

Committee on Educational Policy
April 10, 2019

In attendance: Faculty: Catherine Sanderson, chair; Lawrence Douglas; Tekla Harms; Tariq Jaffer; Edward Melillo. Catherine Epstein, dean, *ex officio*. Students: Gabriel Echarte '22; Brooke Harrington '22; Julia Ralph '21. 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 from the meeting of April 3, 2019.

FTE Recommendations

Catherine S. informed the committee that Bidy would not be able to join the meeting. In her absence, the dean shared with the committee the results of her conversation with Bidy about the committee's FTE recommendations.

Asian American Studies

The committee, noting students' interest in a more robust program in the area of Asian American studies, recommended to the dean that she assemble an external review to make recommendations on enhancing the college's Asian American studies offerings. The committee asked that this review occur during the next academic year. Catherine E. thought this could be quite helpful and said she would assemble a team of faculty who could develop a self-study for next fall. She will attempt to gather a team of external faculty for a review during the coming academic year.

Flexible Grading Option (FGO) Motions

Catherine S. next asked the committee to review the motions proposing a Flexible Grading Option (FGO) that the committee had developed at its last meeting. In the motions that the committee had written, the registrar was tasked with retaining grades for a finite period. Catherine E. asked that the registrar retain grades in perpetuity for FGO courses. If a student decides to apply to medical school after graduation, the student may need those grades. The committee agreed that this was reasonable and revised the description by dropping the words that limited the duration of retained grades. This left the committee with three motions, which the committee approved. Catherine S. said she would now send these motions to the Committee of Six.

Course Proposals

The committee reviewed some additional course proposals and asked that several provide more detail about what will be expected of students in the courses.

Dartmouth Engineering Dual Enrollment Program

Catherine S. said Will Loinaz has asked whether the information about the Dartmouth Engineering Dual Enrollment Program should include an explicit statement that students studying at Dartmouth in this program must take no fewer than 30 credit hours for their junior year. The committee thought this would be fine to state clearly. Tekla asked whether international students who opt to study engineering at Dartmouth would receive a continuation of the financial aid they have received from Amherst during their final year at Dartmouth. Nancy said she would inquire.

Half credit matching of courses

Catherine S. next brought to the committee's attention some questions from Nick Horton regarding half courses. He suggested striking the lines stating that the two halves must match in a manner designated

by the offering department and also suggested adding statements limiting students to one 3.5 course load per academic year. He also wanted to add that students must obtain the approval of the offering department or program to use half courses to fulfill major requirements. Tekla said she was not comfortable with striking language that the faculty just voted less than a year ago. Catherine E. agreed with her that departments can manage the matching of half courses without changing the language in the Catalog. While Tekla said she was fine with limiting students to a load of 3.5 courses one time in an academic year, she was concerned that this would change what the faculty had voted. Any change would require another faculty vote. She thought the proposed guidance from the deans—the guidance explains when the permission of deans is required—would be very helpful. The CEP agreed that it was comfortable with the guidance and appreciative of the language from deans but thought this should come directly from the class deans. Catherine S. said she will communicate with Nick.

Digital Theses

Catherine S. asked the committee to return to a request from Bryn Geffert, the college librarian, and Ewa Nowcki, the registrar, that would require that all student theses be submitted exclusively in digital form; the college would no longer archive paper copies. The committee had previously raised concerns about digital preservation. In response, Bryn informed the committee that the library now employs tools, processes, and standards to maintain and preserve digital materials and has an entire department, with two programmers, dedicated to digital issues, including the management of digital repositories. Students already submit a majority of their electronic theses as PDFs, which are stored on IT-managed servers, subject to regular backups and file-integrity checks. Tekla said she thought the librarian and registrar had done due diligence, and the committee approved the policy.

Five College Certificate in Biomathematics

Catherine S. next asked the committee to consider the proposal to adopt a Five-College Certificate in Biomathematics. The committee approved Amherst's participation in this certificate program.

Advising Recommendations

Catherine S. asked the committee in its remaining time to return again to the advising recommendations from the ad hoc curriculum committee. The committee supported a more equitable advising load.

The committee had more mixed feelings about requiring that all faculty participate in orientation advising. Catherine E. asked if there could be alternative ways to advise students if the faculty member happens to be away. Could advising happen earlier via Skype? She noted that the Woodside Children's Center is closed part on Wednesday that week. Catherine S. thought it would be unacceptable for some students to have their advising occur earlier in the summer—before they had a chance to attend any of the panels or meet with departments—and not in person. Brooke thought it important for faculty to have a more equitable number of advisees. Lawrence pointed out that faculty receive remuneration for orientation advising, but Catherine E. thought that was a bad system which should end. It is part of the faculty's job to advise students.

Tekla agreed that it can be a hardship to be on campus the week before classes begin. She supported finding a way that would forgive faculty who are out of town and unable to advise as part of the program. Catherine S. asked if there could be an option for the dean to waive the requirement if the faculty member has a legitimate reason for not being able to be on campus. Catherine E. was concerned that the faculty member then would be unable to advise first-year students.

Tekla said it is an admirable goal to change to a policy where orientation advisors remain the student's academic advisor throughout their first year, but that this does mean faculty must be on campus during orientation. Turning to the possibility of asking faculty who are not in town during the last week of August to advise their students via Skype in early August, Tariq said this assumes that the faculty member and the student will both be around at the beginning of August. He thought this a problematic assumption. Tekla said it would be a cleaner policy to mandate that faculty be on campus to do orientation advising and then provide relief through a petition to the dean if special circumstances prevented the faculty member from being here.

Tariq asked whether the college could provide child care if the daycare center is closed. Catherine E. said that would be difficult, but it might be possible to work with Woodside Children's Center to rearrange its end-of-summer schedule. She asked if the committee thought faculty should be expected to be on campus that week as part of their job. Lawrence and Edward both opposed that idea. Catherine S. and Tekla supported the idea. This policy would just ask faculty to be on campus one day that week. Tariq noted that international faculty often use this time to visit family. Catherine S. said that as a parent of a college student, she would be disappointed if the student didn't have an in-person meeting with his advisor. She thought this would be unfair to the student, who will be making decisions with inadequate information, hardly what one expects from an institution like Amherst.

Catherine E. asked if the college should move to a system that expects faculty to be here that week. Lawrence asked how many students had to change advisors in the current system. Catherine E. said the college tries to avoid using those advisors, but this results in some faculty having large numbers of advisees and relies on the good will of some individuals. She wanted to end remuneration for orientation advising. Catherine S. suggested the committee think about this and continue with the advising conversation at its next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.