

**Committee on Educational Policy
November 28, 2018**

In attendance: Faculty: Catherine Sanderson, chair; Lawrence Douglas; Tekla Harms; Tariq Jaffer; Edward Melillo. Students: Brooke Harrington '22; Julia Ralph '21. Catherine Epstein, Dean, *ex officio*. Recorder: Nancy Ratner, Director of Academic Projects.

Catherine Sanderson, chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. in the Mullins Room. The committee approved the minutes of November 14, 2018.

Learning goals statement

Catherine S. asked the committee to review the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee learning goals statement, as revised by the CEP. The committee endorsed the following revised statement and recommended that it be sent to the Committee of Six for further consideration.

Learning Goals

The Learning Goals Statement

Amherst's liberal arts curriculum understands education as a process of transformation. The open curriculum provides a structure within which students are able to discover and pursue their intellectual and creative passions and equip themselves for a life of active, collaborative learning. The college's learning goals, listed below, articulate the principles that students should keep in mind when navigating a path through the college.

1. Reason on the basis of various forms of evidence.

The ability to solve complex problems depends on the capacity to find, evaluate, and use different types of evidence. Students develop these skills by learning how to interpret quantitative data; learning how to do close readings of texts, objects, events, and performances; building research skills; and learning how to recognize and address the grounds of arguments.

2. Communicate effectively.

In order to communicate effectively with broad, diverse audiences, students must understand what they are trying to convey and how others can most fully comprehend these claims. Students develop this ability by taking courses that emphasize writing and speaking with clarity, precision, and voice.

3. Approach questions from multiple perspectives.

Students should expose themselves to new ways of thinking and re-evaluate ingrained habits of thought, challenging their own fundamental assumptions. They may do this by taking courses that bring diverse perspectives to bear on complex issues; that explore nonverbal means of expression; that are interdisciplinary; that engage the past on its own terms and cultures in their own language; and that focus a critical eye on their own culture, history, and social order. Students should aim to develop a sense of global consciousness and to become educated global citizens.

4. Develop a sense of the common good.

A liberal education asks us to take seriously the claims of others and make decisions on the basis of something more than self-interest. Students may develop this ability by taking courses that examine questions of social justice in all their complexity and valances.

5. Pursue intellectual and creative interests in depth.

By studying a subject in depth and developing skills in an area, students experience transformational breakthroughs, moments of recognition of how far they have come and how far there is to go. Students gain this proficiency by majoring in a department or program. In addition, such skills come from carrying out extended research projects, doing honors work, and becoming involved in activities that draw on a student's intellectual and imaginative resources.

6. Broaden intellectual horizons and develop creativity.

Exploring multiple fields of knowledge and modes of creativity is an essential part of the process of preparing to be a lifelong learner. Students should take a wide range of courses that expose them to new intellectual territories and cultivate their imagination. They should seek to extend their learning through co-curricular activities.

Course proposal letter

Catherine S. next asked the committee to review a revised version of the course proposal letter. The committee offered a few additional revisions and then approved it, as revised.

Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee proposal for two required college seminars

Catherine E. explained that she thought it might be better to have a wider discussion of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee's college seminar proposal before the CEP vetted the recommendations. She suggested the First-year Seminar (FYS) committee as a logical group to discuss this proposal and thought the FYS committee could perhaps broaden that discussion to include other faculty. The FYS committee would then make recommendations to the CEP, based on the feedback it receives. The committee thought this was an excellent idea and urged her to send the proposal to the FYS committee. Tekla said she hoped there might be a Committee of the Whole discussion at a faculty meeting on the proposal prior to having the CEP consider specific language.

Pilot pre-registration system

Catherine S. noted that the pilot pre-registration system, which involves two rounds of registration, has now been in effect for close to three years. When the pilot began, the faculty asked that the CEP recommend whether it should be made permanent after the trial period ends. She asked committee members for their thoughts. There was broad agreement that the two rounds have brought students and faculty greater certainty over their schedules.

Tekla said the faculty had been concerned initially that the two rounds could become very time consuming for faculty. She did not think that it had, but thought the CEP should seek more feedback from colleagues about this aspect. Lawrence said he liked the two rounds but the problem he has encountered is that students who have been cut from a class now assume that the class is filled and seek other classes. If, during add-drop, students guaranteed seats in the class decide to enroll in different classes, the course may then end up under-enrolled. Ted had experienced the same problem, as had Catherine S. Both said that the solution is to place the names of students who have been cut on a waitlist and tell those students they will have priority if they show up on the first day of class. Catherine

E. said, alternatively, faculty can admit a few extra students and assume that there will be some melt during add-drop.

Tekla wondered if there might be a way to facilitate this process by creating a waitlist electronically. The committee decided to invite the registrar to a meeting to discuss possible tweaks to the system, and Catherine E. said she would ask department chairs about their departments' experience with the two rounds of registration at an upcoming chairs' meeting.

Catherine S. said she has recently encountered another problem, as has a faculty member from sociology. In both cases, the major's required course filled up during pre-registration. Not all of the registered students were majors, but their guaranteed seats made it impossible for majors who failed to register during the first round to register later. She wondered if faculty could create a category of courses that would be capped with reserves for majors.

Brooke said she and other first-year students had experienced a lot of confusion about the registration system. Many thought the courses filled with students in the order in which they registered. In some cases, their advisors were also confused about this aspect. In addition, courses appeared to be full even when they were not. Students were further confused by the fact that the second round of pre-registration did register students in the order in which the registration was received. She thought it would be helpful if first-year students and their advisors received a letter from the dean of new students explaining the system. The committee noted that the registrar could perhaps include a note to students who are being cut from a class, informing them that they may want to continue to shop that class since enrollments sometimes shift during add-drop.

Half courses

Catherine S. shared a communication from a faculty member asking that a review of half-credit courses be undertaken. He noted that the rules governing matches between half-credit courses from different departments were very opaque. Tekla said she would like the CEP to develop clear protocols governing the creation of half courses, the approval of half courses, and the circumstances under which halves may be matched for a full credit. She thought the CEP should undertake this review programmatically, in a principled way, subjecting all half credit courses—including existing half-credit courses—to this process once the protocols have been developed. Catherine E. said that only one department—chemistry—has indicated that it will introduce half credits for laboratories next year. Catherine S. said she would add this to the agenda for spring semester.

The meeting adjourned at 10 a.m.