

**College of the Environment Curriculum Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes for December 4, 2019**  
**20:00 – 3:30 PM, Ocean Sciences Building, Room 203 (Dean’s Office conference room)**

**Present:**

- Aquatic & Fishery Sciences – Luke Tornabene
- Atmospheric Sciences – Greg Hakim
- Earth & Space Sciences – Bruce Nelson
- Environmental and Forest Sciences – Clare Ryan
- Marine Biology – Kerry Naish
- Program on the Environment – Kristi Straus
- Oceanography – Mikelle Nuwer
- Graduate Student Representatives – Henry Bell (Marine & Environmental Affairs)
- Undergraduate Student Representatives – Emily Busse (Environmental Studies)
- Director of Student & Academic Services (ex officio: committee staff) – Michelle Hall
- Guest: Jason Johnson, Senior Associate Dean and Associate Vice Provost, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, and co-chair of the Senate Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching

1. Kristi Straus presented proposed new courses from the Program on the Environment, and the committee approved the proposals with no requested revisions:
  - [ENVIR 101 “Orientation to Environmental Studies”](#)
  - [ENVIR 102 “IB Environmental Systems & Societies”](#) – course is being created to grant UW credit for an International Baccalaureate course; does not need extensive review
2. Megan Dethier presented a proposed new course from Friday Harbor Laboratories, and the committee approved the proposals with no requested revisions:
  - [FHL 250 “Marine Biology”](#) – equivalent to existing FISH/BIOL/OCEAN 250 “Marine Biology” course; proposing to create separate administrative structure
3. As part of the discussion of the FHL 250 course policy statement on disability accommodations, committee members asked for Dean’s Office assistance in clarifying policies and identifying best practices for developing accommodation options for field courses that 1) meet accommodations, 2) are practical, and 3) satisfy course requirements and student learning outcomes.

**ACTION:**

- Hall will consult with Stephanie Harrington on how to incorporate clearer guidelines in forthcoming new college field trip policy.
4. Luke Tornabene, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, updated the committee that the new course proposal for [FISH 470 “Ecology and Conservation of Marine Top Predators”](#) will need to be delayed for discussion at a future meeting because it needs further review by the Marine Biology curriculum committee.
  5. Tornabene presented a proposed new course to be offered via the college’s course prefix:
    - [C ENV 401 “FieldNotes – An Undergraduate Journal”](#)

A pilot version has been offered 3 previous quarters as a FISH 497 special topics course. The course focuses on developing students' writing, editing and science communication skills by participating in the publication of [FieldNotes](#), an undergraduate student-run journal and digital storytelling platform highlighting research by undergraduates in the College of the Environment.

The committee approved the course, pending final revisions:

- Consider offering the course for 2 credits instead of 1, as the required workload and contacts hours seem sufficient for 2 credits.
- Increase enrollments (within constraints of course design and need for mentoring of participants) to increase access to students across the college.

The committee also expressed interest in the role of the TA (grading, teaching?) and the amount of TA support; after the meeting, Hall confirmed that the Dean's Office is providing funding for a 25% TA (not a full 50% TA) for each of the two offerings (Autumn and Spring) through spring 2020.

The committee also expressed interest in looking at the science communication course offerings across the college and discussing ideas for more coordination.

**ACTION:**

- Hall will send the proposal back in the Curriculum Management system for revisions.
- Hall will check with Julia Parrish on possible future discussion with the committee of coordination across science communication offerings.

6. Greg Hakim presented a course change proposal from Department of Atmospheric Sciences. The committee requested resubmission after the following revisions:

- [ATM S 101 "How to Read the Sky, Understand the Weather and Be an Educated Weather Consumer"](#)
- The committee found the proposed new title somewhat wordy, inefficient, and potentially confusing to students, especially the phrase "be an educated weather consumer." Can the main focus of the course be communicated more clearly and briefly?
- In the "Learning Objectives" section of the course proposal and in the syllabus, the objective "be more informed about major societal issues" seems extremely broad; perhaps revise to "weather related issues." Consider revising the objective "be a knowledgeable observer of the atmosphere" to something measurable. In general, consider revising the learning goals to use higher level Bloom's taxonomy language and action verbs such as "evaluate, create, etc." instead of "become, learn, etc." See the Center for Teaching & Learning's webpage on ["Course and syllabus design,"](#) which includes a link to ["Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives."](#)
- In the syllabus, the following policies need to be added: [Disability Accommodation](#) and [Academic Integrity](#).
- In the syllabus, the list of reading topics needs to be revised to remove formatting that makes it unreadable.

**ACTION:**

- Hall will send the proposal back in the Curriculum Management system for revisions and resubmission.

7. Jason Johnson, Senior Associate Dean and Associate Vice Provost, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, and co-chair of the Senate Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching offered an update on the task force's work:

- See attached task force timeline and charge letter.
- The task force was formally charged in Spring 2019 after several faculty councils reported that they wanted to take up the topic of course evaluations, including how evaluations help improve teaching, bias in teaching evaluations, and how evaluations factor into the promotion and tenure process and resulting risks of courses being "taught to the evaluation."
- The task force was also inspired by national conversations (Chronicle, Inside Higher Ed, disciplinary journals, etc.)
- The task force was also motivated by the decline in evaluation response rates after the move from paper to online evaluations, and campus-wide and unit analyses of evidence of bias in evaluations, with a range of results.
- Over the next six months, the task force will generate a proposal for changes to policies / processes that govern course evaluations of instruction and peer evaluation of instruction.
- Winter 2020 - task force will meet with college/school Elected Faculty Councils to discuss what's working and challenges.
- Spring 2020 - task force will present draft proposals at town halls and Faculty Councils and present a final proposal to Faculty Senate Leadership.
- The committee asked if OEA could share the study of bias evidence in evaluations and if the Dean's Office could share the recent analysis within the College of the Environment.

**ACTION:**

- Johnson will check on how to share the OEA study of bias in evaluations.
- Hall will check on sharing the College of the Environment analysis of bias in evaluations.

8. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM.