The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

**Minutes**

Thursday, March 28, 2019

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

Absent: Tristan Schmidt

1. The minutes from March 7, 2019 were approved as written.
2. The possibility of replicating syllabi attachments by semester (Fall 2018 with Fall 2019, for example) may be possible in the future, and the Registrar has asked the UI colleges for input. UEPCC discussed both the pros and cons of this replication. If syllabi are dated and are very specific, students could find this confusing since old syllabi might not be replaced in a timely manner; however, if the syllabi represents a sample of a typical semester for the related course, allowing replication could save time while providing students needed information. Departments would need to make sure that any such sample syllabi would be clearly labeled with a warning on its first page that a more detailed syllabus would be used during the semester. Using sample syllabi and having them replicated may help departments to comply with the CLAS syllabi attachment policy, representing a reasonable compromise between the needs of students and those of faculty.
3. Anne Zalenski, Associate Dean, Distance & Online Education, spoke with the committee about the many changes seen in online education over the last ten years. Distance & Online Education (DOE) now offers a number of majors and degrees for place bound students, including the BA in Political Science and Enterprise Leadership and the BS in Sport and Recreation Management. In addition, two degrees exist for students wanting to complete a degree online, the Bachelor of Applied Studies (BAS) and the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS). There are also significant professional programs online, including the Bachelor of Business Administration. There are 9 certificates offered that can be earned by students without completing a degree. Another significant change is that instructors wanting to create new online courses now go through a professional design process, working with a team of people in DOE, including a course designer, a media expert, and a coordinator. The product created is thus updated, modern, and is easy for the student to navigate. Additionally, instructors are supported by staff who proctor exams in DOE Exam Services. This design process begins with approval from the related DEO, with the designer and instructor along with the media expert creating the course backwards from its learning outcomes to lesson plans and assignments. In other words, online courses are not exactly the same as on campus courses but are instead designed for the online learning environment. Instructors love the opportunity to think about pedagogy, sharing those ideas with others while putting them into action and creating a course becomes a collaborative and highly creative process. For more information on these design opportunities, see this link: <https://teachonline.uiowa.edu/design4online>

Some of these online course and degrees are popular with those who have been deployed or who because of illness or family cannot be on campus. The online programs allow education at Iowa to continue uninterrupted. Others enroll in the BLS or BAS to complete a degree that was interrupted by other events in the student’s life, thus extending educational opportunities to a broader audience. There is now a CLAS Online Advisory Board that makes recommendations related to online issues, and the synergy between the two units has produced good results, with best practices and procedures created and with additional online courses proposed and offered by CLAS. Online courses are best taken by students who are not in their first two years at UI but who have some maturity and ability to work independently; regardless, failing rates in online courses are similar to on campus counterparts. Still, students do need to learn to study for online courses in a more independent way, and DOE is considering creating a modular course for students to take when enrolled for the first time in an online offering. Still, online courses are popular with students, helping them fit required courses into a complex schedule. Enrollment management thus remains important, with on campus students encouraged to take most courses in the face to face. Enrollments in the future may also be affected by related budgetary issues related to instructor or department compensation.

1. Helena Dettmer described a situation with a student in distress over Spring Break, bringing to her attention that more needs to be done in this area to help train faculty and staff about related best practices. Training DEOs and DUSs might be an appropriate first step. UEPCC also discussed the importance of knowing best practices and when to get help immediately. Students sometimes ask for help at unexpected times, and in some cases that request may be the only one given, with those involved able to make a difference. Navigating boundaries is also difficult since it can be hard to know what can be shared or asked. Likewise, it can be difficult to set aside related policies and procedures and just to focus on the student’s needs at the minute, depending on the individual situation and its seriousness. Another area of frustration is referring a student for help but not finding out what exactly happened or the status of the student. Although this information might be protected by FERPA, instructors do need to know about a student’s status in order to help the student complete the course and thus this information can and should be shared when needed. UEPCC members suggested adding best practices and help guidelines to ICON, for both students and faculty. Meanwhile, faculty should become familiar with information on the Office of the Dean of Students pages and at University Counseling, both which offer best practices and advice about working with distressed students. See <https://counseling.uiowa.edu/> and DOS Student Assistance pages: <https://dos.uiowa.edu/assistance/> and the Quick Guide for Helping Students <https://dos.uiowa.edu/assistance/quick-guide-for-helping-students/>
2. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Jung
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Secretary for UEPCC