

**Committee on Educational Policy**  
**September 12, 2018**

**In attendance: Faculty: Catherine Sanderson, chair; Lawrence Douglas; Tekla Harms; Tariq Jaffer; Edward Melillo. 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 8:30 a.m. in the Mullins Room.

**Old business**

The chair reported that she had sent the faculty who had proposed an education studies program a letter with the committee's recommendations.

**Course bunching and course proposal letter**

Catherine S. noted that last year the committee, in an attempt to increase access to the curriculum, encouraged departments to spread their course offerings across the week and avoid, to the extent possible, the most congested periods between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays. She asked if the committee wanted her to remind departments of this issue as they begin to plan new courses for the spring semester. The committee thought it reasonable to do so. Tekla suggested the letter only include the heat map covering the full curriculum rather than the individual maps for each department, since the department pages do not show labs and may just confuse the issue. She also recommended asking Jesse Barba for information about departments which are most likely to bunch courses in ways that limit access. The committee could then make a special appeal to those departments.

Tekla said she supported the language about the committee scrutinizing the balance between capped and uncapped courses, as noted in the course proposal letter, and asked if the committee could view the full set of courses, with their caps, by department, including standing courses at the time the committee is reviewing new proposals. Nancy said she could provide a file with this information.

Committee members also asked that the section on the chair's approval state clearly that the chair should be engaging in both a substantive and also an editorial review of each proposal. They said the chair's approval should indicate that they believe the course description is free of grammatical errors, is concisely stated, is free of jargon, and clearly states the purpose of the course. The letter was approved with those revisions.

**The avoidance of conflict of interest**

Turning to a new issue, the dean asked the committee whether the college should introduce a policy that would guard against a faculty member teaching family members. The college frequently enrolls a faculty child, and, in general, she thought it would be inappropriate for the faculty member to grade that individual's work. Committee members agreed fully with her concern. A number of peer institutions have policies that are designed to prevent situations that might pose a conflict of interest. Committee members found the Yale policy to be particularly apt and recommended adopting much of that language with the addition of a clearer definition of what might constitute a "close" relative from a policy used by the University of Rochester. The committee also recommended adding a requirement that the faculty member obtain the approval of the dean to ensure that the issue of how the work would be graded would be addressed adequately. These recommendations led to the following proposed language:

Instructors should not teach their own children or other close relatives (that is, anyone with whom the faculty member has a close relationship, such as a spouse or partner, child or grandchild, parent or grandparent, sibling, or a spouse, partner, or child of any of the foregoing) in a course for credit. The potential conflict of interest could have negative effects on the student himself or herself, as well as on the instructor's relation to the other students in the course. In the rare instances in which such enrollment is unavoidable, such as when the parent is teaching a course required for the student's major, the parent should discuss the situation with the chair of the department and the dean of the faculty in advance of the course. In no event should the parent be grading his or her own child's work; another faculty member should be asked to evaluate the work and decide upon the grade.

The committee recommended that the chair send this language to the Committee of Six and ask that it be voted by the full faculty and included in the Faculty Handbook. The chair said she will provide a rationale for the need for this policy and explain the origin of the language in her letter.

### **FTE letter**

The committee turned next to the letter soliciting requests for new FTEs. The dean asked whether the committee would like to revisit the conversation that had occurred at the CEP last spring when the committee had expressed a possible interest in reviewing future FTE requests in the field of Asian American studies. At that time, she had mentioned that many students have expressed interest in taking literature and humanities courses in this area. The committee last year thought it might be preferable for the dean to mention this in a chairs' meeting. After a brief discussion, the committee agreed that it did not want to include this in its letter to chairs and would prefer that the dean instead mention this during a chairs' meeting. Turning to other parts of the letter, Lawrence wondered whether the committee should direct faculty to particular aspects of the strategic plan. Tekla, noting the complexity of the plan, thought it would be better to let departments review the goals of the strategic plan themselves before submitting a request. Lawrence also wondered whether a clearer definition of what is meant by "diversity" might be advisable. Here, too, Tekla suggested the letter not try to define the parameters too closely. The goal is for departments to think about their own field and how they can best support the College's diversity goals before submitting a request. The committee then approved the letter.

### **Reading period**

Catherine S. next raised the issue of the reading period and whether the committee might clarify when assignments may be due and what activities are permitted during this period. The reading period policy now reads:

With the exception of previously scheduled performances and exhibitions, no final course work may be assigned or due during the reading period, which extends between 5:00 p.m. on the last day of classes through 9:00 a.m. of the first day of the examination period. (Faculty Handbook, IV.F.4)

This policy prohibits *mandatory* course meetings (including review sessions), and the assignment or collection of exams, quizzes, term papers, final projects, etc., during the reading period. As a rule of thumb, "previously scheduled performances and exhibitions" are limited to activities that are open to the public. The committee thought it would be wise to remind colleagues exactly what is permitted

during reading period and encouraged her to send this to the faculty. It was also suggested that the policy appear somewhere on the Registrar's webpages.

### **Half-credits for science courses**

Tekla said she felt the vote on half-credits for science courses was taken without sufficient understanding of some of the issues. She asked that this be placed on the committee's agenda for the fall. Catherine E. agreed that the vote had been problematic and said she has asked one of her associate deans to look into some of the issues this vote has raised. Tekla suggested the committee try to create guidelines and policies for offering half credits. Catherine S. said she would add this to the agenda for a future meeting.

### **Course registration process**

Catherine S. then turned to the course registration process for first-year students. Over the last few years, first-year students have all registered for their courses during Orientation on a first come, first serve basis. Last year, the CEP offered a way for faculty to create a randomized process that would ensure equal access to classes, regardless of when students were scheduled to register. As part of implementing this, Catherine S. said she became aware that some students—those attending the Summer Humanities and Summer Science programs—received advice about course registrations as part of their summer program, and that this year the program directors actually registered students for their courses before the end of the summer programs.

She noted that this meant that summer students received guaranteed slots, something that no other first-year students received. This violated CEP policy. She allowed that this affected just a small number of students (23 were in Summer Humanities and 13 in Summer Science), and these students, who were all first-generation college students and/or low-income students, may warrant some special attention. She allowed that summer students have always been advised about course registration during the program; the decision to register them early this year, however, was new. According to Jesse Barba, the early registration served two purposes: it prevented the students from changing their minds about their courses after the program ended, and it reduced the need for additional orientation advisors for this very large class. Catherine S. said she thought their early registration was inappropriate. She recommended that the college either adopt a policy that allows all first-generation and low income students—including those who did not attend the summer program—to have priority in registering or ask that all students—even those who receive their advising early—register on the first day, like everyone else. The committee agreed that all first year students should register on the same day, allowing that Summer Science and Summer Humanities students might be placed in the earliest time slot on Orientation Registration day.

The committee decided that it would not meet on Yom Kippur and would hold its next meeting on September 26 in the Psychology Lounge in the new science building. The meeting adjourned at 9:46.