

**Committee on Educational Policy
February 19, 2020**

In attendance: Faculty: Tekla Harms; Edward Melillo, chair; Christian Rogowski; Krupa Shandilya; Adam Sitze. Provost and Dean of the Faculty: Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*. Students: Cole Graber-Mitchell '22; Jae Yun Ham '22; Sterling Kee '23. Recorder: Nancy Ratner, Director of Academic Projects.

Edward Melillo, chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. in Beneski, Room 311. The committee approved the minutes of February 5 and 12, 2020. The committee welcomed its newest member, Jae Yun Ham.

Courses

Edward asked the committee to turn to the approximately 130 new and revised course proposals that faculty members had submitted. The committee had already recommended editorial changes and used this time to discuss bigger issues. It began with a course being taught by a visitor as a 200-level course. The course was designed for first- and second-year students and had been proposed initially to meet one time per week. The faculty on the committee have maintained in recent years that 100- and 200-level courses should meet more frequently than once a week. The instructor, when consulted about this, suggested the once-a-week format would allow time both to prepare students for visits from faculty from various departments and to debrief and reflect on the broader questions about how various disciplines pose questions about education, draw on specific methodologies, make assumptions, and draw connections. Alternatively, the instructor suggested the number of the course could perhaps be changed to 300-level if the committee did not accept this reasoning. The committee thought the re-numbering would be a poor compromise and, while accepting that twice a week might not work with this format, proposed instead that the course be taught three times a week. Edward said he would speak with the instructor.

The committee next discussed whether it was appropriate for courses to be team taught while maintaining very low enrollment caps. This struck some as a poor use of faculty. On closer inspection, most of the courses in this category appeared to be interdisciplinary and involved low enrollments to allow trips, meetings with community organizations, archival work, or the use of limited studio spaces.

Another issue that was discussed was the number of courses that a department could require for students pursuing honors thesis work. The committee noted that most departments expect their thesis students to have acquired necessary skills prior to beginning a thesis. When this is not the case, the thesis advisor generally commits to working with the student on those areas. Catherine said she would poll departments to learn the norm and whether there are any outliers and will report back to the committee. She also said she would request a letter from a department testifying to its continued interest in offering a particular cross-listed course.

The committee then turned to the issue of travel courses, which of necessity have low enrollments. Asked how professors determine who should be in the courses, faculty members described a rigorous application process, often requiring some expertise in an area. Although Catherine said the college does not have a formal structure for determining admission to the courses, she cited evidence in the course evaluations that the courses have attracted students with a range of backgrounds—often students who had never traveled abroad before—and the students were able to form a bond around an intellectual passion. She thought these were particularly valuable experiences. Committee members thought the

low caps on enrollment in the Mellon Colloquia, depending on how the students are selected, might be more problematic. Catherine said she has asked the faculty teaching Mellon Colloquia to select a range of students and to maintain a collaborative aspect to the research, such that faculty and students work closely together.

After asking Edward and Nancy to contact individual faculty members about a few additional changes, the committee approved the remaining courses.

Target-of-opportunity

Edward asked the committee to use its remaining time to prepare for a target-of-opportunity request that the committee would discuss at its next meeting. Catherine explained to the students the background of such requests and the criteria that the committee will use to evaluate the request. The committee asked that the two requesting departments also provide a brief framework of their curricular structures, including the subjects that the departments believe must be covered, and a letter signed by each member of each of the departments.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.