College of the Environment Curriculum Committee
Meeting Minutes for February 14, 2020
11:30 – 1:00 PM, Ocean Sciences Building, Room 203 (Dean’s Office conference room)

Present:

- Atmospheric Sciences – Greg Hakim
- Earth & Space Sciences – Bruce Nelson
- Environmental and Forest Sciences – Clare Ryan
- Friday Harbor Labs – Megan Dethier (via Zoom)
- Marine Biology – Kerry Naish
- Program on the Environment – Kristi Straus
- Graduate Student Representatives – Robin McLachlan (Oceanography), Henry Bell (Marine & Environmental Affairs)
- Undergraduate Student Representatives – Emily Busse (Environmental Studies), Bela Sanchez (Environmental Studies)
- Director of Student & Academic Services (ex officio: committee staff) – Michelle Hall

1. Megan Dethier presented a proposed new course from Friday Harbor Laboratories to create a lower-level course that offers students research experience:
   - FHL 350 “Introduction to Research in Marine Biology”
     https://uw.kuali.co/cm/#/courses/view/5e3b114bc983bb250081c42e

   The committee approved the proposal pending final revisions:
   - Provide more information on how this course is different from the existing FHL 470 “Research in Marine Biology” course, perhaps providing a table or comparison list to more clearly explain the differences.
   - Split the 4th learning goal into two separate learning goals:
     - Become comfortable presenting numerical data in graphical format
     - Learn about appropriate statistical techniques
   - Committee expressed some concern that this 350 course could not count for the required Marine Biology field experience.

   ACTION:
   - Hall will send the proposal back in the Curriculum Management system for revisions.

2. Bruce Nelson presented a proposed course change from the Department of Earth & Space Sciences to change the title, description, and prerequisites, and shorten the required field trip to reduce logistical and financial challenges for students in the professional master’s program:
   - ESS 509 “Introduction to Applied geoscience Investigations”
     https://uw.kuali.co/cm/#/courses/view/5e37ac9cd73440250086e7d9

   The committee approved the course pending final revisions:
   - For the course title, consider removing “Introduction to” to shorten and change “geoscience” to “geological” because the syllabus focuses on geology, whereas “geosciences” implies a broader focus on the range of geosciences. Perhaps try “Applied Geological Investigations”
• In the “Activities & Hours” section, include the total number of hours/week. For a 3-credit course, the typical total hours would be ~ 9.
• Clarify proposed prerequisites. If the proposed new prerequisite is “graduate standing in ESS,” then you can remove “enforce prerequisites for undergraduate students only (classes 1-4).”

ACTION:
• Michelle Hall will send the proposal back in the Curriculum Management system for revisions.

3. Michelle Hall reviewed the process for responding to “Acknowledge” requests and determining if a course has curricular relationship with courses in other units:
   • She encouraged all committee members to review the UW Curriculum Management Quick Guide on Curricular Relationships.
   • Committee members suggested adding content about affected units and a link to the quick guide on the College Curriculum Committee page.
   • The committee asked for the Dean’s Office to formally request that the UW Curriculum Committee state in writing on their website that there is a time-limit for affected units to respond to requests to review proposals. Hall reviewed the quick guide more closely after the meeting and found this note under “Step 3: Add a Proposal Tracking Comment:”

   “Note: Adding this comment is an important way to document when the original e-mail request for an overlap/equivalency check was sent. After 4 weeks, if the potentially-affected department has not acknowledged the proposal, the UWCC may approve the course proposal without the acknowledgement.”

   This statement is helpful, but is somewhat contradicted by the text under the FAQ “What if there are no acknowledgements from affected units:”

   “The proposal will still be halted at the UWCC level if acknowledgments are missing, however, the sooner follow-up is done and acknowledgements are completed, the faster a proposal can be approved.”

   • Hall and Straus encouraged committee members to ensure that their units have a process in place at unit level for responding to affected unit requests (e.g., send to unit curriculum committee members and request their feedback by a deadline, determine who in the unit is responsible for checking the “affected unit” box and who is simply a back-up approver, etc.)

ACTION:
• Hall will add links/content to website and will consult with Julia Parrish about a request to UW Curriculum Committee for clearer affected unit review deadlines.

4. Straus and Hall offered an overview of the current rules regarding designating undergraduate courses to meet UW general education requirements, especially Areas of Knowledge (I&S, NW,
• Hall updated the committee that she consulted with Scott Fallgren, UW Curriculum Office and he noted:
  o If a College approves DIV designation, the UW Curriculum Committee does not tend to question the request because they see the DIV approval as a college-level decision.
  o For Areas of Knowledge, the above UAA website is the only written guidance.
  o The UW Curriculum Committee is looking for ~50% of the course content to be focused on the requested Area of Knowledge, though this is not a written, formal policy.
  o The UW Curriculum Committee almost never approves requests for more than two Areas of Knowledge designations. It is possible to have two areas of knowledge and a basic skill (e.g. writing, diversity).

ACTION:
• Hall will check on whether the committee created a college-level document on Areas of Knowledge guidelines.

5. The committee discussed single unit versus more planned curricular responses to increasing student credit hours (SCH), how we are increasing student credit hours through new courses, increased enrollments in existing courses, and cross-unit efforts. Committee members expressed a willingness to offer advice and explore ideas, but first raised three key issues and requested clarification and guidance from the Dean and/or Associate Dean of Academic Affairs:
  • Leadership – The committee requested clear goals from the Dean/Associate Dean on the issue of how to address declining course enrollments. What are the specific desired outcomes, preferred strategies for meeting them, and any boundaries or guidelines?
  • Communication – Faculty need clearer guidance on whether enrollment goals are viewed as unit-level goals or college-wide. If college-wide, what are the college-wide strategies for addressing enrollment shortfalls?
  • Incentives – The committee requested clearer information on what, if any, incentives there are for creating new courses or expanding existing courses.

The committee discussed additional concerns and issues related to the recent request from the Dean to increase course enrollments:
• How do we guard against simply cannibalizing each other’s course enrollments?
• Has there been any data analysis on whether student credit hours increased overall within the college when new courses were created? How do we assess the effectiveness of creating new courses and additional seats in existing courses?
• Can the college create an incentive for units to collaborate, e.g., could the new climate solutions courses have been designed as college-wide efforts with faculty from varying units sharing the teaching load, and teaching the course through a range of disciplinary lenses? Such interdisciplinary offerings could be of high interest to students. Some faculty also see these as a potential incentive – instead of offering a new large 100 level class each quarter or each year, if this is shared between units, the goals of increasing SCH and increasing
environmental literacy can be met while sharing the burden of that increased teaching, and increasing availability of faculty to teach upper level courses in their units. (This may also be important for retaining majors).

- Look at 1-credit CR/NC courses such as ATM S 220 “Exploring the Atmospheric Sciences” as a model for a large-enrollment course that could increase SCH without extensive faculty effort (a graduate student could be the lead instructor).

**ACTION:**
- Hall will invite Dean Graumlich and Associate Dean Parrish to an upcoming meeting to discuss.

6. Clare Ryan updated the committee on one non-substantive course change from the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences to renew the Distance Learning designation (does not require committee review), BSE 101 “Biomass, Biofuels and Bioproducts.”

7. Meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.