Faculty Curriculum Committee

Annual Report
2014-2015 Academic Year

June 12, 2015
Prepared by Bonnie C. Springer, Chairperson

Members: Johm Bruns, Douglas Friedman, Tammy Ingram, Steven Jaume, Michael Larsen, Joshua Minor, Ted Shockley. Bonnie Springer, Marianne Verlinden

Chairperson: Bonnie Springer
Secretary: Steven Jaume

Task force exploring issues related to handling of special topics courses: Douglas Friedman, Marianne Verlinden assisted by Mary Bergstrom and Cathy Boyd from the registrar's office

Number of meetings: 7 meetings focusing on consideration and approval of curricular proposals. Two orientation sessions held to develop communication systems and committee procedures

Summary of Activities

Curricular Changes. During the 2014-2015 academic year, proposals were submitted for consideration by the Faculty Curriculum Committee by 40 different undergraduate programs. The committee deliberated at 7 meetings and approved the following curriculum changes. One new concentration in Healthcare and Medical Services Management was approved for the Bachelor of Professional Studies Program. 74 different program change proposals were considered and successfully approved. These changes included the approval of 79 new courses, Changes to 62 existing courses and the deactivation of 32 courses. Three new minors were approved in Irish and Irish American Studies, Middle Eastern and Islamic World Studies and Marketing. 28 changes were approved affecting 25 minors. The minor in Health was terminated. All curricular changes are summarized in the attachment prepared by Franklin Czwazka from the Registrar's Office.

Other Initiatives. In addition to the review and approval of curriculum proposals the committee focused on two areas of concern: 1) the continued work on the streamlining of the paperwork process and meaningfulness of the paperwork required for making curriculum changes and 2) identification of issues related to the use of courses that fell into a broad category of “special topics” including – variable topics, special topics, etc
The chair of the curriculum committee met with Provost McGee and Dr. William Veal, chair of the Faculty Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, and Penny Brunner to discuss ideas related to the important connections between the tables on the curricular forms related to program and course assessment and the curriculum approval process. It was determined that it would be helpful for these committees to continue to work together to insure that curriculum was strongly connected to program assessment. Dr. Brunner suggested changes to the existing paperwork at the course level that would clarify the difference between the assessment connections at the course and program levels. Simultaneously, the Registrar’s office was investigating options for new software systems for catalog management. The goal of the new catalog management software is that curricular applications would be submitted through the same system, thus eliminating the paper forms now used. Given this initiative, the task of revising the existing paper forms was tabled. Next year’s committee will start work on development of the online forms for faculty to submit when making curriculum proposals.

The task force exploring issues related to Special Topics types of courses presented its findings to the curriculum committee at the March 23rd meeting. Considerable discussion on “Variable Topic” vs. “Varying Topic” vs. “Special Topic” courses; i.e., courses that can be repeated by students more than once. Occurred. One main question appears to be whether or not course content is being adequately reviewed and if things are being (or even can be) monitored such that students cannot retake a “variable” topic course with the same content. Registrar’s Office states they are not able to do this operationally. FCC Chair will reported the following to the Senate at the April 29th meeting that the current “3-5” rule is not enforceable by the Registrar’s Office and that department chairs need to enforce the repeatable “Special Topics” etc. type courses. It is important that this task be continued into next year’s curricular discussions. There needs to be consistency across campus related to how these different types of courses are used and what purposes they serve in order for curricular decisions to be made equitably and consistently.

Next year the Curriculum Committee will be bringing forward suggestions for changes to the 1994 Senate decision related to the Registrar’s role in monitoring Special Topics courses and will be working on the creation of clear definitions and purpose statements for the range of courses under the “special topics/variable topics umbrella.”