

June 29, 2005

To: Members of the Faculty  
From: Jim Swartz, Chair of the Curriculum Committee  
Re: 2004-05 Annual Report of the Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee's responsibilities are two-fold: routine supervision and approval of all specific course changes, and discussion of and recommendations on curricular policy guidelines. Students are voting members of the committee. Student members were identified early and carried a full share of the ongoing work. Their participation was exemplary. In almost all cases, the Committee achieved a consensus.

The Curriculum Committee acted on a number of routine changes to courses including title changes, modifications of descriptions, additions or deletions of prerequisites, and approval of new courses. The committee recommended to the faculty and the faculty approved the merging of Africana Studies and American Studies into a single concentration of American Studies. These changes are reflected in the 2005-07 Academic Catalog.

The committee approved a proposal to allow transfer students to enter Harris in the first group at fall registration because for many of them it is critical to get the classes they need as soon as possible as many of them have fewer than eight semesters to complete a major.

The committee and the Dean approved the following resolution: departments should submit realistic enrollment caps to course sizes and courses are not to be closed with enrollments below the maximum course capacity as set by the departments at the time they submit their course offerings. In addition, the committee and the Dean have empowered the Registrar to enforce this resolution.

The divisions were requested to have a discussion regarding end of the term issues including the exam period and the possibility of additional reading days. The divisions, in general, agreed that more discussions among faculty about "best practices" regarding assignments/projects and exams at the end of the term would be a good idea. Some faculty felt that maybe the college needs some college-wide explicit rules regarding assignments that could be or could not be assigned to be due just before or during finals week. It was acknowledged that stress is a cultural issue and not a structural issue. No matter what the college does about expanding the number of reading days we need to help students with time management issues so as to reduce stress at the end of the term.

The Deans asked the Curriculum Committee to consider endorsing an exam schedule that adds one-half day to the reading period at the end of the semester. They presented two options for scheduling this extra half-day, both of which rely on decreasing the number of exam periods from 9 to 8 by assigning MWF 8 am and 1:15 pm classes to

the same exam period. The Curriculum Committee endorsed scheduling option 2, and then the Deans took the proposal to the Committee on Academic Standing, which has responsibility for the academic calendar. The Committee on Academic Standing approved option 2 on a trial basis for next year.

Option 1: Weekday reading periods on Monday and Wednesday afternoons (half-days) in addition to the existing two weekend days.

Option 2: Weekday reading period all day on Monday in addition to the existing two weekend days.

The committee discussed and reviewed the application process for independent majors. Over the last few years several students who have wanted to have an independent major have not been academically strong enough to complete an adequate senior thesis which is now designated as a MAP. In response to this concern and after several lengthy discussions among both students and faculty the committee decided to add the following statement to the *Student Handbook* under the description of the independent major: “The quality of a student’s academic record, including the tutorial evaluation, may be a sufficient reason for turning down an application. To receive approval for an independent major, it is expected that a student’s cumulative GPA of all graded Grinnell College courses is at least 3.0 at the time the application is submitted for consideration “

There have been discussions about improving our procedures for student pre-registration and registration for classes. Some of the problems with our current procedure are as follows:

- The process of dropping students from over-filled classes after pre-registration requires faculty time.
- Faculty criteria for accepting and rejecting students when classes are above capacity after pre-registration may not always be perceived as fair and objective.
- Some faculty members have complained about the amount of time that goes into the cutting and balancing process and the add-drop period that are part of our current pre-registration process.
- The current process of filling a course does not help a student who is closed out of a course understand when or how he/she might get into the course in the future.
- The drop-add process at the end of the semester adds stress in a high-stress time period for both students and faculty.
- Registration serves the purpose of confirming that students are actually on campus at the start of a semester, but now students can confirm directly at the Registrar’s office.
- The second-semester Sunday registration (i.e. drop/add) day seems unnecessary to some faculty.

The committee recognizes that any changes in how we register students for classes will have to be done within the following principles:

- Given our mission and curricular structure, we value highly our advising system. Any registration system we adopt (slightly modifications on the current system, or a more major change) needs to reflect the critical function of our advising system, as much of what we hold of value in our academic structure is reflected in and dependent upon our advising system.
- We value the independence of instructors in establishing maximum class sizes and setting priorities for admission of students if a class is overenrolled, or in allowing students who have not completed prerequisites into a class.
- Some students and faculty members support using technology more effectively to enhance the efficiency of our pre-registration and registration system. There appears to be virtually no support for replacing our advising system with distribution requirements so that students could select courses on their own and register for them, so long as they fulfill those requirements in order to graduate.
- Some have suggested that students meet with their advisor and then get permission to register electronically for classes, on a space available basis. The problem with such a system is that students will want to register as early as possible to maximize the probability of getting into classes. Such a rush would disrupt our advising system and reduce thought-provoking conversations between advisees and advisors, which often require multiple meetings covering far more than the mechanics of selecting classes.
- The registration process for new students in the fall seems like a reasonable way to deal with the need for new students to meet with their advisors over several days and then enroll in classes.

The committee will receive, in the fall, a proposal from the Dean suggesting some alteration in our pre-registration process in keeping with the above stated principles.

Thanks once again to excellent work by Steve Langerud, Internship Coordinator, the Committee's internship review process continued to work well. During the academic year 40 students were approved for internships (10 for GIL, 8 for GIW, and 22 for academic semesters). There were 83 students approved for internships for summer 2005. For the summer of 2005 13 students have completed the process for receiving academic credit. The committee approved all 13 students for credit. In addition, there were 2 CPT applications reviewed and approved by the Curriculum Committee for summer 2005.

2004-05 Curriculum Committee members:

Jim Swartz	Gerald Adams	Wayne Moyer	Dan Reynolds
Lee Sharpe	Jean Ketter	Peter Clough	
Courtney MacKuen	Abel Lomax	Rebecca Miller	