The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

Minutes

September 3, 2020

Attending: Roxanna Curto; Kathryn Hall (staff); Alan Huckleberry; Erin Irish; Andrew Kitchen; Rebekah Kowal; Brian Lai; Cornelia Lang (Chair); Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez; Jennifer Rogers; Christine Shea

Absent: Shaun Vecera

1. The minutes from March 12 were approved as written.
2. After UEPCC members introduced themselves, they reviewed the duties of the committee as listed in the [CLAS Manual of Procedure and Policy (Article VI)](https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/faculty/2017%20CLAS%20MOP%20Article%20VI%20-%20The%20Undergraduate%20Educational%20Policy%20And%20Curriculum%20Committee.pdf). An undergraduate student will join UEPCC shortly and is a voting member, as stated in the Manual.
3. Members volunteered for UEPCC positions, as follows:
* Secretary, Rebekah Kowal, Department of Dance.
* Liaison to the Faculty Assembly Agenda Committee (FA), Christine Shea, Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Department of Linguistics.
* Liaison to the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC), Jennifer Rogers, Department of Health and Human Physiology.
1. The committee discussed Fall 2020 courses to date, including successes as well as issues related to COVID-19. The group began by lauding the work of faculty in preparation for the semester as well the support provided by staff in the Center for Teaching (CfT), Distance Online Education (DOE), the Office of Teaching, Learning and Technology (OTLT), and other support units. A community effort occurred to ensure that many first and second-year courses would be offered in CLAS as face-to-face or hybrid courses. The committee noted that this was a substantial achievement resulting from the hard work and dedication of the CLAS community to its students.

Some of largest stress points in preparing for the semester have been last-minute changes. Rebekah Kowal noted that Halsey Hall was deemed unsafe because of ventilation problems, leaving Dance without a teaching space; however, Hancher Auditorium, the IMU, the Department of Theatre Arts, the School of Music, and Recreational Services offered facilities for dance courses, turning what could have be an unworkable situation into a memorable and exciting experience for students. Still, as cases of COVID-19 grow and students are quarantined, face-to-face experiences are jeopardized. Alan Huckleberry then brought up the Voxman Music Building as an example of a new and exceptionally well-designed space with excellent ventilation where faculty and students report feeling safe. Health obstacles still exist, especially for musicians who create aerosols, with special rules needed for the practice rooms, for example. Some instruments, too, are harder to accommodate, such as the organ and the piano. UEPCC members indicated research labs to date are generally safe because of the course structures created by faculty that alternate students in labs and because students have traditionally been taught to take lab safety seriously and have always worn PPE. The group agreed that UI buildings and labs in the future should not be shut down simultaneously as was required last spring but should rather be closed based on the specifics of each situation.

While creative approaches have facilitated many important face-to-face experiences, students are nevertheless missing important academic opportunities because of the pandemic. As more students become ill, managing students’ move to online sections, providing make up work, and communicating with students interrupts time allotted for teaching and research. Additionally, the concern for students’ safety takes an emotional toll on the instructor and students’ anxiety can interfere with their learning. Some students also report difficulty learning online and resources are needed to help such students. Cornelia Lang described some excellent resources, including work done by UEPCC member Shawn Vecera, and she will forward those materials to the group.

UEPCC members summarized the discussing by emphasizing that some academic experiences must be in person while others are better taught virtually, especially considering the disruption created by any sudden change in modality because of growing cases of COVID-19. Departments working closely with faculty should decide which courses function best in face-to-face, hybrid, or virtual formats. Faculty are charged with teaching and are invested in it; likewise, they are experts in their areas, and their voices should be heard about the best mode of instruction since it influences course design, content, and student learning. Asynchronous courses also have a place in the curriculum since this mode allows content to be presented in smaller modules with students able to prepare and review at their own pace. The group stressed that deciding a course’s modality in time to prepare the course is essential, with any decisions about course modality for Spring 2020 now urgent. Last minute changes should be minimized as much as possible.

1. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebekah Kowal
Professor and DEO, Department of Dance
Secretary for UEPCC