

EPC Minutes
November 6, 2014

Meeting called to order at 11:05 am

Present: Melinida Milligan (chair) (MM), Tim Wandling (TimW), Patricia Kim-Rajal (PKR), Armand Gillinsky (AG), Nathan Rank (NR), Laura Watt (LR), Felicia Palsson (FP), Chiara Bacigalupa (CB), Alvin Nguyen (AN), Christian George (CG)
Murali Pillai (MP), proxy for Tia Watts

Guests: (all arrived at 12:15 pm) John Kornfeld (JK), Meng Chi-Su(MCS), Bala Ravikumar (BR), Farid Fahramand (FF), Annie Green (A&H Student Senator) (AnnieG)

Approval of Agenda

Approved as written

Approval of Minutes from Oct 23

Approved as submitted

Information Item

GEOG 206 Society, Environment, and Sustainable Development being proposed as an experimental GE D2 course. Proposal and syllabus available on Moodle.

Consent Items

1. Current MCCCF's on Moodle (5 new permanent courses, 1 title change, 4 course deletions, 1 creation of XL section). No objections raised; Melinda will sign.
2. Proposal to make BIO 130 and 131 permanent GE courses in area B2. No objections raised; proposal approved.

New Business

1. ENSP Program Revision

Laura Watt presented the proposal to phase out two study plans in ENSP major: Outdoor Leadership and Education and the Environment. The department is suffering from too few faculty to support the study plans, and the courses have been under-enrolled due to declining student interest. In addition, the old system of waivers for students in the Education plan that exempted students from the tests required for the credential program no longer exist, so that this option does not have the same benefit for students that it once had. Finally, students were having more and more difficulty enrolling in some of the courses that are housed in other departments (KIN and THAR). Two of the courses in the study plans will still be offered (ENSP 440 and ENSP 444), but the more specialized courses (ENSP 442 and ENSP 345) will be phased out.

NR commented that the proposal represents good planning ahead.

LW commented that this plan will help the department work most effectively with the small number of students who want to complete the plans.

MM commended the department for the thoughtful approach to addressing the change in student needs and department resources.

NR moved to waive the first reading, and the motion was seconded by MP. Motion passed unanimously.

Second Reading

CB moved that the proposal be approved, and AG seconded the motion.

No further discussion was had.

Motion passed unanimously.

2. Sociology Program Revision

MM presented the proposal, since no one from the department could be present.

Based on the Sociology program review, several revisions are being proposed. The changes to the Sociology major include: remove the required methods seminar course, add a requirement for a statistics course, and remove the substantive areas requirement for the sociology electives requirement.

Regarding the removal of the methods seminar requirement: Traditionally, there was a three-course methods sequence. Students face challenges taking the courses in sequence, and the senior seminar has become more identical to the methods course. Proposal is to take out the methods seminar and let students choose a Sociology elective instead.

Regarding the addition of a statistics requirement: Other comparable social sciences (e.g. Psychology) and other Sociology departments in the CSU require statistics. The course is also required for many graduate programs that sociology majors pursue. The department has also shifted its focus away from a heavier emphasis on qualitative research methods to a more equal emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative methods, and this change will make the major more aligned with that shift. Finally, because of graduate school requirements, many Sociology students already take statistics as their GE Math course, so this change reflects practice. Those students who took some other math course for GE can take SOCI 301 Statistics for Sociologists.

Regarding the removal of the substantive areas requirement: The department has decided to eliminate the categories for the major electives, because the divisions no longer make as much sense within the discipline. In future, department will look at more formal study plans based on student career goals.

Technically the number of units in the major is raised slightly with the addition of the statistics course, but in practice it's not a big change, because many students take 43 units anyway. This change will actually speed up degree attainment by helping students know early what they need to do. And the slightly higher number of electives should not be an issue, since many students have overlap between their Sociology and GE courses.

NR commented that it sounds like for most students, the number of electives will stay the same.

MM: 43 units is typical for a sociology degree.

TimW commented that 43 units is a good number for a major. He suggested that all majors should help students understand how their major can work with other majors or minors so that those who are interested in multiple fields can maximize overlap to finish two majors or a minor.

AG suggested the following changes:

- Paragraph 1: third line: eliminate the word “way” or at least pluralize it
- Paragraph 1, Line 6: change ration to ratio
- p. 6, the comparison should show both totals as a range: 37-43 for the old major and 40-46 for the new major
- Put an asterisk next to statistics course that says it also fulfills GE
- p. 7, appendix A, the part that says 6 electives were kept and 3 removed: Add a justification that discusses the resource impact of removing those three courses

Regarding the last bullet point, MM said that the revisions for the electives are still under discussion, so the effect on resources is not clear. LW suggested that a statement to that effect would be fine.

NR asked why the statistics course was not included as a support course, rather than as a requirement of the major. He added that it does make sense to nest the requirement if it can also be met through SOCI 301.

MM confirmed that students can take MATH 165 or SOCI 301.

AG suggested that the statistics courses be specified: MATH 165, SOCI 301, or equivalent.

MP asked how many new students would be signing up for MATH 165.

MM answered that because many students already take MATH 165, the MATH department thought the increase would be negligible (perhaps 10 per semester).

AG asked what the capacity in Soc 301 is.

MM replied that the current cap is 25, but the ideal would be one section per semester, so 50 seats per year. She added that the Sociology department does increase capacity when students need the courses to graduate, so the capacity in this course could also be increased as dictated by student need.

LW made the motion to waive the first reading, and the motion was seconded by AG. The motion passed unanimously.

Second Reading

TimW suggested that including the statistics course as a requirement in the major instead of as a pre-requisite or support course would be more effective for the ARR.

CG asked how removing the Sociology courses from the Human Development major affects that major.

MM answered that the Human Development major is in flux. Human Development is doing their program review, and the outcome of the review will help to inform what happens with the program. A more substantial revision to the major is under consideration, including the possibility of being connected to a department.

LW moved to approve the proposed revision to the Sociology major, with the clean-up changes suggested by AG (see above). PKR seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports

1. EPC Chair (MM) – MM presented the proposal for the University Studies Committee to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee gave the following feedback:

- Add more precise language about reviewing courses
- Asked whether the committee needs to be approved by the Senate. It may be more appropriate that EPC approve the committee. MM has been tasked with looking at how other curriculum committees on campus have been approved historically.
- Asked whether this proposal solves the problems with the UNIV courses (the problem is that they don't get the kind of review and support they would receive in a department).

TimW commented that when the position for a director of undergraduate studies was created, it was created as a faculty position, which might have addressed the third bullet point. There is probably still a need for this kind of position.

NR asked whether the University Studies committee would be another subcommittee of EPC.

MM clarified that the University Studies committee would be parallel to the school curriculum committees, and thus would not necessarily be a subcommittee of EPC.

2. No report from the AVP of Academic Programs because Elaine Sundberg was not present.

3. Graduate Studies Subcommittee Report (PKR). The Graduate Studies Subcommittee is continuing to gather information about the idea to only archive master's theses electronically. They are also discussing recruiting for graduate programs.

4. GE Subcommittee Report (TimW): At the last meeting, the committee looked at the two proposals that were on today's EPC agenda as information items, both of which passed unanimously. The other item discussed was the revisions to the GE course proposal form (to combine the permanent and experimental forms into a single form), and TimW would like some feedback from EPC. Does EPC think the default on the form should be experimental or permanent? Under what conditions should a course be approved as permanent?

LW proposed that the default be experimental. She suggested that it makes sense that the first few times a course is taught, it should be seen as experimental. Even though there could be exceptions, an experimental default would reflect the reality that courses do evolve.

FP proposed that the default should be for permanent courses, because the criteria for what faculty members have to bring back to make a course permanent are still unclear. The default should be permanent until proposers can be given a clear sense of what they need to do to take a course from experimental to permanent.

LW agreed that the criteria for moving a course to permanent status needs to be clarified, but added that encouraging experimental courses might help to avoid some of the controversial issues that surround individual courses.

FP pointed out that moving to one form is supposed to address the points just raised. The current question only asks what the default should be. It seems unfair to ask that everyone go experimental when many courses are ready for permanent status.

NR reiterated that it is important to define what proposers need to do to make a course permanent and that the GE Subcommittee has to figure that out. However, a default to experimental does not mean that the proposer should not make the case for a permanent course if they are ready to do so. And if the form does not say what should be asked for (e.g. an assessment plan), then the criteria cannot be required.

TimW commented that the GE committee members would have the option to themselves suggest that the course be proposed as a permanent course. He added that whatever is done, it has to be written down and very clear. But that language does not have to be on the form; it could be in the Curriculum Guide.

AG asked whether the form is digital and whether the words "experimental" or "permanent" have to be in the title. He suggested that if the words are not in the title, then the options could be given as radio buttons or something similar.

TimW agreed that a third option is to make the form neutral, with no default.

LW said that most courses need to be tried first, so the default should be experimental.

CG suggested that proposers should be encouraged to ask for experimental status, but the form should be neutral.

NR added that the process should make it obvious that the GE Subcommittee could encourage the proposers to ask for permanent status.

FP added that, historically, courses going through the GE approval process have been regarded as permanent.

MM suggested that, based on events from last year, courses should start as experimental. And there should be clear guidelines about what the proposers will be asked to do to gain permanent status. She also asked whether experimental courses will be held to a higher standard. Last year, GE seemed to be leaning toward encouraging experimental courses, but with clear guidelines about what would be expected when the courses came back for permanent status, including specific responses to any recommendations the GE Subcommittee made the first time around. Also, the GE chairs need a process that allows them to respond more effectively to proposals, including those that shouldn't go forward as written.

TimW said that he was hearing a general consensus towards a default to experimental, but with the option left open for proposers and the GE Subcommittee to pursue permanent status when warranted.

LW added that students perceive GE as boxes they need to check, thus reducing the focus on the overall goals of GE. A two-step approval process could help all of us to be more mindful about whether GE courses are working and doing what we want them to do. A two step process offers the opportunity to check whether GE goals are still being met.

MM noted that if the requirements for an experimental course are too high, then it makes sense to proposers to just ask for permanent status.

5. Program Review Report (FP): The committee has not met since the last report.

Old Business

The sole old business item on the agenda is the proposal for ES 201 Digital Circuits and Logic Design to be approved as a GE Area A3 permanent course.

MM began with some procedural comments

- A member cannot call the question in committee.
- It is possible to do votes by paper ballot. Someone during the discussion could move to vote by paper ballot. Such a motion does not have to be seconded, but does have to be voted on. Can also just include the request for a paper ballot in whatever motion is made. If a paper ballot is approved, two people will be tellers to count votes. Chair's paper vote is set aside, in case there is a tie.

MM met with ES faculty last week and agreed to start with a response from the ES Department Chair (MCS) to the comments made in the last two meetings.

MCS distributed a handout addressing three concerns:

- Why this proposal?
- Questions being asked about the proposal
- Questions that should be asked

Why the proposal?

The proposal is designed to help the ES major meet the 120 unit cap mandate. Under 128 units, students had to take 16 units every semester, so they had no flexibility in terms of passing courses or varying their loads. The ES major could not take all 8 units from the ES major or else they would not be able to meet their accreditation requirements. ES has produced 18 graduates and 15 were hired immediately (4 at Agilent), which is excellent progress towards the department's goal to help students graduate in 4 years and be hired into good jobs. ES 210 is a good proposal, which took two years to develop and which meets the GE requirements.

Responses to the concerns raised so far:

- Concern: Double counting. Response: Table 1 of the handout lists the majors that double-count courses with GE. Engineering does not have currently have any courses that double count.

- Concern: the course is too content heavy. Response: there are 6 hours of lecture and lab per week. Lab hours can be used for interaction between students and lecturer, so there is plenty of time during the week for student/faculty contact.
- Concern: students will suffer from lack of breadth. Response: table 2 in the handout presents a comparison with other engineering schools. Other schools have lower GE requirements, so SSU students overall have more breadth.
- Concern: there is not enough writing in the course. Response: the course is writing intensive. There are weekly lab reports, a presentation outline, one-page briefing, homework, and a full report on the final project.
- Concern: the course is not a traditional A3 course. Response: table 3 shows that in other CSU schools, a variety of departments, including engineering, teach A3 courses.

Question that should be asked:

Is the committee voting on a policy about approving GE courses or is it voting on a particular course?

MM advised the committee that if a decision is not reached today, then the proposal dies. She also asked that if members did not support the proposal, that they articulate those reasons clearly so that the proposal could be revised if the ES department were to desire to do so.

NR moved that the proposal be approved.

TimW seconded the motion.

AG asked the following questions: In Table 1, none of the sciences double-count A3 courses, so the table does not seem to support the proposal. In table 3, regarding table 2, why not have two courses count towards GE to address the 8-unit gap? Regarding table 3, it looks like only two CSU campuses have engineering departments that teach GE courses in A3.

MCS answered that 4 units had already been deducted from ES courses, so there is only a 4 unit gap remaining. Regarding table 3, only some campuses have an engineering program. Table 1 makes the point that this course would be the first GE course that ES is asking to double count. It is one of the few majors that does not already double-count.

LW commented that even if the course meets the A3 goals, it is not clear that the course is aligned with the overall goals for area A. GE is not just about the subareas.

TimW questioned whether the numbers of GE units listed for other schools are accurate numbers. He went on to say that he would support reducing the total number of GE units to meet the ES Department's need to meet the 120 unit limit. And he added that his main concern with this proposal is that we are making policy by precedent, rather than having first defined the policy that would more clearly define what an A3 course should be. He also asked why the course could not meet area B instead. Finally, he mentioned that some LO's, such as exploring a variety of media, still do not seem to be addressed.

JK said that all existing A3 courses were evaluated on the basis of how well their learning outcomes aligned with the existing GE outcomes. This course should be evaluated the same way.

NR said that putting the course in Area B does not resolve the 120 unit problem and that where the course belongs is a question to be asked at the levels of review that come prior to EPC. He added that A3 is the most suitable area for this course to be, because it does have a large component of critical thinking. He asked whether EPC members really believed students would be done a disservice if the course were approved as A3.

FP expressed appreciation for the analysis and said that she agrees with the substantive comments about what a critical thinking course should be. However, GE should answer that question, and they approved the class based on the existing learning outcomes. She suggested that EPC would have a hard time proving that the course does not meet the existing learning outcomes.

TimW commented that the learning outcomes only define some things that a course should do, but they are not comprehensive, and thus not adequate for making decisions about courses. He expressed continuing reservations about moving courses that have been traditionally taught in the humanities into other disciplines.

MP asked whether the course was approved unanimously at GE, and MM confirmed that it was.

AnnieG suggested that students do not actually like it when a major course is also a GE course, because GE status makes it harder for majors to get the courses they need. She also asked why the course is not upper-division.

The motion to approve the proposal was passed with 5 votes in favor, 4 opposed, and 1 abstention.

Meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm.
Minutes submitted by Chiara Bacigalupa