

EPC minutes for 2/20/14

Christina Baker, Libby Dippel, Armand Gilinsky, Melinda Milligan (chair), Felicia Palsson (recorder), Nathan Rank (12:35 arrival), Tim Wandling, Laura Watt, Carmen Works

11:07 meeting called to order.

Chair MM proposes the following **modifications to the agenda**:

- New Business: Item 1: General discussion with Mike Smith about EPC/GE process for experimental course proposals, 12:00
- New Business: Item 2: Univ 160AB proposal: discussion about the procedures that were followed at GE with this experimental course, 12:15
- Items 2 and 3 under New Business become Items 3 and 4.
- An additional New Business Item 5 is added: EPC Chair Election.

Agenda is approved with these modifications.

Discussion about the agenda:

MM reviewed past EPC minutes concerning the status of experimental course proposals and GE purview. It seems it is within the rights of the proposers to bring their proposals to EPC – there's no language stating otherwise on forms or documentation relating to the proposal process.

Any new clarification that EPC requests about the process needs to go on the form – stating that GE has the sole purview in that area – if that is what we decide.

The key question is that IF the GE decision is not to approve the course, does it stay there, or can it go to EPC for review.

EPC members are generally NOT inclined to take over the work of GE by agreeing to review course proposals.

Agenda is clarified again to note that New Business Item 2 (formerly item 1) is *not* a first reading of the course proposal. It is a discussion about procedures.

Minutes of 2/6/14 approved with one wording change:

Proposal for SCI 120: LW asked for clarity *not reduction* of the text.

Old Business: Item 1: COMS 2nd reading continued (L. Burch)

MM introduces the topic by stating that she, TW and L. Burch met with Dean Stearns Monday to discuss A&H budget allocations. Dean Stearns indicated that freshman GE courses are prioritized and Department Chairs make subsequent allocation decisions. Criteria that Chairs have agreed on include: program viability; University service; FTEF in learning communities; sabbaticals.

This discussion was interesting but didn't help resolve the questions raised by the COMS program revision. MM is interested how EPC can best assist COMS. Dean Stearns suggested that COMS should make their case to the chairs if they want additional allocation. It is not necessarily the experience of COMS that the process works this way.

MM asks the committee specifically what we'd like to ask of L. Burch at this time; and asks L. Burch whether they are satisfied with their current proposal as it stands, or whether the COMS department wishes to submit a revised version.

L. Burch states the department has done as much as it can to address budget cuts and will not come forward with a revision. She will incorporate the questions and comments EPC has made already. L. Burch is not sure whether the chairs' meeting is in fact the forum where decisions get made. She further states the department is proud of its revision and of its curriculum and what they have been able to do given the constraints.

TW comments that it would be helpful to refer the issue of a lack of a clear planning structure for COMS to our Academic Planning Committee. Perhaps the Dean is consulting with chairs, but the Dean has authority. COMS has the highest SFR in the School and has gone from 32 courses down to 18. The program viability issue – “what program wouldn’t exist if we didn’t fund it” isn’t a sustainable structure for long term planning. Programs have no clear roadmap for planning; the tension is they’ve been forced to cut their curriculum already and can’t plan for the future. Don’t know their budget and can’t plan within it.

L. Burch notes the department has consulted with the Dean and did go through program review, but a key issue is “are we going to have full time faculty teaching a course for free.”

AG states the committee owes it to Liz and the COMS department to give them an opportunity to move this forward to Executive Committee. AG would also like to follow up on TW’s suggestion to refer these global issues to the Academic Planning Committee. And AG notes he met with a 1999 grad of COMS who said most valuable part of her degree was the internship.
AG moves to approve the program revision and send to Ex Comm.

MM says the committee can’t approve the program revision until the document is final and cleaned up. We should see final revised version that is going forward to Ex Comm.

AG withdraws motion and introduces new motion to put this on the agenda in between now and next meeting for email review so we can vote on the merits of the cleaned up version. LW seconds.

TW speaks against the motion stating he would like to defer that matter to L. Burch and would like to see the cleaned up document come back to the next EPC meeting.

L. Burch notes it would be great to have two weeks to make changes and bring back.

AG withdraws the second motion.

There is a procedural question whether this should have been on the agenda if we are not looking at the cleaned up document today.

MM said 2nd reading could go on for as many meetings as needed.

TW: we could vote on it today, but we’re not ready to vote today. It can stay on the agenda until next meeting.

COMS 2nd reading will continue at next meeting.

11:44: The committee moves into Reports.

Charles Elster is a guest from SDS. Chair MM notes he is on our agenda as an occasional report.

Charles Elster's SDS report:

One of the charges of SDS is in collaboration with EPC perform periodic review of diversity in the curriculum and make recommendations. Last year the SDS worked on clarifying what diversity was, and why important. Looked at competencies called the Tilford competencies (from Kansas State). Looked at different types of infusion of multicultural pedagogy into curriculum. Created guidelines. Then met with MM and FP to discuss collaboration with Program Review; SDS created workgroup on program review. Merith Weisman, Rebecca Bryan and CE are in the workgroup. They looked at section 5 of the self study template – area on diversity. One concern is that the program review was last policy was updated in 2009. SDS would like to know if it's due for an update and is this committee the one that does it. SDS would like to be helpful, not prescriptive, but rather provide resources about how diversity issues can be incorporated into curriculum, classroom, etc.

FP reports as Chair of Program Review Subcommittee:

Program Review plans to invite C. Elster on behalf of SDS to discuss ways that SDS can provide resources as part of the program review process. The agendas have been full so far but the invitation is coming. The last Program Review subcommittee meeting was a discussion with Rebecca Bryan regarding Kinesiology. The next meeting will most likely be a discussion with a representative from Anthropology.

There is also the ongoing issue of Program Review vacancies. Not every school is able to send a representative. FP attended Structure & Functions to discuss. Chair Senghas recommended that MM or EPC propose changes to the constitution to add at-large members to the Program Review subcommittee. FP requests that EPC vote on this as a supplement to a school-representative basis for Program Review membership. FP recommends two at-large positions.

TW comments that he supports SDS activities. It will be helpful to have diversity resources come through program reviews.

AG moves to request a change in the constitution to allow expansion of Program Review subcommittee to include two at-large members from the campus. LW 2nd.

Motion passes with one opposed.

11:57. Mike Smith and Terry Lease have arrived.

New Business Item 1: General discussion with Mike Smith about EPC/GE process for experimental course proposals

MM goes over the slight changes to the agenda to clarify that we are discussing general processes before the specific instance of Univ 160AB.

MM distributes packet of EPC minutes from 3/22/12 and the current forms that exist for the “GE Experimental Course Proposal Process” and the “GE Course Modification.”

MM notes the first question we must assess is, with experimental course review, once a recommendation is made by GE and comes forward to EPC, is it final? Does GE have final purview? If GE’s decision is negative, does the proposal stay with GE or can it come to EPC for a first reading?

M. Smith states that is a question for EPC to decide.

CW would like to see rigor in the process. There can’t be a guarantee that every proposal passes.

TW suggests that if a vote at GE is unanimous it should come to EPC as a consent item. Any EPC member can request to make it a business item to discuss the merits of the recommendation. It can also be reviewed at Senate. However, in the case where GE does not approve the course, it should only come to EPC when there is a procedural issue.

M. Smith notes that each proposal must go through a curriculum committee first at the School level, and regardless of whether they approve or disapprove, the proposal still comes to GE. M. Smith would argue against every proposal coming to EPC for review.

T. Lease notes there is a distinction between curriculum committee providing input, which is input not a decision. The process needs to include a form of appeal from a committee lower down to one higher up. Yet it’s difficult to appeal on the decision alone – a proposer needs to appeal on the grounds for the decision – how it was handled/procedure.

Several members voice agreement with the idea that EPC should not be reviewing proposals and doing the work of the GE committee. Consensus is that only in the case of a negative decision should it rise to the level of a business item on the EPC agenda.

MM notes there is still an open question about appeal, and whether the proposer has the right to request to bring it to EPC for review?

AG asks M. Smith as Chair of GE: was the proper procedure followed? And is there any basis for there being a procedural complaint, regardless of the merits of the proposal.

LW notes the specific instance is our next agenda item.

TW notes that when there is no curriculum committee to review the proposal (as in this case of Univ 160AB) he would be likely to raise the issue at EPC regardless of what GE decided.

FP notes that the question of whether proper procedure was followed may be murky and difficult to determine, in particular if the minutes are not correct. In the rare case of a negative decision by GE, it might be easier to simply give the proposer a hearing at EPC than it is to determine whether the proposer has a right of appeal. What evidence would we ever likely get to support an appeal?

LW suggests it's not a matter of evidence – but actually just discussing whether the procedure does *seem* murky. If it does that may be sufficient to ask GE to revisit.

M. Smith says that procedure was proper in the meeting but not in the following documentation (minutes). Also he did not copy the EPC chair on the decision. Documentation issue.

AG says one way to resolve this issue would be for GE to communicate to the proposers that they have the right to revise and bring back.

T. Lease suggests the GE committee document the reasons why it was a negative decision. FP notes that the minutes generally document the GE discussion.

AG points out that it's getting lost in the discussion that this is an experimental course.

M. Smith points out the history. The idea of experimental courses being that people are more free to experiment. Subcommittee wanted the review to be more stringent.

MM also wants to suggest we clarify the difference between experimental and permanent course proposals. Maybe write a statement of philosophy about why there's a difference between the two.

TW would disagree with the "free to experiment" and argue for more stringent requirements for experimental courses because the budget is #1 consideration with what passes. CW concurs.

MM summarizes group discussion as follows:

- A positive recommendation from GE comes to EPC with memo of rationale and goes on the EPC agenda as a consent item.
- Negative decision from GE comes to EPC as information item with memo of rationale.
- In the case with an experimental course, the proposer can ask that we hear it on procedure, but if there is a content question about the decision, GE decision will stand and the proposer can bring it back to GE.
- If EPC has questions about content it remains in our purview to review.

Calls for a motion in support of the above.

So moved. All in favor.

New Business Item 2: Univ 160AB proposal: discussion about the procedures that were followed at GE with this experimental course

MM asks Terry Lease – do you have process concerns?

T. Lease: Yes. Three concerns:

1. I have one set of GE subcommittee minutes where the decision was made. Is it a matter of process or documentation? Among other things, when the decision was made and GE went into executive session it is a violation of by-laws. Constitution says only personnel matters go into executive session.
2. Also the documentation in the minutes doesn't reflect that specific points were given to Kirsten Ely. Rationale for decision wasn't documented in the minutes.

3. Minutes note that “puzzlement is expressed over the high level of scrutiny...” This suggests a procedural issue.

TW mentions the quickest, best way to get something revisited at GE is to get one of the voting members to bring back to reconsider. You always have that recourse in governance.

MM notes that Richard Senghas is looking into the by-laws about subcommittees. It may be that the reasons for going into an executive session could be broadly framed.

M. Smith: It is a part of Robert’s Rules that executive session is something you CAN do if a committee member requests it.

CW mentions there can be secret ballots instead. People don’t feel intimidated in that setting.

FP: addressing T. Lease’s three points of concern: #1 is the true process question; which the constitution and by-laws will determine. Re #2 FP notes there was a good amount of specific feedback provided to Kirsten Ely when she made the proposal but it’s not documented in the minutes. Also this was her third visit to GE. Re #3 FP notes that the judgment call of how well or whether each course proposal meets the learning objectives is the nature of the work of GE. FP voted in favor because she thought the proposal did demonstrate it was meeting the objectives. Other committee members felt otherwise. That is the work of GE to determine how much scrutiny to give and how much to ask proposers. Thus it is a content issue that EPC would not want to get into, as agreed before, otherwise EPC is taking over the work of GE.

LW points out that even if Robert’s Rules allow executive session, our own by-laws might not. Our constitution trumps Robert’s Rules.

T. Lease concurs.

AG suggests the GE minutes don’t pass smell test in any case, because you have vote counts for the business item but no vote count for the agenda revision (to change the agenda to go into closed/executive session). There isn’t even documentation what the rationale was for a closed session. That should be present in the minutes. Also, there are notes from the closed session – but it is not noted whether these were passed on to the proposer. So there may well be a procedural issue.

CW suggests that the points Terry raised are too subjective, other than the by-laws issue.

LW says there is sufficient uncertainty about procedure – so we should just send it back to GE. **LW moves to do so. CW seconds.**

MM says that first we would need to give GE a little more language about what we want them to do. The vote for and rationale for a closed session were not documented. On that basis we send it back. But what are we asking them to do?

Several members express discomfort with voting on the motion since it is the end of the meeting and we’re out of time. **LW withdraws motion.**

MM adjourns the meeting at 12:51. Business Items 3-5 postponed.