

July 12, 2008

To: Members of the Faculty
From: Jim Swartz, Chair of the Curriculum Committee
Re: 2007-08 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. These changes will be reflected in the 2008-09 Interim Academic Catalog.

The committee approved a proposal to FOC that faculty membership to the committee be for two years instead of one in order to provide for better continuity for the committee. This proposal was approved by the faculty.

The committee reaffirmed that the Dean should enforce the numbering of special topics course based on the following guidelines as current publish in our catalog

A three-digit system is used for numbering courses. The first digit indicates the level of the course.

The course levels are:

- 100** Courses open to all students unless otherwise noted
- 200** Courses for which students should have completed work in an appropriate discipline at the 100 level
- 300** Courses for which students should have completed work in an appropriate discipline at the 200 level
- 400** A small group of courses, such as advanced seminars primarily for majors, for which students should have completed 300-level work

The Committee recommended to the Registrar a new registration procedure for new students that would “provide more equal access to courses and use faculty and student time more efficiently,” the Office of the Registrar designed the following procedure to be implemented in the fall of 2008.

New Registration Procedure:

In consultation with an adviser, every first-year and transfer student will fill in a card specifying his or her course preferences for a series of rounds. According to random

selection, each student will be placed in a single course during each round. For example, once a student is placed in a course for round 1, other choices in that round will not be valid in subsequent rounds. Course preferences for the next round will be selected from courses identified in the round 2 section of the card followed by those listed in the round 3 section of the card. For students without a tutorial, an additional course will be entered from round 4 so that every student who wishes may have four courses. No second course will be added for anyone until everyone has been registered for a first course. In the interest of fairness, the placement order will be reversed for the second round and reshuffled for subsequent rounds.

The question of the scheduling of short courses during fall break came to the attention of the Committee. The committee believes that the fall break should not be used for anything other than its intended purpose. Giving a course for credit during this period is not what the break is designed for but students are free to organize and/or participate in any type of alt-break activity.

The Curriculum Committee approved the structure for the Wilson Summer Internship Grant winners proposed by Doug Caulkins as Chair of the Wilson Program in Enterprise and Leadership for creditable summer internships for the duration of his SFS appointment and his Chairmanship of the program.

In the Fall the Committee sent the following memo to the Executive Council for consideration.

This proposal grows out of discussions that have occurred over the last several years in Curriculum Committee in response to issues arising from the introduction of the Mentored Advance Project (MAP). Curriculum Committee proposes a three-pronged approach to ensuring the high quality of MAPs and to supporting other forms of independent study. First, we recommend that the college change the compensation system by investing more resources in independent study by compensating faculty for independent work with the course numbers 297, 397, 299, 387, 399, and 499. Given the higher expectations placed on MAPs, we believe that it would be justified to compensate other forms of independent work at a different level. Second, we propose that the cash value of MAPs be increased to higher amount and that faculty be allowed to choose between cash and course credit as forms of compensation. Finally, we propose a number of measures be taken to ensure that MAPs meet the expected quality. These measures include introducing a department-based review process, imposing a limit of eight MAP credits per student, placing an upper limit on the number of non-MAP independents for which a faculty member can be compensated during the academic year, developing an evaluation process for MAPs similar to the end-of-course evaluations, and requiring the submission of a plan for presenting research findings off the Grinnell campus.

History and Rationale

Although the MAP program is generally regarded as a success, several troubling issues have arisen in its implementation.

- a. The lack of a system of quality control or accountability that has led to completion of MAPs of uneven quality
- b. The relaxation of the original expectation that the final product of a MAP include a presentation of findings in a venue external to Grinnell
- c. A notable shift away from other forms of independent study, such as guided readings or independent projects, to MAPs along with an overall and significant decline in all forms of independent study.
- d. A lack of “supply” of MAPs or other forms of independent study for students in certain departments especially, but not exclusively, in the Humanities and Social Sciences
- e. A failure to monitor, in a consistent way, the enforcement of the rules on the number of MAPs sponsored by individual faculty members in a given semester or in the summer
- f. Inconsistent information in various college publications about the expectations for MAPs as opposed to other forms of independent study
- g. The inability of many faculty members to “cash in” MAPs
- h. The lack of a clear rationale for compensating MAPs but treating other forms of independent study as an unpaid overload

Faculty members on the Curriculum Committee have consistently identified two sources for these undesirable effects: a compensation system that privileges MAPs over other forms of independent study and the failure to create a set of procedures to ensure the quality and accountability of MAPs. Despite hours of discussion by several different Curriculum Committees and the consideration of numerous proposals, limited progress has been made in addressing any of the difficulties bulleted above. Much of the discussion in the past has focused on the compensation issue. An earlier Curriculum Committee proposal to provide compensation for all forms of independent study was rejected as too expensive or too much like rewarding “piecework.” Other proposals, such as ending compensation for MAPs completed during the academic year or switching to a system of cash payment only, have not found sufficient support among faculty members on either the Curriculum Committee or the Executive Council. Though there has been much debate about introducing procedures to improve the quality and accountability associated with MAPs, no concrete proposals have come forward. Given the incentive structure created by a compensation system that strongly favors MAPs, enhanced quality control alone is insufficient for addressing the most significant undesirable effects identified by Curriculum Committee.

The discussion about MAPs raises the much larger question of the level of Grinnell’s commitment to independent study. Along with most of our peers, Grinnell has made independent study a centerpiece of our appeal as a small liberal arts institution. MAPs and other forms of independent study are often featured in official publications disseminated by Public Relations and Admissions and Financial Aid. Despite the centrality of independent study in our publications, the

total number of independent projects has declined since 2002-2003. Not only have MAPs become the preferred form of independent study, they have made faculty more reluctant to support other forms of close-student faculty collaboration. Some MAPs have displaced other forms of independent study that might be more appropriate for fostering student learning. The reduced number of opportunities for independent work with a faculty member violates the college's public commitment to such forms of study.

This proposal offers a coordinated approach to addressing the unintended consequences of the current system and to foster a more diverse and appropriate approach to independent study at Grinnell.

The minutes from the Executive Council regarding the memo of December 2007 are as follows:

The Dean distributed some statistical information on independent study. E. Willis pointed out that there are two issues as described in a memorandum dated 12/4/07 from the Curriculum Committee:

- Compensation for non-MAP independent study supervision; and
- The incentive system for MAPs pushes projects that are more appropriately categorized as independent study.

The President expressed his reservations about giving cash compensation citing this as an inappropriate incentive to greater work. He also stated that he thought the issue of MAP quality should rest with the departments. Further, he likes the outcome of MAPs leading to greater support for full-year leaves. Council expressed concern with the lack of evaluations of student MAPs. There was concern that a MAP requirement may lead to uncertain quality outcomes. The Dean noted that he has encouraged the Committee for the Support of Faculty Scholarship to give the quality issue consideration when looking at proposals for funding of summer MAPs. E. Willis pointed out that students are coming with expectations of being able to do MAPs, so whatever happens the message to students must be clear. She pointed out that there are two distinct models:

- Faculty projects with students recruited (mostly in the sciences); and
- Student projects with faculty recruited (mostly in the non-sciences).

J. Meehan noted that while limits on the number of MAPs are important they are not well enforced. Swartz responded that the only limits are on how many can be counted toward graduation, not on how many in which they enroll. Various models for limits for faculty and students were discussed.

The President suggested that making judgements on approval of MAPs should take care not to second guess faculty, while still protecting pre-tenure faculty.

E. Willis summarized the discussion. There should be no compensation, encourage vetting by departments, restrict school-year numbers of MAPs undertaken by both faculty and students, and required MAPs is a bad idea.

The committee has asked that the deadline for submitting a MAP application to the chair for approval be moved up by two weeks in the hope that this will encourage vetting by departments.

Currently a MAP is required for all Independent Majors and in both the Linguistics and Latin American Studies Concentrations.

The committee approved the idea of asking each department to write a short paragraph describing the general procedures the department uses in cutting students from over enrolled classes and that this information would be published in the schedule of classes each semester

The committee will carry over the following agenda items for next fall:

1. A review of the policies and procedures for receiving credit for summer internships.
2. Review and assessment of the role the CDO with the Curriculum Committee regarding internships for credit.
3. The subject of restricting school-year number of MAPs for faculty.
4. The subject of restricting the number of MAPs for students
5. The issues of required MAPs.
6. The role of the committee with respect to EKI.
7. Look at the process of transcript analysis.
8. A proposal to create a category called Interdisciplinary (INT or INTD) for all courses that are being offered as interdisciplinary courses. Any course such as GDS/HUM 251 or SCI/HUM/SST 350 would be labeled INT. Intra-divisional courses would still carry the label of the specific division and courses that serve two disciplines would still be cross-listed. Interdisciplinary courses would be listed in the catalog in a section titled *Interdisciplinary*. If the college wished to track EKI then having a category of INT would be an easy and efficient way of doing so. In addition, it would provide an identifier for transcripts and other external documents in describing EKI to external audiences. How these courses would be counted in determining teaching loads of faculty and departmental course offerings are mechanical questions that can be worked out in discussion with the Dean's Office and/or the Executive Council. Note: Any course can count as cognate credit towards a major if the department says so.

Thanks to the excellent work by Kathleen Powell the Committee's internship review process continued to work well. During the academic year 40 students were approved for internships (15 for GIL, 11 for GIW, and 14 for academic semesters). There were 68 students approved for internships for summer 2008. For the summer of 2008, 34 students have completed the process for receiving academic credit. The committee approved 34

students for credit. There were 6 CPT applications reviewed and approved by the Curriculum Committee for summer 2008.

2007-08 Curriculum Committee members:

James Swartz
Eric Simpson
Kristen Audet

Gerald Adams
Karla Erickson
Eric Olson

John Stone
Katherine Ingram

Eliza Willis