**Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Meeting Minutes**

**February 25, 2020**

**Voting Members Present:** Chair Molly Bolger, Joan Curry, Kirk Dimond, David Ortiz, Claudia Stanescu, Richard Vaillancourt, Joost Van Haren

**Non-voting Members Present:**  Neel Ghosh, Abbie Sorg

**Voting Members Absent:** Bennett Adamson,Leslie Dennis, Moe Momayez

Chair Molly Bolger called the meeting to order at ­­­3:30 p.m. A quorum was established with 7 voting members.

1. **Approval of Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee meeting minutes, 1/28/20**

Claudia Stanescu moved to accept the meeting minutes from 1/28/20 as submitted. David Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

1. **Policy Proposal**
   1. **Proposal to add Minimum Units to the Bachelor’s Degree Candidacy Policy –** submitted by Curricular Affairs on behalf of Provost’s Office

This policy proposal was drafted in order to make explicit the current practice of requiring 120 units for bachelor’s degree candidacy. Including this practice in the policy is an important step in preparing for the upcoming HLC review. Discussion commenced – no concerns were raised about the addition to the policy. Committee members confirmed that there would be no changes to practice needed based on the update to the language of the policy.

**Claudia Stanescu moved to approve the proposal as submitted, and Joost Van Haren seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with 7 votes in favor.**

1. **Additional Discussion – General Education Teaching Policy Proposal –** Neel Ghosh

The current proposal to allow graduate students to teach Tier Two General Education courses stalled at a UGC meeting in Fall 2019, as committee members could not agree with the proposal as written, and the GPSC could not agree with the compromise proposed by the committee at that time. The proposal was originally submitted by GPSC to enable graduate students to have more opportunities to teach as part of their professional development. The compromise proposed by UGC was to allow graduate students to be co-instructors of record with faculty members for Gen Ed courses. The GPSC is still interested in updating the policy in order to allow graduate students to teach Gen Ed courses without requiring a faculty co-instructor. Concerns about the co-instructor proposal include an increased complexity and possible inconsistency in the assignment of workload in the system, along with a concern that being listed as a co-instructor rather than sole instructor may be detrimental to graduate students’ job searches after graduation.

Discussion commenced:

* There is still concern about accepting the proposal as submitted by the GPSC in the Fall. Opening up Tier Two courses to be taught by graduate students with no restrictions or protections could have negative effects for graduate students (teaching Gen Ed courses may not be appropriate for all graduate students’ educational goals and professional development), undergraduate students (not all graduate students are ready to teach Gen Ed courses well), and departments/the institution (a sudden shift in instructor demographics for Gen Ed courses from faculty to graduate students could inspire pushback from undergraduate students and parents).
* Would it be possible to simply accept the proposal that was submitted in Fall 2019, and leave it up to department heads and deans to approve graduate student teaching assignments as appropriate? There may be conflicts of interest between what would financially benefit the department/college and what is best for the graduate and undergraduate students.
* There are some cases where departments are already assigning graduate students to teach General Education courses during the Fall and Spring semesters, though it appears that average class size for these cases is around 25 students or fewer. While the hope is that any update to the policy would preserve the integrity of the experience for undergraduate students, it doesn’t seem that the current policy is uniformly followed or enforced.
* Some concern about opening up graduate students to teach all General Education courses is based on the ability to teach a course with large enrollments. An additional concern is the breadth of the content in General Education courses.
* Should the university really be working to make it possible for graduate students to teach General Education courses? If one of the goals of graduate education is to get students through their programs in a timely manner and into the workforce, wouldn’t it cause delays if the students were spending their time teaching courses instead of completing their own work? The answer to this question can vary significantly between disciplines. While it may be true for students in STEM disciplines, teaching experience may be vital for students in the social sciences, arts, and humanities. It’s important to craft policy that takes into account the needs of students in all disciplines rather than focusing on specific disciplines.
* HLC requires instructors to have coursework equivalent to a master’s degree in the field. Is there anything preventing departments from hiring their graduate students as adjuncts to teach General Education courses? Not technically, but this setup would not be ideal as it would add complexity, cause financial issues, and remove protections for the graduate students. This should not be promoted as a solution.
* The GPSC and Graduate Council should be notified and involved in this process.
* What are possible solutions other than the already-discussed co-instructor format?
  + Accept the proposal as submitted, and allow colleges and departments to make their own judgement about whether they wish to assign graduate students to teach Tier Two General Education courses. Provisions may need to be made to allow the university to appropriately deal with cases of abuse where departments require too much of graduate student instructors, or require them to teach when it doesn’t align with their educational goals and professional development.
  + Allow graduate students to submit a petition/application to be approved to teach General Education courses. This could help prevent cases of abuse by requiring the petition to originate with the student rather than the department. Who would be responsible for reviewing, approving, and storing petitions once they were submitted? Policy would need to be rewritten to include those details if this solution is chosen.
* The subcommittee agreed that piloting a petition/application process could be a good compromise. A 3-year pilot would help the university see whether a permanent policy change is needed, how many graduate students are interested in teaching, and how many departments wish to assign graduate students as instructors of Tier Two courses. Additional discussion on the details for such a process commenced:
  + Petitions should be submitted by the student and approved by the department and college. Petitions should not be submitted by the department on behalf of students, to ensure that teaching is something the student wants to do, and not something they are being told to do by the department.
  + Petition should include a statement of why the student wishes to teach, specifying how that will fit into the student’s educational goals and professional development.
  + Petition should include a confirmation that the student meets the HLC requirements to teach. It would be nice if checking qualifications could be automated in some way- for instance, automatically approving a PhD candidate that would otherwise be considered qualified if they weren’t pursuing a doctoral degree.
  + New General Education courses should not be proposed by graduate students. They should be allowed to petition to teach existing courses, but not create new courses.
  + The policy could be simply updated to specify that graduate students may petition to teach Tier Two courses, and a process could be created and maintained as needed separately.
  + Once approved at the department and college level, where should petitions go? Should there be any university-level review? Where would completed petitions be housed? For now, they could be sent to the UWGEC; that committee would not be included as an approval, but as a repository.

Molly adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m. The next Subcommittee meeting will be on March 31, 2020.

*Respectfully Submitted by Abbie Sorg, 3/6/20*