

Committee on Educational Policy
September 5, 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 and welcomed the committee to a new year.

Calendar

Catherine S. asked the committee to begin by reviewing a preliminary three-year academic year calendar. This calendar still requires review by the other colleges in the consortium and may be subject to revision, according to Jesse Barba. It also assumes that the current second registration period will continue after the end of the three-year pilot.

After reviewing the broad outline of the calendar, Tekla expressed reservations about the lengthy reading period (which can include as many as nine days, with weekends) that now occurs between the last day of classes and the beginning of final exams in the spring. Some students have no papers to write, and in the absence of organized scheduled activities during this “reading” period, she felt students lose focus. Another member had encountered a situation in which a faculty member had added a class that had not landed on a snow day during one of the make-up days, but the committee as a whole felt that the shortened semester deserved more than one year before it was declared unworkable. The committee then approved the calendar with 4 in favor and 1 opposed.

Spring course proposal letter

The committee next turned to a draft letter soliciting new spring courses. The committee recommended revisions to clarify the committee’s expectations about the number of course meetings each week and also recommended adding a keyword for “attention to social justice.” The committee also suggested posting the letter on the dean’s webpage so faculty could easily consult it when adding or revising a course. The dean supported this use of her page.

Course evaluation timing

Catherine S. then asked the committee to revisit an issue from last year. Currently, course evaluations must be completed by the last day of class for electronic submission. Last year, the committee felt that important teaching in some cases occurs after that day and asked to extend the deadline. Howard Hanna in IT and Riley Caldwell-O’Keefe from the Center for Teaching and Learning advised at the time that extending the deadline without otherwise addressing response rates might not provide the productive feedback about teaching and learning that was desired. One committee member noted that the reduction in the quantity of returned evaluations might be more than offset by the higher quality of feedback provided at a later point. The committee decided to opt for maximum flexibility by moving the deadline to the last day of exams. At the same time, the committee recommended cautioning faculty that response rates might be higher if students are asked to complete the evaluation during class. Members recommended that the dean mention this in her email about course evaluations, and she agreed to do so. Catherine E. also informed the committee that a separate committee appointed by the Committee of Six will review the issue of course evaluation forms this year and consider whether the college should require a standard evaluation form in the future for faculty prior to tenure. The separate committee will not be charged with looking at the default form used by senior colleagues. Catherine S.

said she would contact Howard Hanna in IT to let him know that the CEP would like the due date to be revised to the end of exams.

Education studies proposal

Catherine S. next asked the committee to turn to a proposal for an education studies major. Last year, the committee had met with a group of faculty proposing such a major, and they have now submitted a new document. The committee expressed disappointment in the proposal, and noted several concerns.

The committee concluded that the proposal still required significant work to create a viable major and also noted that the college might need a discussion about how it will sustain the current proliferation of majors. Catherine S. said she would draft a letter with the committee's concerns.

The meeting adjourned at 10 a.m.