

Faculty Senate Minutes December 5, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 4:09 p.m. All departments were in attendance except Interdisciplinary Studies and Music.

I. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes were corrected to clarify that GERC sub-committees would work until the start of the spring semester.

The minutes of the November 21, 2006 meeting of the Faculty Senate were approved as corrected.

II. Report of the Faculty Senate Chairperson

Chairperson Börger-Greco reminded senators that faculty with course proposals for this year should review the UCPRC timeline to be sure to meet the curriculum review process deadlines. She noted that Senate does not intend to waive the two-meeting rule for course proposals this year. Dr. Börger-Greco also urged faculty to attend graduation in regalia on Sunday, December 17 at 2 p.m. in Pucillo. She also indicated that the next Senate meeting will be on the first day of classes, January 16, 2007. Any items to be included on the agenda can be sent to Dr. Börger-Greco. She also reminded faculty of the special Senate meeting on General Education issues to be held on January 30, 2007.

III. Report of the Student Senate President

Student Senate President Andrew Moyer noted students are busy completing the fall semester.

IV. Report of the Graduate Student Association

Graduate Student Representative Stephanie Ensminger reported that the graduate assistants are having a drop-in holiday social at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 7 in the Ford Atrium. She asked faculty to encourage their graduate students to attend.

V. Report of the Administrative Officers

Provost

Provost Prabhu commented that things are going well overall. A question was asked about whether brunch would be provided to faculty at graduation. Dr. Prabhu responded that notification would be sent to faculty.

VI. Reports of the Faculty Senate Standing Committees

UCPRC

First Readings

(1) NEW UNDERGRADUATE COURSE

GEOG 306: Environmental Impact Assessment, 3 credits. Proposal to create course introducing requirements and methods for putting together federal environmental impact statements.

(2) NEW UNDERGRADUATE COURSE

ESCI 440: Space Weather and Environment, 3 credits. Proposal to create course covering space environment between earth and the sun.

GERC

Senator Warmkessel expressed appreciation for the good response from volunteers willing to participate in working groups for General Education curriculum aspects. She noted that the goal is to be able to present a cohesive proposal for General Education at the January 30 meeting. Dr. Warmkessel also noted that GERC has received two new freshman seminar course proposals and know of two more in progress.

VII. Reports of the Faculty Senate Special Committees

None

VIII. Proposed Courses and Programs

(1) CHANGE IN UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

BS, Computer Science. Proposal to change CSCI 420 to a required course and reduce the number of elective courses from 4 to 3 was approved without dissent.

IX. Faculty Emeritus

None

X. Other/New Business

A Schaffer/Saunders motion to take discussion of a General Education Diversity designation off the table was approved with one dissenting vote.

Dr. Schaffer noted that significant modifications had been made to the previous proposal from the President's Commission on Cultural Diversity based on discussions this fall. He emphasized a shift in perspective, defining diversity as a quality of a community collectively. He also indicated an expanded definition of this idea to be Diversity and Community Courses.

Discussion of a General Education Diversity designation was held, including:

- Should a diversity requirement be tailored to individual students to ensure they each have an experience outside their own demographic groups? Many young people do not understand their own people group. For instance, young African-Americans do not necessarily know anything about W. E. B. DuBois.

- Does a course about a people group really help us live better together as a community? DuBois himself addressed the issue of needing to know how your people group is defined by society and dealing with your own view of self. By defining diversity as a property of community, attitudes can be improved when students better understand themselves. This type of definition suggests that something like a history course might also fall into this new visioning of Diversity and Community Courses.

- Is there a need for a diversity requirement if communities change quickly and more cultural diversity is introduced? Shifts in cultural diversity in our area are lagging behind urban areas. The goal is to change how we live in any community regardless of the cultural composition at a given time. This should not be a directive to learn about another people group as much as teaching civic engagement in one's community.

- A minority-group faculty member commented that studying one's own background can develop a narrower perspective. Is this discussion premature without better definitions of what is meant by diversity and without input from the GERC sub-group addressing how to create an appropriate global viewpoint? We want students to be culturally aware and willing to interact within any community.

- What is the difference between the P course and the new D designation? The PCCD recognizes that most P courses are more interdisciplinary than multi-cultural and hopes further to expand the viewpoint from just multi-cultural to broader community issues.

- MU is lacking in language training courses, such as Chinese, which are important for training students to be part of the global community. Perhaps we should be focusing more on how diversity could be enhanced by broader course offerings.

- The D course requirement is a way to create a policy structure that makes our curriculum richer. It helps support faculty efforts in developing these types of academic programs.

- There is a danger that voting against the D course requirement would imply that there is resistance to the idea of diversity on campus. Does adding a D course requirement really make diversity stronger across campus? There is clearly a desire to recruit diverse faculty that bring the best skills to MU. The definitions laid out in the PCCD proposal should encourage this type of development across campus. Asking GERC to include a diversity requirement is another way to encourage development of a diverse MU culture.

- The concept of understanding community and recognizing diversity issues seems ideal for inclusion in freshman seminar courses. Furthermore, service learning experiences can give students an early experience with civic engagement that makes these concepts more real. There is concern that students in skills-based fields are less likely to encounter many

of these D courses in their programs. It is important that students are getting the most benefits from their training given the cost. It is expected that D courses would overlap with other required courses rather than being an additional criterion to meet. Integration with freshman seminar courses is good. The new plans for orientation may also include service learning experiences. Students would be able to use cross-cultural experiences to satisfy the D course requirement.

- A new faculty member expressed excitement about getting away from a simple parade of cultures. The move to critical thinking about cultural appreciation is important and will support pluralism as a celebration of differences. We can all be better people if we learn to deal with diversity in positive ways.

- It seems that this discussion of incorporating diversity needs to be held on a broader scale with more faculty input.

- Faculty from under-represented people groups have expressed concern that simply taking a course does not improve how we deal with diversity around us. There is a need for students to learn this by doing things with diverse peoples.

- One concern is that courses can set up a sense of feeling defined as a group rather than being able to sense an appreciation that is woven into the community mentality.

- We need to know what we mean by D courses. It seems beneficial to at least expose students to things they have not encountered before. Although it would be an additional requirement, students appreciate being exposed to new things. Many people experience diverse populations in only a negative way. Courses provide a mechanism for doing that exposure in a controlled and informed manner.

- There are many ways to address inclusion. Would D courses be the only way? GERC needs to put together their curriculum proposal in a way that includes diversity.

- There are benefits to experiential learning. Is labeling courses alone going to be effective? There needs to be a synthesis of doing with classroom processing of that experience. Both W courses and L courses involve a process of doing. It could be more beneficial to incorporate diversity themes into other courses. There is some danger that once the guidelines and labels are implemented, little is done to maintain courses that match the original intent. Some courses with W or P labels reportedly no longer meet guidelines for those designations.

- Taking any course does not guarantee that students acquire the intended skills. But establishing the goals still gives students some helpful exposure. Is curriculum review critical? Faculty have a responsibility to maintain the quality of their courses and make every effort to meet stated goals. An effective education is a blending of all types of learning experiences.

- How do we approve W or P courses? Is there a need for periodic review of General Education courses? This is a serious issue if courses are not meeting the stated program goals.

- What about intellectual doing? Thinking is an academic kind of doing.
- Would it be difficult to offer a D course or experience online? These courses might help bring a more diverse population into the MU community.
- Does labeling a course shift student focus away from the true purpose, looking to satisfy a requirement rather than actually learn what is intended? Are there other ways to include intentionality of goals without creating a label? Should GERC be asking that General Education courses meet the goals of the program?
- It is crucial to avoid tokenism. Can we challenge ourselves to infuse diversity across the curriculum? The PCCD has the charge to help direct incorporation of diversity on campus regardless of whether a D course requirement is added to the General Education curriculum. This discussion is relevant to other issues on campus and not solely in the curriculum.

Originally this discussion at the October 31 special meeting was meant to end with a straw vote. Dr. Warmkessel noted that this was for feedback on general opinions and is not needed in addition to the discussions already held.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aimee L. Miller
Faculty Senate Secretary

Action Summary:

The minutes of the November 21, 2006 meeting of the Faculty Senate were approved as corrected.

A Schaffer/Saunders motion to take discussion of a General Education Diversity designation off the table was approved with one dissenting vote.