

Committee on Educational Policy

October 6, 2022

In attendance: Faculty: Robert Benedetto, Chair; Sandra Burkett; Mekhola Gomes; Chris Kingston; Geoffrey Sanborn. Provost and Dean of the Faculty: Catherine Epstein, ex officio. Students: Isaiah Doble '25; Zane Khiry '25; Gent Malushaga '25. Recorder: Nancy Ratner, Director of Academic Projects.

Rob Benedetto, chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m., and the committee approved the minutes from the previous meeting.

Updates

Rob reported that he had met with several of the faculty members who are proposing to convert the Film and Media Studies program to department status and expects that they will resubmit a revised proposal.

FTE requests

Rob next informed the committee that the Department of Psychology has requested an extension of the deadline to submit an FTE request to January 15, 2023, when the department thinks it may know the outcome of this year's search and have a better sense of its most critical staffing needs. The committee agreed to the extension.

Course proposals

The committee then turned to new courses that have been submitted for the spring semester. Several members thought introductory courses should be open to more students. The committee questioned the proposed caps of 15 in several courses that had little justification provided and requested that additional justification be provided. The committee also focused on several 300-level courses that were proposed to meet once a week, expressing concerns that once-a-week scheduling may create barriers for students. Student members, on the other hand, spoke in favor of courses that meet once a week, saying these courses can allow more time to hear from guest lecturers and engage in meaningful conversation afterwards. The students also acknowledged that with fewer meetings students need to organize their time to complete their work outside of class but said these challenges also applied to courses that meet twice a week with just one day between meetings. Geoff noted that there are many other justifications for courses that meet once a week even though he said he does not teach in that modality himself.

Faculty members pointed to both the pedagogical pitfalls and the attraction of fewer meetings for both faculty and students, and this led to a conversation about equity issues. Several members noted that variations in teaching responsibilities appear to create inequities across faculty between and within departments. These different norms result in inequities across the College. In addition, for every course capped below the 20-student average, another course must accommodate more than 20 students. As a result, low enrollment caps in some courses can lead to higher enrollment in other courses. Some members speculated that this may contribute to differences in enrollments across fields. While caps are not the only factor affecting average class size, the committee agreed that the faculty as a whole needed to understand the ways in which low caps in 100- and 200-level courses may limit students'

opportunities to explore more broadly and how those caps affect the teaching burdens of colleagues who teach uncapped courses. The committee decided that these issues—enrollment caps, what constitutes an upper-level course, how open courses should be, how often courses should meet, and what the numbering of courses signals to students and advisors—should be part of a set of concrete guidelines that the CEP will take to the faculty later this semester.

The committee then approved some courses and asked for further justification for the limits on others. The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.