The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum CommitteeMinutes

February 13, 2020

Attending: Helena Dettmer; Andrew Forbes; Eric Gidal; Kathryn Hall (staff); Anita Jung; Collin Kepner (student member); Rebekah Kowal; Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez; Jennifer Rogers; David Ryfe; Shaun Vecera

Absent: Brian Lai

1. The minutes from February 6 were approved as written.
2. The proposed General Education (GE) Values and Culture (VC) status for ITAL: 2880 Italian Food Culture (3 s.h.) was summarized and discussed by the committee, with members recommending GE status for this course in GE VC. The conversation also focused on larger enrollment management issues, including whether the GE Curriculum Committee (GECC) should evaluate GE proposals in terms of enrollment management strategies, eliminating undue competition among CLAS units already offering GE courses. In some situations, limiting courses may be appropriate and GECC members have been discussing this issue. Helena Dettmer also reminded members that all GE courses must be offered every two years. Those not offered are removed from the GE program, with the courses dropped from the MAUI Course Library each fall at the request of the Registrar and the College or sooner by the program offering the course. CLAS annually drops around the same number of courses as added, indicating departments are tending to the curriculum. Additionally, GE requirements are intended to add breath and general knowledge to a student’s in-depth study of the major, which is key to the GE Curriculum Committee’s work. All proposals must demonstrate that the related GE learning outcomes and required GE course attributes are met. This approach is objective and provides consistency. It also allows other colleges to propose GE courses.
3. Shaun Vecera, UEPCC member and Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences, updated UEPCC about a course he has developed for undergraduates about the cognition of learning (PSY: 1010 Your Brain Unlocked: Learning About Learning, 1 s.h.). The course helps students to understand and reflect upon the process of learning as suggested by current findings of cognitive science. Some students have found these to be familiar strategies while others are unaware of them. A study of overall GPAs among various populations shows that underrepresented minorities and first-generation students, for example, earn D and F grades or withdraw from a course on average of 10-40 percentage points above students who are not in these groups. It is thus important to help all students to understand how learning occurs, thereby creating a more inclusive learning environment. Learning and memorization both take time and repetition, especially for information to be recalled and integrated. Learning is not simply based on “intelligence” or a natural inclination toward understanding a topic. Instead, encouraging students to adopt a growth mindset and to set learning goals can be a more positive strategy. Students also need to reflect on whether or not their learning goals have been achieved while choosing new study tools when previous ones have not been effective. Additionally, instructors can introduce new or different study strategies, such as pre- and post quizzes and peer-led study groups. Becoming a life-long learner means becoming a self-regulated learner, knowing what one knows and does not know while setting goals and evaluating steps to learn new materials. Such habits encourage students to grow in skills and in confidence. UEPCC members wondered how instructors could best be “nudged” into helping students to become such learners since retention is related to this empowerment. Many instructors are giving students these tools already by being more explicit about those that work well and by using them within class. The group also discussed how teaching evaluations that encourage instructor self-reflection might, in turn, result in improved instruction, also helping students. Revising peer evaluation practices and the ACE teaching evaluation forms is crucial to changing the culture of instruction to one that teaches students effective learning strategies.
4. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebekah Kowal, Associate Professor and DEO, Department of Dance
Secretary for UEPCC