The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum CommitteeMinutes

November 21, 2019

Attending: Helena Dettmer; Eric Gidal; Kathryn Hall; Anita Jung; Andrew Kitchen; Brian Lai; Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez; Jennifer Rogers; Shaun Vecera

Absent: Andrew Forbes; Rebekah Kowal

1. The minutes from November 14 were approved with one correction.
2. The committee discussed the issue of office hours and what constituents a reasonable number of “hours by appointment.” In some cases, students find “regular” office hour times inconvenient and thus would like an appointment to suit their own preferences. The policy related to office hours states the following:

According to the [University Operations Manual](https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/human-resources/professional-ethics-and-academic-responsibility#15.2), the Office of the Provost, and CLAS policy, the following information must be included on every syllabus:

3. A minimum of three office hours per week (60 minutes x 3). State the days, times, place, and “by appointment” since the College requires instructors to be available for a reasonable amount of time by appointment.”

Key to this policy is the statement that the amount of time allocated for “by appointment” should be “reasonable.” Instructors are not obligated to meet each student at the student’s preferred time; this, in fact, would be impossible in large courses. Members suggested that it might help if faculty used a scheduling app such as the one now used by academic advisors and the Office of Academic Programs & Student Development in 120 Schaeffer Hall to schedule these “by appointment” meetings. This could help students to see when times were available for appointments, cutting down on the time spent on email communication. Another strategy might be to define “by appointment” on the syllabus so students better understand the instructor’s availability. UEPCC recommended that each department and program discuss this issue and work to create a procedure for handling “by appointment” for that unit so students see it defined multiple times on the syllabi and understand it is not a personal instructor’s policy, but one followed by faculty in the department or program. It could be that some departments would want to consider providing additional staff support for the scheduling of these appointments and to help with SDS accommodations in very large courses. In a class of 300 or more students, for example, these tasks can take a great deal of time. The group also mentioned that the term “Office Hours” is frequently misunderstood by students. Defining this term or renaming it might also be helpful.

1. The committee reflected on the work it had completed this semester as well as on initiatives for Spring 2020 related to undergraduate education. The committee will consider agenda items over the break, bring them forward at the first meeting of the spring semester.
2. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Jung, Professor, Art and Art History  
Secretary for UEPCC