**Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Meeting Minutes**

**October 22, 2019**

**Voting Members Present:** Chair Molly Bolger, Leslie Dennis, Moe Momayez, David Ortiz, Jennifer Schnellmann, Claudia Stanescu, Joost Van Haren

**Non-voting Members Present:**  Roxie Catts, Neel Ghosh, Abbie Sorg, Alex Underwood

**Voting Members Absent:** Bennett Adamson

**Guest Presenters:** Marie Teemant, Jessica Summers

Chair Molly Bolger called the meeting to order at ­­­3:35 p.m. A quorum was established with 6 voting members. An additional member arrived after the approval of the minutes.

1. **Approval of Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee meeting minutes, 8/27/19 and 9/24/19**

Claudia Stanescu moved to accept the meeting minutes from 8/27/19, and moved to accept the meeting minutes from 9/24/19 as presented. David Ortiz seconded the motions. Both motions passed with 5 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

1. **Policy Proposals**
   1. **Proposal to Amend the General Education Teaching Policy –** submitted by Graduate and Professional Student Council

**Presenter:** Marie Teemant, GPSC President

This proposal is to update the policy on who can teach General Education courses, to allow graduate students to be listed as instructors of record for Tier II courses. A previous proposal to amend the General Education Teaching Policy was tabled by the Undergraduate Council Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee in March 2018. The previous proposal would have allowed departments to assign GATs as primary instructors for both Tier I and Tier II courses in all semesters. The current proposal would allow departments to assign GATs as primary instructors for Tier II courses in all semesters given that the GAT meets proper preparation and supervision as mandated by the Graduate College, and the duties in the appointment are directly aligned with the education and professionalization of the student; departments would continue to be able to assign GATs as primary instructors for Tier I courses during Summer and Winter semesters as in current policy.

The proposal would be especially important for students in small departments, where there are few or no opportunities for graduate students to gain experience teaching courses. These students often cannot teach 400 level courses as these courses typically co-convene with 500 level courses, and many of the 200 and 300 level course offerings are listed as Tier II courses. Students searching for positions upon graduation are more marketable if they already have teaching experience; since other institutions do not prevent graduate students from teaching general education courses, students from those institutions have an advantage over UA graduates.

Discussion commenced:

* Why does the current proposal focus only on Tier II courses? Partially this is a compromise since GPSC knows that not everyone supports the idea of graduate students teaching general education courses. One benefit of opening up Tier II courses to graduate student instructors is that these courses generally have more focused content, and are generally offered with smaller class sizes than Tier I courses are. Tier II courses would provide a better environment for graduate students teaching some of their first courses, so they aren’t thrown into teaching courses with very broad content to a large lecture hall of 150 students.
* What would be the benefit of graduate students teaching these courses? There is little research on this, but it appears that undergrads are more likely to take additional courses in a discipline if they’ve taken a course taught by a graduate student. Graduate students have the benefit of being closer in age to undergrads and so can build a rapport with their students that is more difficult for faculty members. Graduate students are often studying specifically because they want to teach; their passion for the subject and for teaching would be a benefit to their students.
* There is some difference in the typical progression of graduate student instructors between the sciences and the humanities. In the humanities, it is typical for graduate students to start out as a TA, leading discussion sections under the supervision of the instructor of record, then to progress into teaching courses as the instructor of record. Being the instructor of record and having ownership of the teaching methodology makes the graduate student a better instructor in way that being a TA cannot.
* What other departments have graduate students that have been consulted and support this proposal? German Studies, various departments in the Humanities, and Physiology have all expressed interest in having more opportunities to teach.
* The proposal doesn’t specify that students would first need to be a TA before being listed as the instructor of record; could this be added? There is already a policy in the GA manual that requires all GA’s to have a supervisor. The specific progression isn’t spelled out because of differences in what is standard depending on the discipline. It’s important to leave enough flexibility for colleges and departments to implement processes that make sense for their discipline.

Since there were no further questions, the presenter left at this time. Discussion continued:

* A committee member confirmed that at least in some departments, it is standard practice that graduate students start out as a TA and then begin teaching standalone sections once they’re ABD. This teaching experience does make a difference for students getting jobs once they’ve completed their degree.
* The second bullet point in the proposal, regarding the alignment of the appointment with the student’s education and professionalization, would be difficult to enforce since it’s about intent and there are no metrics to judge by.
* Committee members expressed concern that the proposal as written would be susceptible to abuse by departments, using graduate students to generate more income through RCM without giving them proper supervision and support. This would have negative effects on both graduate and undergraduate students.
* Committee members agreed that rather than allowing graduate students to be listed as sole instructor of record for Tier Two courses, a good compromise would be to allow them to be listed as co-instructor of record with a faculty member. This would give the student the opportunity to take the lead on teaching a standalone section, while still having supervision and support from a qualified faculty member. Concerns about qualifications of faculty as required by HLC would also be addressed by this setup.

**A straw vote indicated that the committee would like to redraft the proposal to allow graduate students to be co-instructors of record with a faculty member for Tier Two courses. New language will be drafted and distributed electronically for an e-vote.**

1. **Proposal to add Optional Information Items to Syllabus Template –** submitted by Faculty Senate

Presenter: Jessica Summers, Chair of the Faculty

This proposal is to add optional language to the Undergraduate Syllabus Template, to address food insecurity, Title IX, preferred gender pronouns, and campus safety. Faculty would be encouraged, but not required, to include this language on their syllabi.

Discussion commenced:

* There are concerns that the syllabus templates are already too long. While this information is all useful and pertinent to students, it may be seen as simply more text that students and faculty won’t read. Jessica noted that this language would all be optional for faculty to include if they wished to, and not required.
* It was noted that there is a customization in UAccess which allows students to identify their preferred pronouns in the system, which pushes to the class roll in UAccess for all classes the student is enrolled in. Would it be possible to encourage students to use this process, rather than putting the onus on them to self-identify to the instructor of each class separately, each semester? Yes, this would be good to include, while still allowing students to work directly with the instructor if they wished to, or had not yet completed the process in UAccess. A question was raised about whether the preferred pronouns identified in UAccess are pushed to the D2L class roster as well. Alex Underwood will check on whether this is the case, and will work with D2L staff to update that if it isn’t yet occurring.
* A committee member noted that the campus safety section includes links to details about the evacuation and active shooter plans for a specific building as an example, but that it would be important for instructors to replace the links with ones appropriate to the building that their class will be held in. Recommended that the language in this section be updated to very clearly call out that those links are examples to be replaced by the instructor.

Since there were no further questions, the presenter left at this time. Discussion continued:

* The committee agreed that the following edits should be made to the language:
  + Description of the process for identifying preferred pronouns in UAccess
  + Clear and obvious labelling of McClelland Park links as examples for campus safety section
* Has the Campus Safety section been reviewed and endorsed by Risk Management? This would be good to confirm, in case they have recommendations about that language.

**Claudia Stanescu moved to approve the proposal pending updates to the language as listed above, and David Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 7 votes in favor.**

1. **Discussion on creating a Simplified Approval Process for Experimental Courses –** initiated by Faculty Senate

Presenter: Jessica Summers, Chair of the Faculty

Faculty have expressed concerns that the process for adding new courses to the Course Catalog takes too long, and that there needs to be a quicker process to allow for the development and offering of experimental courses closer to the start of the semester. This is especially important as trial courses for the new General Education curriculum are being proposed and taught. No formal proposal has been made as the Faculty Senate didn’t want to come to UGC with preconceived notions of what a simplified process should look like; they just want to start the discussion.

Discussion commenced:

* What is the difference between a regular course and experimental course right now? In the system, both courses go through the same approval process (approval from Room and Course Scheduling, Departmental and College approvers, General Education/Honors/Graduate College approvers as appropriate, and Curricular Affairs, including a 10 day campus review period). The only difference in the system is that experimental courses are given an expiration date, and thus can only be offered for one calendar year.
* Is there any indication in the Course Catalog or Schedule of Classes for courses that have been added as experimental/temporary? No, the courses are virtually identical to regular courses when looking at the Course Catalog and Schedule of Classes.
* What would a possible trajectory be for experimental courses? In the past, experimental courses went through department and college approval, but not through administrative offices (RCS and Curricular Affairs). After their first year the department would have the data they’d need to know whether they wanted to continue offering the course, and they could submit a request to add it to the catalog as a permanent course.
* If a faster process with less oversight is approved for experimental courses, what’s to stop departments from submitting every new course as experimental? Depending on your perspective, every new course being taught for the first time is experimental. This should be a “just in time” measure for unusual situations or emergent content, but whether a course merits this status would be subjective.
* Isn’t this why house-numbered Special Topics courses are included in the catalog? These are shell courses maintained by departments so they can run new courses for a couple of semesters before adding a new course to the catalog. Utilizing these courses wouldn’t require any change to university policy or practices, but would only work if all departments had these courses set up in their catalogs. The Registrar’s Office can run a report to determine which departments don’t already have these courses, and recommend that they add them for use in these situations. If this is the recommended route for running new course content, it might be best not to even offer a “temporary course” option on the Course Add request forms.
* Is there a sunsetting process for courses in the catalog? Yes, the Biannual Course Review process is run by the Registrar’s Office to help departments identify and remove courses from their catalogs that haven’t been offered for more than 5 years.
* Committee members expressed concern that the course approval process takes too long. Perhaps if a simplified process can be developed for experimental courses, it would be better for all new courses to be submitted as experimental initially to get the course added to the catalog, and then the course could go through the full approval process during that first year. It might also be helpful to ensure that every approver in the system (departmental, college, etc) has at least one backup approver, to reduce the risk of one person not responding in a timely manner.
* The Registrar’s Office will work on pulling information on the following, to provide more insight when the topic is revived on a later date in the subcommittee: average time courses take to move through the approval process, and which departments don’t yet have house-numbered Special Topics courses.

Molly adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m. The next Subcommittee meeting will be on November 26, 2019.

*Respectfully Submitted by Abbie Sorg, 10/24/19*