The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

**Minutes**

September 12, 2019

Attending: Helena Dettmer (Chair); Andrew Forbes; Eric Gidal; Kathryn Hall (staff); Anita Jung; Andrew Kitchen; Rebekah Kowal; Brain Lai; Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez; Jennifer Rogers; Shaun Vecera

1. The minutes from September 5, 2019, were approved as written.
2. The CLAS double-counting policy for undergraduate certificates was discussed. CLAS certificates require around 18-21 s.h. Students like certificates to help extend the broad nature of their education and to show a proficiency in skills and content related to a first-career; certificates are not a required component of a degree. The double-counting policy limits students from counting more than 6 s.h. from a major, minor, or certificate toward the certificate in question. Certificate coordinators and CLAS academic advisors spend a great deal of time tracking these duplicative courses, which must be done by hand. Decisions about courses that will be double-counted or any exceptions or substitutions must also be recorded by hand and are sent to the Registrar which also checks rules related to duplication as a student nears graduation. Certificate coordinators and advisors have limited time to talk with students and early registration is particularly compressed. Some students, too, declare a certificate online without any advising; consequently, not all students understand or are aware of the double-counting rules. Students have learned to depend on the degree audit to guide their choices and to convey the requirements and since double-counting is not tracked in the audit, it can show a certificate as completed when in fact there are issues related to the double counting of too many courses. The end result is that some students earn credentials using more than 6 s.h. of double-counted courses because the errors are not caught. The policy creates inefficiencies and confusions, with these outweighing its benefits. Additionally, other UI undergraduate colleges do not have such a policy, with these differences creating difficulties for students. The UEPCC conversation also entered on the purpose of certificates, which is to help students articulate and explore a focused interest. Whether or not courses overlap might be irrelevant since the student is seeking to understand knowledge within a different context. Helping students to connect their learning across disciplines while augmenting it with applied skills is very positive and outweighs any concern with course overlap. Additionally, if duplication is a central concern, there may be better ways of ensuring that the student has learned what is needed through a higher GPA requirement, for example. Naturally, if a certificate has a great deal of overlapping course work, it should not be approved, which is most likely the best way to solve some of these issues. The committee unanimously recommended that CLAS end the undergraduate certificate double-counting policy.
3. Dean Goddard visited UEPCC to meet members and to speak about his vision of the College as well as about current projects and those under consideration. Based on the information from the 20/20 Report, from the last outside review of CLAS, and through conversations with DEOs and faculty members, Dean Goddard decided that a structural reorganization of the some collegiate functions was needed immediately. The related long-term goal is to encourage departmental autonomy, resulting in inspired solutions and strategic processes to help CLAS to prepare for the future. That future includes many new opportunities in areas of knowledge, inventions, and related careers but also, of course, includes declining demographics within first-year cohorts nationally. Those who enter UI will be more diverse in terms of underrepresented status, age, economic background, skill sets, and interests. Preparing to serve this new generation of students is in keeping with the tradition and strengths of a liberal arts education as is fostering upward mobility and a first career. Creating particular programs of study that encourage the view of UI as a destination will also serve to advance the research mission of the university, moving it toward excellence in many areas. The current structural change will allow more faculty and staff to be deeply involved with this future and to help chart its course.

The committee wondered how UEPCC could help with this plan and what role excellent teaching might play since this can be key to retention and time to graduation while also helping students to reach their potential. Creating incentives for excellent teaching and clarifying the teaching evaluation process seems crucial since research tends to be rewarded more generously, particularly in some fields. Dean Goddard agreed, reminding the committee that research done on teaching evaluations shows that bias serves to diminish the usefulness of these traditional evaluations. These must be augmented with other processes that will uphold the importance of instruction as foundational to the UI mission. UEPCC members mentioned examples where reflection on teaching and focusing on gradual improvement in one or two areas of a course had been powerful, with teaching seen as an ever-evolving process leading to growth rather than as a problem to be solved. The new structure for peer evaluations recommended by the ACE Evaluation Review Committee provides for more reflection and dialog, which might empower faculty while helping to create community around the importance of teaching. The committee thanked Dean Goddard for his visit and for his time.

1. The meeting was adjourned.

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