University Curriculum Committee
Minutes
October 28, 2016

Members Present: Corfis, Court, DeBaillie, Ingham, Smith, Weimer, Wenker, Wiegmann

Members Absent: Howard, Moser, Thompson, Kapust

Guests: Sarah Mangelsdorf, Provost
Jocelyn Milner, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

The meeting began at: 9:00 am

I. Consent item – Minutes of the October 14, 2016 meeting
Motion by Ingham, second by Wiegmann to approve, unanimously approved.

II. Discussion with the Provost and Vice Provost

The provost thanked the committee for the work it has done and is doing and asked the committee members to tell her more about what the committee is currently working on and what challenges it faces.

Smith explained that much of the committee’s work and challenges are related to credit hour requirements. Now there are more distance based courses as well as more innovation in face-to-face classes it is difficult to make comparisons with traditional, lecture-based courses and apply the credit hour rules in a consistent way. The committee is trying to figure out how to get in front of these issues. Two working groups have formed, one for the new course proposal form and the other is looking at best practices from around campus and at other institutions that can be used to develop guidelines for the development and review of course proposals.

The provost asked about the committee’s methods for dealing with courses that have overlapping content. With the new activity based budget model, school/colleges and departments “staying in their lane” is important in order to avoid perverse incentives and inefficient use of resources because of duplication. There is also concern about students getting credit multiple times for the same content. She has had these conversations to some extent with the deans but recognizes that the UCC deals with the issue much more closely and specifically. Ingham explained that the committee’s role has become less about being a traffic cop. We do see courses that seem to be in the wrong place, for example a communication course in the Medical School. In such cases the committee recommends to the proposers of these courses that maybe instead of developing a new course they look to those on campus who are experts in the field. Corfis added that the college
curriculum committees are looking at this although they are not always able to judge overlapping
content across schools and colleges in a comprehensive way. Hopefully the new curriculum
management system will help with this issue. The provost suggested that the committee could
develop policy in this area. She acknowledged that any sort of prescriptive policy that relied on
percentages of overlap etc. would be difficult and that there are other reasons for offering courses
that overlap such as requisite differences, scheduling needs, emphasis within the subject matter.
Milner added that policy is helpful but we still need active participation by the faculty committee
to exercise judgement. Milner also noted that as a campus we are severely lacking in curricular
policy, the institution is over 160 years old but the UCC is only 4 years old. We will need to
build policy over time that will address federal compliance and accreditation requirements and
counter self interest in the budget model.

The provost said that it is unusual for an institution like this to have such a new campus level
curriculum committee so it is expected that there might be a policy gap that needs to be filled in.
Even with the UAPC people don’t love it when things are turned back but it is a part of
developing quality programs and courses. As a new committee you are stepping on toes, for the
UAPC most things are business as usual. Milner added that the UAPC has a checklist of what
things have to be done before a proposal can go to the UAPC. The role of these groups is to
counter self-interest and set a common standard for the campus for course delivery that is
consistent within the institution and among other institutions.

The discussion then moved to the creation of policy in a more general sense. The committee
appreciates that the provost is supportive of them developing new policies. Corfis talked about a
negative perception of the UCC around campus because of sending proposals back for reasons
that are not always spelled out clearly in policy. We need policy so that the school/colleges
know what is required but it needs to be flexible so it meets the needs of a wide range of
discipline across campus. It is important that the committee figure out how to more clearly
articulate what we are looking for. Once the requirements and standards are clearly articulated
the UCC needs to coordinate with the school/college curriculum committees to make sure that
the requirements and guidelines at each level are understood and in sync.

The provost noted that it would save a lot of time if only well vetted proposals came to the
committee. Efficiency is critical with the UCC given the ever expanding number of proposals
that are reviewed. In the past few years there has been no time to develop policy because of the
volume of proposals. In 2015-2016 the UCC reviewed 720 proposals. This year the committee is
making a concerted effort to streamline the discussion and focus on the proposals with problems.
Milner remarked that the turnover in the course array and courses offered is higher number that
at peer institutions. Maintaining this pace will be difficult due to limited staffing.

A significant factor in the credit hour determination relates to how the course is offered. We do
not have governance for mode of delivery. Weimer asked what a credit means in a blended,
flipped, online etc. course. We need some guidance on this. Milner responded that there are
examples of how this is handled at other institutions but it is possible that what others have done
would not be acceptable here such as a checklist where you check off the activities that are
occurring and then tally them up and assign credits. Smith suggests that the committee could
focus on asking proposers to describe what the instructor/student contact is and how that meets
the learning goals. The committee does not want to pigeon hole and be overly prescriptive while still meeting the federal regulations. Ingham mentioned that there is a UCC sub group that is trying to develop best practices which may be even looser than guidelines so that we can allow for innovation. Perhaps from there we can develop policy that will allow proposal decisions to be made efficiently.

Smith asked about how aggressive we should be in developing a policy statement for campus. The provost responded that as a governance committee the UCC has the right to create policy where it sees the need for policy. Given the long history at this institution of not having a single, campus level curriculum committee and the need for policy to meet federal compliance and fill in the gaps that the long history of no policy has created.

The discussion then moved to focus on issues of professional development, if faculty don’t have support to learn about best practices how useful is it for this committee to create best practices and policies? How do we coordinate these? How do we make sure that everyone on campus has access to resources? The provost suggested that the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning, Steve Cramer can help with this. There are such resources and the Teaching and Learning Consortium provides a uniform list of what is available. This list is provided at new faculty orientation. Smith said that the committee would discuss this issue with Cramer when he meets with the committee in December, perhaps this committee can help by opening channels of communication with these groups.

A formal policy on credit by exam is relatively new, we have few courses use credit by exam on campus but now that there is a clear process for offering credit by exam the committee expects to see more of this sort of thing, does the provost’s office have a sense of how widespread this will become? Milner explained that credit by exam was designed to address a small but important gap. It is an opportunity to give students credit for something they already know. There are ways in which students may learn the content of a lower level class such as through a series of courses at other institutions that are not transfer equivalents. We don’t want to hold students back if they already have the content knowledge from these introductory courses. We don’t want students taking up seats if they don’t need to be, this helps with time to degree.

Smith wrapped up the discussion with the provost with one last concern which is the final exam schedule. The current schedule only gives students one study day which is not enough. Weimer also voiced a concern about length of the final exam; he feels that 2 hours is quite short. Pedagogically, it is hard to give an interesting, challenging final exam in 2 hours. The provost explained that the final exam schedule is part of the academic calendar which is under the purview of the Faculty Senate and the University Committee. As part of a recent revision to the academic calendar there was discussion about the way final exams are scheduled. There are no specific plans to make changes but there is interest in looking at issues related to final exams more closely in the future.

The provost thanked the committee again for all of its hard work and departed.
The committee briefly continued the discussion after the provost departed. Reviewing the proposals and turning them back is one method of controlling quality but it is important that the UCC develop policies that will help proposers develop approvable proposals from the start. If the process is fixed and better communication and information is provided to the school/college curriculum committees then they and the UCC can operate more efficiently. A policy is needed that creates a set of expectations that go down to not only the school/college but the department and the individual course proposer. As we develop policies it is important to consult with the school/college curriculum committees. The project that is already underway to create a new course proposal form is going to be the most effective means of communicating and establishing policy.

III. Course Proposal Review
   A. Actuarial Science 655  Health Analytics
      Type: New Course
      Reviewer: Smith
      Action: Unanimously Approved

IV. Credit by Exam Review
   A. Animal Science/Dairy Science 101 - Introduction to Animal Science
      Action: Unanimously approved

This is the first credit by exam proposal the committee has reviewed. There was discussion about the questions asked on the proposal form. After the committee has had the opportunity to review a few proposals it may be worthwhile to have a separate discussion about the policy and the form. What is it really important for the proposer to explain? Should changes be made to the proposal form? Ingham requested that the form be revised to ask questions about the pedagogy and purpose of offering credit exam for the course. The committee will review the policy and have a discussion about credit by exam at a future meeting.

V. Obsolete Course Process
Young provided an update on the obsolete course process. At the November 11th UCC meeting all waiver request proposals that have been approved by the school/college curriculum committees will be reviewed. Committee members decided that they would like to have these proposals divided and assigned to members for review the same way course proposals are.

VI. Working Group Updates
   A. New Course Proposal Form
   B. Credit Definition
      1. Review and adopt goals

Due to time constraints this item was not addressed.

VII. Request for course attribute from Law School
Motion by Weimer, second by Corfis to approve, unanimously approved.

VIII. New Business
Meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.