

## COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM

March 4, 2015

12:45 p.m., 254 Baker

### Meeting Minutes

**Voting Members present:** Bujanovic, Cohen, Daley, Hassett (for Dibble and Donaghy), Shannon (for Wheeler), Vanucchi, Verostek, Wagner, Whitmore

**Guests and others Present:** Newman, Margolis, Fischer, Minard (for Rutkowski), Sanford,

**Unable to attend:** Kyanka

1. **Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 12:49
2. **Approval of Minutes from February 11.** The minutes of the February 11, 2015 meeting were approved by popular acclamation.
3. **Announcements**
  - a) Proposals posted for CoC and faculty review:
    - i. There have been a lot of proposals and there will be more. Daley stated he would like to partition up the proposals, especially the curriculum proposals. He asked the Committee to keep reviewing the proposals and to make comments through the appropriate channel (i.e. to the proposer, copy [Curriculum@esf.edu](mailto:Curriculum@esf.edu)). Any comments are welcome, even if it is just a request for clarification. Newman will send all comments to all committee members one week before the next meeting (i.e. on or before March 25<sup>th</sup>). The Environmental Health curriculum is still undergoing completeness review. The Environmental Health courses are up for review at this time. Newman will add a note to the web page explaining that the Environmental Health curriculum will shortly be posted.
  - b) Proposals submitted for CoC completeness review:
    - i. See attachment to this agenda. See above for discussion
  - c) Administrative approvals by the Dean
    - i. None

#### 4. Updates from the Dean (Shannon)

All of the seamless transfer waiver requests are in. Most of the curriculum changes are in to comply with seamless transfer. These requests have been handled out of the OIGS office. It doesn't look like there are many problems with seamless transfer.

## 5. Old Business:

### a. **xxxx96 generic course descriptions**

Daley reported no progress.

### b. **Study Abroad course**

Shannon reported no progress.

### c. **Minor Enrollment form.**

Shannon has made progress on the Minor Enrollment Form. This cannot be completed until there is a resolution on the minors policy. He should have something before the end of the semester. Daley noted that sophomore students will want to enroll before the end of the semester.

### d. **Update on new policy concerning transfer credits and minors.**

Wagner had missed the Faculty Governance meeting when this was discussed, and Daley had had to “shoulder the burden.” The discussion had been wide-ranging. Wagner had been under the impression that a minor was analogous to a Bachelors degree, with specified course prerequisites to be met. However, after the reports of the discussion at the Faculty Governance meeting, along with discussion with the Provost and Dean of Instruction, he realized that perception of a minor can range along quite a wide spectrum, and the choice of where an institution’s policy on minors lies on the spectrum is specific to each institution. At one end of the spectrum lies the attitude that a minor is simply an artifact of accounting, and any student who has courses in a specific subject, whether or not the courses were taken at ESF, can declare a minor. At the other end of the spectrum the minor is seen as a prescribed set of courses, with learning outcomes specific to the minor, and any courses transferred in from other institutions would be subject to vetting and quality control by the minor coordinator before being accepted as part of the minor. Wagner had assumed that ESF lay somewhere near the “quality control” end of the spectrum, but the discussion had led him to refer back to the Committee to verify what kind of minor philosophy ESF wanted to pursue. The Provost and Dean had asked him to revise the policy, but Wagner wanted some input from the Committee as to the above issues. Shannon stated that there is no vetting of minors by SUNY or by any other accrediting parties. Daley offered that he did not think the Committee should take firm action on the proposed policy at this time because the larger College community needs time to digest and discuss the issue. The Committee’s action has had the effect of elevating the issue to some level of debate, revolving around the question of “what are minors and why do they exist?” Looking at the big picture, Wagner suggested that the “spectrum” of the structure of minors aids in understanding the issue. The Committee hopes for a middle ground – it does not want to get into outcomes assessment with regard to minors. Daley asked Shannon to explain a comment made by him (Shannon) during the Faculty Governance meeting, namely, that he does not see a need to have a policy on minors. Shannon said that he thought it was not a bad idea to have a policy that a certain percentage of credits for a minor should be taken while matriculated at ESF. Minors that some faculty see as “problematic” in this respect are actually not impacted by this policy. If we transfer courses into a Bachelors degree we don’t question the process as long as the courses conform to departmental standards and as long as enough credits are taken at ESF. Wagner commented that this sounded like the “quality control” end of the

minor spectrum. Shannon stated that even if the quality is there the questions remains as to where the student was matriculated when he/she took the classes. Daley reported that EFB faculty members were worried that this policy would preclude certain minors from being advanced in the first place, however, one minor in question, Marine Science, would be fine under this policy. Daley suggested that if things are working well now, why should ESF have a policy? The Committee's role in this should be covered by the "Do no harm" philosophy. Whitmore asked if the Committee could find out how many students have graduated with minors composed of classes not taken at ESF/SU. Daley stated that the purpose of a minor is to show that the student has some specialized knowledge, even if the student has completed the classes at a college other than ESF. Shannon noted that the sole reason we have minors is that students perceive a minor's value for career goals. It may be valuable later on in the job market. Daley said that the college has always encouraged students to take the majority of their classes for a minor at ESF or SU. How should the Committee give guidance to proposers to prevent, for example a minor in astrophysics. There is no current policy preventing this. The minor should reflect the mission of the College. Shannon pointed out that language minors can be taken through SU – these are not offered at ESF. The "while the student is matriculated at ESF" wording in the proposed policy would allow this. Cohen said that students with SU minors can always put it on their resume, even if it does not appear on their ESF transcript. Daley stated that one of the values is that the minor is taken "while the student is matriculated at ESF". Students who leave the College and take classes elsewhere over the subsequent years should not be able to come back to ESF and ask for a minor in the subject matter of those classes. This cannot happen if the student is required to be matriculated at ESF. Wagner noted that we have agreements with many institutions in places such as Spain, China, etc. Credits taken in these institutions could possibly be used for a minor. Vanucchi said we should be encouraging minors, since education in general is going in the way of adding areas of competency. Hassett pointed out that minors have to be proposed by faculty and there is an overseeing group for each minor. We have to credit faculty with some sense in overseeing the minor. We are not in the Wild West. Whitmore then asked why we need a minor policy at all. Faculty cannot launch a minor without a vetting process. There was general confusion about the status of the policy and Shannon pointed out that the Committee should have started by disseminating the current policy on minors, adding the current proposed policy as an addendum. Whitmore pointed out that students can always add classes to a minor by petition, and if petitions of this sort are happening on a frequent basis then the Committee needs to look at the minor policy in general. With regard to the proposal on hand, Daley stated that the Committee needs to flesh out some of the wording more, particularly what is meant by "while at ESF." Exceptions are allowable, but there should be at least 6 credits of ESF courses. Ultimately, students should be advised by the minor coordinator. Shannon noted that it is in the nature of the student

to ask for exceptions. Daley thought that the policy should not overstate the requirement for ESF courses – the policy should not be of the accounting model, nor should it be based solely on quality assessment. The Committee does not have time to assess minors. Daley asked if everyone present was in agreement in principle. The discussion continues...

- e. **Guidance document for differentiation between course levels.** Wagner, as the major instigator, stated that no progress has been made on this.

## 6. New Business:

- a. Proposals for action:

FCH 550 Polymer Science: Synthesis and Mechanisms (revision)

FCH 552 Polymer Science: Properties and Technology (revision)

Daley introduced these two proposals which were submitted to change the semester of offering. These are usually performed as an administrative change, but Shannon pointed out that in some cases this type of change can be in effect a major structural program change. Daley described the “new program” SUNY form as having the 8-semester map. Since SUNY approves the program in the basis of the 8 semester map, any changes in the map should therefore be reported back to SUNY. What the Committee is doing here is to make sure that all changes are fully documented. No comments had been received on the proposals during faculty review time. The motion to adopt these course changes was passed and the changes were approved unanimously.

- b. Provost’s request that wording on learning outcomes be added to the Minor Curriculum Change Form

Daley said that it is in the policy that a proposal will identify what the learning objectives are. The Provost’s expectation is that if a learning outcome in a course is changed there should be a commensurate learning outcome change in the program. This should be clear from the proposal. Newman and Daley are to add wording the Minor Curriculum Change form to ask for changed in learning outcomes.

- c. Feedback from graduate students on shared resource classes

Margolis stated that graduate students had been surveyed regarding the teaching of shared resource classes and there had been an overwhelming response of comments. Graduate experience has been that outcomes are extremely varied. Most of the comments revolved around the quality of discussion in a shared resource course, with the graduate students being dissatisfied with the level of discussion when undergraduates were present. A suggestion had been made for separate discussion groups for graduates and for undergraduates. Another point was that the pace of the class was too slow for undergraduates. Also, many graduate students had already taken a similar class during their undergraduate career and found that the shared resource class taken at ESF was not much different. In some cases, the requirements for the undergraduate and graduate sections were the same. In classes where the TA was an undergraduate, the graduate student did not get much help. Shannon pointed out that some departments have a dearth of classes for PhD level students. Even at the 600 level, if the class is a shared resource class it is questionable how much coursework the students have to choose from. Cohen noted that EFB is currently conducting a survey on this issue, among others. Daley asked Margolis and Cohen to compile a summary of the responses to their respective surveys

and share them with the Committee. Daley will forward these to IQAS. Shannon suggested that there is a need for some analysis on the quantity of different courses at different levels. Daley stated that most faculty think that if there are less than 12 students in a class it should not be held.

d. CoC schedule for the remainder of the semester

The one remaining last meeting of the year is scheduled for April 1. The Committee will probably need one more meeting after that to close out course and curriculum issues. There may be a need for a meeting in the latter part of April, or even early May in case the Committee can't get through all the reviews pending.

e. Other

Daley pointed out that his tenure as Chair was coming to an end and that current Committee members are ideal candidates for chairs.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:47 pm.

Action items:

1. Daley to continue to work on XXXx96 generic course descriptions.
2. Shannon to continue to work on the generic study abroad course.
3. Shannon to continue to work on the Minor Enrollment Form.
4. Daley/Newman to add wording to the Minor Curriculum Change Form.
6. Margolis and Cohen to forward the results of their surveys to the Committee.