The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

**Minutes**

Thursday, September 27, 2018

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

Absent: Tristan Schmidt (student member)

1. The minutes were approved as written.
2. The committee members briefly discussed the name and membership of the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC) and recommended these topics be raised with GECC members. If the revisions are recommended by GECC, a formal proposal will be submitted by that committee to UEPCC for consideration.
3. The committee reviewed the recommendations of GECC for GE CLAS Core status in the following courses and areas, also recommending approval:

* TRNS:2000 Translation and Global Society, 3 s.h. for GE Core Status in Diversity and Inclusion.
* THTR:2605 Monsters, Victims, and Villains: Changing Perceptions, 3 s.h. for GE Core Status in Diversity and Inclusion. (In Fall 2018 known as THTR:3605/EDTL:3963 Inclusive Theatre)
* BIOL:2120 Good Genes Gone Bad: Genetic Disorders of Notable Celebrities, 3 s.h. for GE Core Status in Natural Sciences Non-lab.

1. Mark Harris, Director, Student Disability Services; and Michael Venzon, Assistant Director for Accessibility Services, Student Disability Services, discussed accommodations with UEPCC members in relation to [allowed absences](https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/accommodations/descriptions/attendance/). This particular accommodation was added to the SDS website in Summer 2017 to help clarify related procedures and questions. Although accommodations for absences may seem new, they have always been allowed in certain situations such as for disabilities that occur intermittently. Absences in some courses may not present a problem for the student’s learning, particularly if lectures are already recorded or if students are supplied with a Power Point or notes. In applied courses, however, attendance may be necessary for the student to meet the course’s learning outcomes, as is often true in dance, studio arts, or world languages, for example. Accommodations that include allowed absences thus can present some issues that need careful consideration.

It can be difficult to know how many absences might be allowed without hurting the student’s learning. As with all accommodations, it is the student’s responsibility to discuss the matter with the instructor and to alert the instructor of the need for these accommodations. Learning outcomes are best when the student and instructor discuss together how the accommodations can be handled. Creative solutions can sometimes come about because of this dialogue. It is especially important with absences to discuss and have a clear agreement with the student what this might mean and how many times the student anticipates being gone. This can be done while respecting the student’s privacy and without asking why the accommodations are needed. Additionally, putting the agreement in writing that has come out of this dialogue with the student is important, allowing both parties to share expectations and remove any misunderstanding before they become an issue. Noting any consultations with others that occurred can also be helpful as can be a plan for how to handle excessive absences.

If instructors are in doubt about how to proceed, it is important to consult with related experts who may have additional guidance, such as the DEO, the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the department, or the CLAS Student Development and Services Office in 120 Schaeffer. Faculty may also consult with SDS if the student has already shared the accommodations letter, but SDS is not allowed to reveal who has accommodations or the rationale for granting them. Students are responsible for sharing this information or for keeping it private.

In some classes where student engagement is a large part of the learning experience, it may not be appropriate for a student to be granted significant attendance accommodations since the student would not have a full opportunity to learn the material. The SDS website gives these related guidelines, as developed by the US Office of Civil Rights:

* How much classroom interaction is there between the instructor and students, and among students?
* Do student contributions constitute a significant component of the learning process?
* Does the fundamental nature of the course rely upon student participation as an essential method for learning, e.g. foreign language?
* To what degree does a student's absence constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
* How do you calculate attendance in the final grade?
* What is the classroom policy regarding attendance?

(<https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/accommodations/descriptions/attendance/> )

SDS accepts the instructor’s decision on whether or not attendance accommodations may be made without harming the student’s learning and how many absences may be acceptable.

Another important SDS policy to keep in mind is that accommodations do not occur retroactively. A student presenting the SDS letter during the last part of the semester, in other words, should be accommodated only for current or future work and not for work already missed. In some cases, the student might have just received the accommodations, with the delay no fault of the student. However, to be fair to all students, accommodations are only granted after the letter is presented and not retroactively.

UEPCC members brought up many examples where in the past it has been difficult to decide where the “line” should be drawn and what is acceptable in terms of granting accommodations. It may be very helpful for departments to discuss these matters as a whole and based on the types and sizes of courses offered to provide guidelines for instructors to consider, particularly related to absence accommodations. Additionally, the SDS website contains valuable information. Also discussed was the behavior by a handful of students to take advantage of accommodations to gain an unfair advantage over other students. Instructors noted that occasionally a student may not have been forthright about accommodations, presenting an outdated letter, for example. This behavior does fall under the CLAS Code of Academic Honesty. Generally, however, students do not like requesting accommodations and often try to do without them because of their stigma. For attendance accommodations, it might be important for SDS students to contact the instructor before the course begins; otherwise, if the instructor does not deem the absence accommodations appropriate, the student may need to add a new class. SDS will need to allow access to the student’s current letter of accommodations before the semester begins.

5. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez  
Associate Professor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
Secretary for UEPCC