

Minutes of the Subcommittee on Upper-Division Cross-School Opportunities
July 15, 2009

In attendance were: Ladelle McWhorter (Chair), Kathrin Bower, Chris Cotropia, Crystal Hoyt, Joan Neff, Porcher Taylor, Steve Thompson, Margaret Denton, and Provost Stephen Allred.

The first order of business was to select a secretary. Margaret Denton volunteered.

The principal focus of the meeting was the inventory of cross-school upper-division curricular opportunities put together by the Chair. The committee discussed the five sections of the inventory in the order of their presentation in the document: Cross-School Major Programs, Cross-School Minor Programs, Cross-School Concentrations, Cross-School Courses, and Cross-School Dual Degree Programs.

The Chair asked Provost Allred for a clarification about the charge of the Committee, specifically whether it included interdisciplinary programs within schools as well as across schools. The Provost responded that it included both.

General statements, remarks, questions:

The Provost reminded the Committee that the University's goal was to create opportunities for the five schools to have more curricular contact with each other.

The Committee should not be concerned with examining the subject of faculty participation in interdisciplinary programs and its ramifications for tenure and promotion, for example, but should include in its final report a recommendation that this issue be duly addressed.

Ladelle McWhorter emphasized that the issues of fairness and sustainability must be kept in mind when considering different programs. She further stated, "We cannot expect any school to contribute to the enhancement of other schools' programs without receiving something in return, nor can we expect faculty members to take on new responsibilities without trade-offs and compensation. We have to respect people's goals, concerns, and limitations and develop proposals and programs that serve the students and faculties of all five schools. Otherwise we won't have the collective will and energy to bring our ideas to fruition and support new programs over time."

Section 1: Cross-school Major Programs

I. Cross-School Joint Majors. International Business/French, International Business/Italian, International Business/German, International Business/Latin American and Iberian Studies.

Kathrin Bower wanted to clarify that these programs are not officially double majors despite the perception of some people. These are combined majors because of the study abroad component. Kathrin Bower recommended that we utilize the catalogue language when describing these majors, that is, substitute “combined” for “joint”. Steve Thompson commented that business students are pragmatic and thus interested in having double majors or concentrations on their transcripts rather than combined majors. Kathrin Bower added that frequently B-School students opt for a minor in one of the MLC or LAIS programs rather than pursue the combined major because that gives them the bullet point on their transcripts and cvs, but does not require them to complete a senior research project.

II. Cross-School Faculty-Designed Interdisciplinary Majors Programs.

Ladelle McWhorter asked about the differences between I and II. Kathrin Bower said the diversity of courses distinguished them. Joan Neff pointed out that there was a difference between offering options outside of the home school and requiring them. Kathrin Bower noted, for example, that it was possible to skirt the cross-school element in at least one of the six interdisciplinary majors: International Studies. Ladelle McWhorter also noted that the mechanics in administering I and II were different. Kathrin Bower and Steve Thompson addressed challenges in administering I. For example, the German part of the combined major of International Business/German requires a senior project, usually a paper. Who is responsible for evaluating the project? It requires an advisor in German, but the content is often business. Is having two advisors, one for each school, realistic? Currently, the senior project for the combined IB/French, German, Italian, LAIS majors is mentored solely by a faculty member in either MLC or LAIS.

Joan Neff pointed out that American Studies was not a cross-school program, at the moment.

III. Cross-School Faculty-Designed Single-Disciplinary Major and Degree Programs

No substantive discussion.

IV. Interdisciplinary and Cross-School Student-Designed Majors Program

Kathrin Bower raised the question of distinguishing IDS majors who design their own curricula and the IDST program run by the School of Continuing Studies. Porcher Taylor clarified that the only interdisciplinary program in Liberal Arts in SCS is Weekend College, which has a major code designation of IDST. However, SCS also has some interdisciplinary courses in its traditional Liberal Arts program. In fact, all of SCS’ core courses in its Liberal Arts major are designated with the subject code of IDST. Porcher Taylor gave the example of an A&S student, Tanika Jackson (2007 graduate, major in IDST) who crossed over two schools: the Business School and SCS. In this, she may have been the first A&S student to do so. It was also noted that self-designed interdisciplinary studies majors are not by definition cross-school majors.

This discussion led to the Chair's observation that the Committee needed information about the number and type of classes taken by students outside of their home school. Kathrin Bower agreed to contact the registrar about this. What also would be helpful is information about the double major combinations across schools selected by our students.

Section 2: Cross-School Minor Programs

This section includes four minor programs: Environmental Studies, WGSS, Medical Humanities Minor, and Law and the Liberal Arts Minor. The latter may not remain because of the PPEL major.

Section 3: Cross-School Concentrations

Steve Thompson noted that often, in the case of the Business School, these programs are one-way. For example, business students have the opportunity to participate in the Concentration in Entrepreneurship but students outside the Business School are excluded from such programs.

Bob Nicholson tries to facilitate access of non-business students to upper-division courses by waiving prerequisites for Arts Management students, Environmental Studies students, and other students seeking to take specific courses offered in the Business School. Business faculty have discussed the possibility of offering primer courses for non-business majors that would teach the fundamentals necessary to enroll in certain upper-division business courses. This does not, however, give students without a major in the Business School access to the Entrepreneurship Concentration. It merely allows them to take certain courses without having to take the six prerequisites officially required for upper-level Business School classes.

The above discussion led to one concerning the access of A&S, Business, and Leadership students to SCS courses. Joan Neff remarked that the revenue of SCS is based upon the enrollment of SCS students. A&S students include these courses as part of their tuition. Porcher Taylor pointed out that there are three bridges that these UR students must cross to enroll in SCS courses: the home school department chair/academic advisor/dean approvals that must be obtained; the fact that these UR students cannot register until the first day of the semester; and the unit conversion differential. A 3 credit hour course in SCS is transferred as .86 unit for students in A&S. A solution discussed by Porcher Taylor is for the SCS to offer 4-credit classes, which would help the conversion of hours into units as well as help SCS students complete their programs faster. Porcher Taylor added that in the Spring of 2010 he will teach a selected topics course on business ethics, which would be cross-listed between the Business School and SCS and combine students from both schools.

Crystal Hoyt added that one way the schools might try to combine efforts and reduce redundancy is by creating a joint research methods course for students in interdisciplinary programs. The research methods class that she teaches for the Leadership School might also be a good candidate.

Section 4: Cross-School Course Offerings

Section 5: Cross-School Dual Degree Programs

Chris Cotropia addressed the subject of Dual Degree Programs. The issues involve accreditation, the level of the class taken, and the translation of units into hours. Law students are limited to 9 hours taken outside of the school. These classes must be graduate level courses and are subject to approval. A solution: cross-listed graduate level courses. This option eliminates the restriction of 9 hours and the difficulty of unit/hour conversions.

Concluding remarks.

The Committee emphasized that it needs to consider carefully what professors want, what students want, and what will be helpful to students after they leave.

To that end the Committee intends to set up a series of meetings with specific constituencies: those who run the programs (schools, individuals), and students (through student government organizations). These will be followed by at least two open forums. Information gleaned from the meetings with constituencies will help to inform the forum discussions and formulate questions for an on-line survey addressed to the faculty and others involved with interdisciplinary programs.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Denton, Richmond le 15 juillet 2009