

Minutes of the Subcommittee on Upper-Division Cross-School Opportunities

September 14, 2009

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

The main agenda item was to discuss the Constituency Forums that have been held so far: A&S Academic Council, ID Coordinators, and Law School, as well as, further discussion about the Leadership School meeting. Specifically, the discussion centered on trying to answer the following questions: What have we learned? What good ideas are emerging? What problems have we identified?

Chris Cotropia reiterated concerns of the law school primarily the issue of resources and combining undergraduate and law school students in a class. Another concern is how teaching interdisciplinary courses impacts the evaluation for tenure. Chris also remarked that law professors do not necessarily have Ph.Ds, which makes some of them uncomfortable about teaching in a liberal arts program that is discipline oriented.

Steve Thompson addressed concerns of the business school. A major constraint will be resources. What is resource feasible? Is it the same for the law school? An overload situation is not desirable, even with monetary compensation. Chris added that the law school restricts adjunct teaching. This doesn't work for them, but contract hires might. Same for the business school. The American Bar Association, however, does allow undergraduate teaching by law school faculty.

Addressing resources, Porcher Taylor proposed establishing explicit lines for teaching first-year seminars. Joan Neff responded that the goal is to have broad participation by full-time faculty rather than designated teachers.

The subcommittee concluded that there will have to be discussions in individual schools to decide what is needed, then go to the Provost with their requests.

The subcommittee then took up the question of the structure to vet courses that are upper level interdisciplinary cross-school. As to what kind of structure, Kathrin Bower proposed that there be a coordinator and a cross-school curriculum committee. A coordinator is needed to keep track of the curricular offerings that qualify as cross-school upper division offerings on an annual basis and that person would also need to communicate with the deans and programs in all five schools to determine future projections of such course offerings and what resources might be necessary to offer them. This person should be at the same level in the institutional structure with the Director of Faculty Development.

Joan Neff pointed out that because each school operates independently and because this is a structural change that has enormous consequences, the management of this aspect of the curriculum cannot be housed in a school. Chris Cotropia added that resources such as a banking system, also have to be cross-school, not just in the same school. Steve Thompson noted that joint appointments were necessary to help sustain interdisciplinary, cross-school teaching. The structuring of these appointments would be such that an individual faculty member would not be adversely affected if enrollments in individual schools changed. The Chair said that there should be a way to reintegrate faculty with a joint appointment where a portion of the appointment had ceased to be relevant.

Kathrin Bower raised the question of where resources should go. Will there be a limit to cross-school programs? We currently have seven such programs. What can we afford and what kind of mix is desirable? The important point is to know not only what cross-school programs exist, but individual courses that fit that model. Crystal Hoyt asked if there was data on how many students take upper level cross-school courses. Joan Neff will try to get information about what 300-level courses are taken in another school. How many students are doing cross-school majors and minors, as well as classes?

Joan Neff posed the questions: What should be the criteria for being a cross-school program? What should be the criteria for being a cross-school program versus individual courses? Steve Thompson commented that a mechanism to review cross-school programs and to determine their viability would be needed.

Del McWhorter, the Chair, observed that talking about the infrastructure is the most important issue for us now as a committee.

The subcommittee then discussed scheduling the Open Forums. Scheduling the forums will have to take into consideration those that have already been scheduled by the sub-committee on general education. In addition to the practical issue of scheduling, the sub-committee discussed how it might structure these forums. It was thought that some kind of structure would be helpful in getting good feedback.

At the end of the meeting, the Chair encouraged all committee members to consider possible models for infrastructure that would address some of the issues raised during the discussion.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Denton, September 18, 2009