

Committee on Educational Policy
September 4, 2019

In attendance: Faculty: Edward Melillo, chair; Tekla Harms; Krupa Shandilya; Christian Rogowski. Catherine Epstein, provost and dean, *ex officio*. Students: Gabriel Echarte '22. Recorder: Nancy Ratner, Director of Academic Projects.

Edward Melillo, chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. in the Terrace Room.

Course proposal letter

Edward asked the committee to begin by discussing a draft of the letter to faculty inviting them to submit new course proposals for the spring semester. The committee briefly questioned whether the letter should discourage further proliferation of courses focused on very narrow topics, particularly those which attract low enrollments. Tekla wondered how the committee could distinguish between upper level courses with significant prerequisites and courses designed for majors in small departments, both of which the committee deemed acceptable, and boutique courses that only appeal to a very limited group of students, which the committee thought more problematic. Catherine thought the committee should only concern itself with courses offered at the 100- and 200-level, and only in cases in which such offerings seem to have developed into a pattern. She noted, for example, that enrollments in the upper level language courses will nearly always be small and should not be a concern. On the other hand, faculty who begin to see a pattern of low enrollments in 100- and 200-level courses offered in the English language should be encouraged to rethink their offerings.

Edward asked if the committee could see the low enrollment data, scrubbed of identifying labels. Catherine said the committee could have access to such data. Christian observed that there seemed to be many last minute course additions from visitors this fall; he thought late additions to the curriculum could contribute to low enrollments. Catherine said she was less concerned about enrollments in courses offered by visitors because they will often have low enrollments. The more significant concern is the small but growing group of tenure-line and tenured faculty who regularly offer 100- and 200-level courses (taught in English) with fewer than five students.

Edward said he often tries to encourage advisees to take a diversity of faculty styles. Catherine pointed out that all faculty are tenured on the basis of their being excellent teachers. She did not think it was teaching style that was discouraging enrollments but perhaps the narrow content that is being taught. Christian said he worried that the clunky nature of the course search engine might reduce students' awareness of the full spectrum of courses available. He added that students following the pre-med track often have only one available course slot, further limiting their search. Tekla suggested the committee add no new language to this letter. Instead, the committee should examine the data after the end of add/drop and then, if still deemed necessary, add language to the December letter which invites course proposals for the next school year. The committee then approved the letter, as written.

FTE request letter

The committee next turned to a draft of a letter to chairs soliciting new and replacement FTE requests. The committee approved the draft, once the committee has received an estimate of the number of available FTEs.

Department affiliation

The committee briefly discussed the request of a faculty member who wished to become half-time in the original department and half-time in a second department. Both departments supported the change. The position would revert to the original department if the faculty member were to leave the college. The committee approved the change.

Shared courses for double majors

Tekla mentioned that some departments allow students to double dip, applying courses to the major that have also been credited to a different major. This has been particularly true for students studying both mathematics and statistics. She thought this policy might not necessarily be in the students' best interest and might have other distorting effects at the college, and for this reason, she had wondered if the committee should consider regulating this issue. However, noting that the trend over the past year or two has been towards greater flexibility and fewer regulations, and that there has been a reduction in the overlap between courses taken for the math major and those taken for the statistics major, she said she no longer thought it would be productive to consider this issue. Gabe said he thought the different rules for different departments can sometimes make the curriculum appear uneven. In the end, no one on the committee thought there needed to be further regulation at this point.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Raising a new topic, Catherine said she wanted to alert the committee that international students on F-1 student visas were experiencing lengthy delays of their Optional Practical Training (OPT) or employment authorization documents (EAD) from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The committee discussed this concern. Catherine suggested the committee invite Hanna Bliss to the next meeting to discuss CPT in greater detail.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.