

Committee on Educational Policy

September 22, 2022

In attendance: Faculty: Robert Benedetto, Chair; Sandra Burkett; Mekhola Gomes; Chris Kingston (via Zoom); Geoffrey Sanborn. Provost and Dean of the Faculty: Catherine Epstein, ex officio. Students: 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.

FTE letter to department chairs

Rob asked the committee how it wanted to address cluster hiring in this year's FTE process. Mekhola said she thought it was important to signal that the College continues to value the way cluster hires can attract and retain a diverse faculty. The committee agreed and approved this draft of the letter, pending information from the provost with the approximate number of FTEs that will become available during the next hiring cycle.

College policy on number of courses for a thesis

Rob noted that some departments allow the honors thesis to count for up to three courses—allowing credit for one course during one semester and two courses during the other semester of their senior year. One student this year attempted to add a fourth course, using a Special Topics course during the fall semester. Catherine said she thought Amherst, as a liberal arts college, should establish a firm policy that students can count a maximum of three courses during their senior year towards their thesis. The committee agreed and thought it would be good to propose language to be added to the Catalog to codify this policy. Rob asked Nancy to speak to Jesse about how to proceed to clarify the policy in the Catalog.

Film and Media Studies (FAMS) proposal to become a department

Rob next asked the committee to consider a proposal from the Film and Media Studies (FAMS) program to convert from a program to a department. Two years ago, the CEP received a proposal for FAMS to obtain department status. At that time, the committee noted that it needed a letter of understanding from each department that would be contributing part of an FTE and acknowledging that it had agreed to this change in FTEs. The committee has now received a slightly revised proposal along with letters from each of the departments that would be affected if this proposal were approved. The committee discussed the proposal.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.