University Curriculum Committee
Minutes
October 23, 2015

Members Present: Brighouse, Brown, Green, Fadl, Howard, Ingham, Kapust, Smith, Wiegmann (phone)

Members Absent: Moser

The meeting began at: 9:03 am

I. Consent item – Minutes of the October 9, 2015 meeting
Motion to approve made by Ingham. Unanimously approved.

II. Consent item – The Physical Education Activity Program (PE ACTIV) has submitted 56 course discontinuation proposals as part of the Department of Kinesiology’s plan to retire the subject listing.
Motion to approve made by Brighouse. Unanimously approved.

III. Proposed Changes to UCC Membership

The University Committee is recommending that Faculty Policy and Procedures be updated to allow academic staff to serve on the University Curriculum Committee. The proposed changes are attached. This change was discussed and the membership agreed that academic staff would bring valuable knowledge, perspective and experience to the committee in particular because of the administrative and teaching responsibilities they may have that are unlike those of the faculty. The range of titles and positions for academic staff is much broader and varied than faculty, questions were also raised about which academic staff would serve and it was recommended that language be included to restrict eligibility to instructional academic staff titles.

Concern was voiced that the reason the change was being requested was due to the fact that it is difficult for the Committee on Committees to find four faculty members to serve each year. Part of the value of serving on the UCC is being able to bring knowledge about the curricular process back to your school/college and department. The UCC plays and important role in the development of curriculum, are there ways to highlight the importance of the committee?

Brown will take this feedback to the Secretary of the Faculty and the University Committee
IV. Guest Presentation (9:45 – 10:15) – The School of Medicine and Public Health is in the process of updating and revising the curriculum for the MD program. This will include submitting a number of new course proposals that will be a bit different from what the committee has traditionally seen from SMPH. To help the committee understand the type and rationale of the curricular changes, Associate Dean Christie Seibert, Curriculum Coordinator Amy Becker and Dr. Shobhi Chheda from SMPH are coming to present and hear feedback about the changes they have planned.

Dr. Seibert, Ms. Becker and Dr. Chheda gave a presentation on the planned revisions to the MD curriculum. The curriculum will now be organized in 3 phases and emphasizes competencies and the integration of basic science and clinical topics. An important concept in the new curriculum is longitudinal sequencing that will reduce repetition and increase opportunities to integrate concepts from the clinical and basic sciences. All of the courses are going to be graded on an S/U basis. Dr. Seibert explained how a combination of national exams, instructor evaluations and the mastery of concepts in courses combine to create a profile of student performance that makes A-F grading unnecessary. Courses in the MD program will look somewhat different than courses in other programs across campus, the MD curriculum committee understands however that there are common course elements (the credit hour, course descriptions etc.) that must use the “common language” of courses. They expressed their willingness to work with the UCC to make sure that their course proposals meet the needs of the program while still conforming to established requirements. The first two proposals will be reviewed by the UCC at the November 13th meeting.

V. Discussion
A. Cracking the Credit Hour

The committee had a brief discussion about the changing nature of courses and instruction as distance delivery modalities become more and more popular while at the same time the metrics used to determine credit hours rely heavily on student and instructor face-to-face interaction. It is recognized that student and instructor interaction is key to providing a high quality education. It is as much a concern if a freshman makes it through an entire year or even a semester without interacting with an instructor if they are taking traditional large lecture classroom based courses as it is if the courses are offered online. The value of a UW-Madison education relies on the reputation and environment we provide and if this isn’t emphasized we will have difficulty competing effectively with online institutions.

The lack of models or guidelines leads people to do things that might be expedient but are not necessarily in the best interest of students. Good intentions around using peer mentors, posting lectures notes online or using innovative teaching methods can go wrong if students still focus on learning for the exam, regurgitating information then forgetting it. There are ways of providing excellent, polished materials that do not recognize the importance of making mistakes and natural interaction that occurs in an in-person setting. Interaction among students can also be a very valuable education tool.

B. Next Steps
There is a need to find a common language that transcends the different modalities. The committee should consider developing a set of guidelines about what is important when assessing contact hours. Credit hour stands in for learning, let’s use that and assess the learning outcomes which then requires high quality assessment of learning. The problems of online courses are already there for in-person courses. The real pressing question is, people who want to create heavy online courses, how do we consider the assessment of the credit hours assigned? Whatever we move toward for online, we want to keep in mind for in-person courses.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.
6.53. UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

A. MEMBERSHIP. The committee shall consist of 12 faculty members, three from each faculty division as indicated below. Members shall serve three-year terms, which shall be staggered. The Committee on Committees and the Academic Staff Nominating Committee shall coordinate so that no department has more than one member on the committee.

1. Two faculty members from each division. The Committee on Committee shall give consideration to appointing members who have recently served on their college or school curriculum committee.

2. Four academic staff members with instructional experience. The Academic Staff Nominating Committee shall give consideration to appointing members who teach or have taught more than one different course.

B. FUNCTIONS.

1. Approves courses. Proposals for new credit courses, or for modifications of or discontinuation of existing credit courses, shall be approved by the department (or department-like body), then by the school or college, and finally by the University Curriculum Committee.

2. Review of course offerings. The University Curriculum Committee may review and recommend the alteration or discontinuance of existing credit courses, and the establishment of new courses.

3. Advice on educational policy and planning. On its own initiative or on request, the University Curriculum Committee may advise the chancellor, provost, deans, or other administrative officers of the university on educational policy and planning and their implementation.