class participation grade may help increase the response rate, but we can consider other options, such as releasing course grades to students only after they have completed their course evaluations. That way, faculty are not forced to assign participation as an evaluation criterion.

To move forward on these initiatives, though, requires that the Senate define committee roles for overseeing the process. It is not clear if a senate committee should have complete oversight or if there should be a joint administrative/senate structure. Traditionally, course evaluations have been under the purview of the Committee on Teaching (COT). CEP members are uncertain of whether or not such changes should fall under the purview of the COT.

VI. CEP Delegation Policy

CEP will monitor and review on an annual basis all decisions delegated to other academic and administrative units. The approved draft will be posted on the Senate's public CEP website. Members found the policy to be unproblematic and will be updated after confirmation with campus stakeholders. A revised policy will be issued if changes are needed at a future meeting.