The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

**Minutes**

Thursday, February 21, 2019

Attending: Helena Dettmer (Chair); Jill Beckman; Andrew Forbes; Matthew Gilchrist; Kathryn Hall (staff); Anita Jung; Meena Khandelwal; Jerald Moon; Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez; Tristan Schmidt; Shaun Vecera

Absent: Rebekah Kowal

1. The minutes from February 14, 2019, were approved as written.
2. UEPCC recommended the following two courses for approval for GE status, as listed below:
   * EPLS Being Here (3 s.h.) in the GE CLAS Core area of Diversity and Inclusion (DI). (Course will be assigned a number in the near future.)
   * ASTR:1085 Citizen Astronomy (3 s.h.) in the GE CLAS Core area of Natural Sciences Non-Lab (NS).

During this discussion, UEPCC members considered the role of online courses in the GE CLAS Core. On the one hand, these courses are needed for online degrees, such as the BLS and BAS offered through Distance and Online Education and for the BA in Political Science, for example. On the other hand, the GE experience requires that students have opportunities to practice speaking skills, part of the comprehensive learning outcomes of the GE CLAS Core. Dialog among peers and with faculty members helps to sustain engagement and to foster student success while enhancing skills needed for professional development. Online courses should be asked to integrate speaking skills with the course structure if GE status is desired. Also discussed was the use of technology, with the related fee paid by the student. Although these fees can be seen as a “textbook” cost, they do add up and can exclude some students from buying all of the needed course materials, keeping the student from fully participating in a course. Key points of the discussion will be communicated with the General Education Curriculum Committee, which also shares these concerns.

1. Tristan Schmidt, UEPCC student member and UISG Director of Academic Affairs, updated the committee on two student focus groups and their discussion of ACE evaluations. The focus groups were sponsored by UISG and included students from a number of different colleges and non-UISG members. The feedback from these students about ACE evaluations was consistent with the current understanding of related ACE problems, including that students do not fully understand the importance of the ACE teaching evaluations and often do not feel compelled to complete them unless the course generates very strong feelings, whether negative or positive. The number of questions on the forms can make completing them time-consuming, and at the end of the semester, students are busy. For these reasons, the students recommended that no more than 10 questions be included. Students also agreed that they would be much more likely to complete the forms if done in class. Using class time to fill out the forms also shows that they are important to the instructor. The students thought that making the evaluation results known to the UI community would also help to communicate the importance of the forms and their relevance. Finally, the two focus groups agreed that the draft ACE question about the fairness of the instructor’s grading was unclear. Dean Dettmer noted that she plans to email all undergraduates in CLAS each semester about the importance of these evaluations.
2. UEPCC reviewed a newly created absence form that could be used by CLAS students. The goal of the form is to foster communication while encouraging students to be pro-active and responsible for their actions. At the same time, the optional form is meant to remind students of absence policies and related resources. Instructors might find the form useful in larger courses, cutting down on email while helping to document absences and related requests. The form could replace the Registrar’s absence form for CLAS; the Registrar is in the process of convening a working group to discuss the related form. UEPCC made many helpful suggestions about how to improve the form under discussion, including its layout, text, and tone; a revision based on these insights will be discussed at a future meeting. The form will also be shared with members of UISG who first brought this idea to the committee and with the Dean’s Student Advisory Committee.
3. UEPCC members next looked at the text for various CLAS web pages concerning absence policies and procedures that attempts to better align the faculty and student pages on this topic. Managing the range of situations that are involved in absences can be challenging and requires a high level of discretion from the faculty member based on the details of the specific situation. UEPCC members will continue to review other portions of this text in order to make it as clear and as helpful as possible for faculty and students navigating the UI, SDS, and CLAS absence policies.
4. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Jung  
Professor, Art and Art History   
Secretary for UEPCC