

**Committee on Curriculum
February 14, 2017
Meeting Minutes**

Voting members present: Liu, Cohen, Stavenhagen, Tao, Teece, Wagner

Guests and others present: Minard, Murphy, Neumann, Newman, Spuches

Unable to attend: Amidon, C'Dealva-Lenik, Reuter, Sanford, Shannon, Verostek, Wheeler

- 1) **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 11:03
- 2) **Approval of Minutes from January 12, 2017 meeting.** The minutes from the January 12, 2017 meeting were approved unanimously as submitted.
- 3) **Announcements.** Liu noted that the following proposals were listed for faculty review or were undergoing completeness review. Proposals recently administratively approved by the Dean are also listed.
 - i) **Proposals posted for CoC and faculty review:**
 - Natural Resources Management graduate program (new)**
 - ERE 340 Engineering Hydrology and Hydraulics (revision)**
 - ERE 540 Engineering Hydrology and Hydraulics (revision)**
 - ERE 412 River Form and Process (revision)**
 - ERE 612 River Form and Process (revision)**
 - ii) **Proposals submitted for CoC completeness review:**
 - Minor in Natural Resources Policy (new)**
 - Microscopy Minor (revision)**
 - iii) **Recent Administrative Approvals (with approval date)**
 - Environmental Decision Making certificate (January 25, 2017)**
 - Environmental Health curriculum revision (February 1, 2017)**
- 4) **Updates from the Dean.** The Dean being absent, there were no updates from the Dean.
- 5) **Old Business:**
 - i) **Guidance document for differentiation between course levels.**

Wagner, after a semester-long absence from the Committee, gave the following background on this item, which has been on the agenda for a number of weeks.... In the past there has been much discussion about shared resource courses, particularly with respect to the differences between the two levels of the courses. At ESF, in many cases, there are institutional constraints to having stand-alone graduate classes, and historically shared resource courses have fulfilled a need. The 3xx/5xx split is reasonable, given the differences in what needs to be delivered at graduate and undergraduate levels. Wagner, however, was concerned that the 4xx/6xx split was not making sense in terms of students getting what they need. In looking into the situation further, it has become clear that the problem is not consistent across disciplines at ESF. In PBE the 4xx/6xx split can make sense, while in FNRM the split results in difficulties in terms of what can be delivered. The 3xx/5xx split works for a professional program, but a 4xx/6xx split is problematic in these types of programs. The Committee on Curriculum had been charged with trying to produce a guidance document to differentiate the course levels within the split. Because of the inconsistencies regarding the delineation of the levels from discipline to discipline, the problem is much broader than originally perceived. The question at hand is whether the Committee should move forward in producing a guidance document, or simply leave the issue as it currently exists. If the Committee moves to produce this document then there needs to be some attempt to define the problem more clearly. With the current climate moving towards the introduction of certificate programs,

especially at graduate level, then the shared resource issue may have something to bring to the conversation. Spuches asked whether there were stipulations as to how an undergraduate can register for a shared resource class. Wagner explained that, to his knowledge, an undergraduate can take a 3xx/5xx class as long as they have fulfilled a GPA requirement. With a 4xx/6xx class the permission of the instructor is required. It was his recollection that an undergraduate cannot take the 5xx section of a 3xx/5xx class and apply it to their undergraduate degree without a petition. Minard added that to register for a 4xx/6xx class an undergraduate must have a 3.0 GPA. Neumann advocated for the shared resource class, and suggested that there should be a supplementary question on the course evaluation form to capture information about how well the split format has met the graduate students' needs. In his experience the level of discussion in a split level class sometimes does not take place at a high enough level for graduate students. Teece asked how many 3xx/5xx split classes currently were in the catalog. Wagner responded that there was a recent ESF report with this information, and it was his recollection that the phenomenon was more prevalent in professional degree programs. Cohen offered that in EFB the curriculum committee did not see this as a problem. In a survey of EFB graduate students the problems, if any, lay with the level of discussion in the discussion sections. Neumann concurred and indicated that the format of the class, if it is centered around discussion sessions, may not meet the needs of graduate students. Wagner noted that if an additional discussion group were added to a class specifically for graduate students there may be a problem with the designation of the class credit hours. Tao mentioned that ERE has many shared resource classes because there are not enough faculty available to teach the classes as stand-alone graduate classes. It is much more practical to keep the split-level classes. Cohen stated that EFB has the same problem. He noted that course proposals for shared resource classes submitted to CoC must show differences in objectives for the two class levels. Spuches pointed out that this is not explicitly required on the proposal form. Wagner asked whether assessment data exists to prove that 6xx-level information is being adequately provided in these classes. He noted that the modelling required in his classes would be appropriate to teach as a 3xx/5xx shared resource class, as his models are mainly graphic and/or algebraic. At the 6xx level the models become more mathematical and calculus is involved. This would not be appropriate to teach with seniors in a 4xx/6xx split class. Teece asked if this issue should be reopened, and Cohen noted that it has never been removed from the agenda. Neumann suggested that he would bring this up to the GSA committee and try to obtain feedback from the graduate students. Teece noted that he would like the Committee to develop a set of guidelines for shared resource courses. Some examples of differentiation between graduate and undergraduate levels in shared resource courses were offered by Liu, Cohen and Murphy, and included extra discussion for graduate students, as well as extra projects, and the use of the additional required work for graduate students as extra credit for the undergraduate students.

After some further discussion along the same lines, Teece asked that the subcommittee be asked to come up with some further information on the issue and begin to draft guidelines. Wagner offered to head the subcommittee as long as the issue was tabled until the Fall of 2017. Spuches offered his assistance and noted that a seminar for best practice in shared resource classes may be a good idea. Neumann offered that graduate student input is important. This item has been tabled until Fall 2017.

6) **New Business:**

i) **Proposals for action:**

ERE 440 Water and Wastewater Treatment

ERE 640 Water and Wastewater Treatment

Teece stated that we need to look at the difference in learning objectives for this shared resource class. Cohen noted that there is an extra learning objective for ERE 640. Tao pointed out that the requirements for ERE 640 include a class project (either literature review or research based) in addition to the undergraduate requirements. Graduate students are not required to take the final exam. Teece was not satisfied that this fulfills an adequate distinction between a graduate and undergraduate class. Tao explained that graduate students have diverse backgrounds - some with only a science background - and may not be as well prepared as they should be. This class is mainly an

engineering design and analysis class. The learning outcomes for graduate students are more analysis-based. This class is required for undergraduates but is an elective for graduate students. Undergraduates taking this class will be applying for professional engineering licensure and are therefore on a difference career track than the graduate students. Wagner noted that, with respect to the discussion above regarding shared resources, this shows why the problem of these types of course is difficult, while at the same time, with limits in the number of faculty available, a shared resource class may be the only solution. It also shows why guidelines for shared resource courses cannot be prescriptive along the continuum of needs across disciplines. Discussion continued, adding concerns about the issue of differentiation between the levels of shared resource classes, until Liu asked that general discussion of the split be addressed at a later date, as agreed to earlier. Teece, commenting on the specific classes under discussion, indicated that he was not happy that the work performed by a student in the graduate class was appropriate for a 6xx level class. In this case, the differences between ERE 440 and ERE 640 are not great. He suggested that a 4xx/5xx split would be more acceptable. Minard, having checked with the registrar, stated that there are no policies prohibiting 4xx/5xx classes. Tao noted that the guidelines on shared resource classes will not be introduced until the Fall, and this current proposal is merely a revision of an already existing class. The major revisions to these proposals were at the undergraduate level, to avoid overlap with other classes in the ERE program. After further discussion on the problems of delineation between 4xx and 6xx levels of a shared resource class, the proposals on the table were passed as follows:
ERE 440 - approved unanimously.
ERE 640 - votes to approve: 4; votes against approval: 2. ERE 640 also approved by majority vote.

Certificate of Advanced Studies in Environmental Leadership.

There being no discussion on this proposal, and no comments received during the review period, this proposal was approved unanimously.

OIGS Policy 2017-1: Applied Learning

Teece asked that this policy, proposed by the Office of Instruction and Graduate Studies, be not moved forward out of the Committee and remanded back to the proposer. He noted that this new policy seemed to be looking at something much bigger than a simple curriculum policy and the Committee does not have full information on which to base an approval or rejection. Since the impetus for this comes from SUNY it would seem that discussion should take place at a much higher level than the Committee on Curriculum. Historically, when SUNY has introduced mandates for campuses, if these mandates are not properly implemented, the campus may lose out when resources are made available. At ESF we certainly do applied learning, but it is not a requirement in all cases. By relegating an "applied learning experience" to an opportunity rather than a requirement this may shut down areas where students can excel and where the institution can attract both funding and students. Applied learning should be mandated for all ESF students. Since not all programs can do this, this should not be discussed by CoC, but at a higher, institutional, level. The emails between the Dean, the Provost and the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs show that the Committee does not have the full information on which to discuss this issue. What the Committee has been given is the option of approving one of two choices. More information is needed. This should be a much bigger discussion at the level of the institution. Spuches noted that the fulcrum is the definition of applied learning. The Committee does not have this definition at hand. Teece continued that SUNY encourages applied learning and historically has pushed material and financial resources to this. If ESF makes applied learning optional the College may lose potential for this support from SUNY. The Committee does not know the full implication of the decision on whether applied learning should be mandated or optional for ESF students. Teece noted that it would seem foolish to make applied learning optional, but we can't mandate it since not all departments currently mandate it. Mandating departments to include applied learning is outside the scope of the Committee. This should be at the level of the ESF mission statement. After additional discussion on a similar vein it was decided to return this proposal to the proposer and ask for further information.

OIGS Policy 2017-2: Graduate Academic Standards

Cohen asked for an amendment to this policy revision, adding, at the end, the sentence "When a student is taken off probation the Dean of Instruction and Graduate Studies will additionally notify the student's major professor and committee members." The policy revision was unanimously approved, as amended.

ii) Discussion on requirements and procedures to be followed when a change is made in a course's method of delivery.

Cohen introduced the topic by explaining that he knew of a course that recently changed from being face-to-face to being fully online. This change was made without submission of a course revision to the Committee, and he asked whether a submission form should be required when there is a change in the method of delivery of a course. Spuches noted that there is a space on the proposal form to denote the course format, and probably also changes to the delivery method should be noted in the "Instructional Methods" section. He questioned whether a change in format or instructional methods constituted a major or minor change. He explained that, in his work with Open SUNY, questions have arisen as to how to select course content that is appropriate for online. Instruction should always be valid and the online interface needs to serve the student, as well as conform with accessibility requirements. Spuches indicated that he would be happy to work with Cohen to develop policy for this situation. Cohen asked if anyone has oversight over the changes in the course when it switches to an online format. Liu suggested that this is not the purview of the Committee, rather it pertains to the Committee on Instructional Quality. Spuches and Murphy explained that when a course is delivered online there are several extra considerations to be taken into account. The OSCQR (Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence Quality Review) rubric should be taken into account, and SARA (State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement) regulations need to be adhered to if out-of-state students are involved. In addition, until an online course/program is approved by MSCHE (Middle States Commission on Higher Education), students may not use financial aid to pay tuition. There are therefore implications for both on-campus and off-campus students when a course is delivered in an online format. Currently there are gaps in our procedures for delivering online courses, and these must be filled. Spuches is currently working on this. The definition of "online" also needs to be addressed, as there may be varying proportions of online delivery within what is normally termed a "face-to-face" class. Murphy pointed out that it is simple to calculate "seat time" for a face-to-face class, and therefore conform to NYSED's definition of what constitutes a credit hour. This is problematic when the course is online. At present, it was estimated that only four online courses have been proposed to the Committee (BPE 510, 511, 536, EST 202).

Discussion on this issue was tabled until the next meeting. Cohen and Spuches are to work to draft policy/guidelines.

iii) Other

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:32 pm

Action items:

- Spuches and Cohen to work to develop policy/guidelines with reference to change in class delivery to online format.
- Newman to add wording to OIGs Policy 2017-2 before forwarding to Academic Governance.