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

November 30, 2009

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

The subcommittee reviewed a preliminary report drafted by the Chair. It was agreed that the report should include separate sections for the subcommittee’s proposals to the faculty. The subcommittee also considered changing the order of the proposals, that is, putting the proposal of cross-school course offerings first followed by the proposal to place cross-school programs directly under the Provost’s office. Implementation that brings them together would follow.

The main discussion centered on the need to include in Section 1 of the report a definition of “cross-school program” as it relates to majors, minors, and concentrations. The subcommittee initially considered a minimum of one required course in another school and discussed the idea that other criteria might be established depending on the program. Joan Neff suggested another criterion: either a required course in two different schools or a requirement that a student take courses in two different schools. Porcher Taylor was concerned about anticipating the possible permutations of a disjunctive approach that left open some of the criteria and suggested that the oversight committee would be the body to decide such matters. Joan Neff felt certain that the question of defining cross-school programs would be raised by the faculty, and thus needed to be addressed by our committee.

Del McWhorter articulated four possible criteria that emerged from the subcommittee’s discussions: 1) required courses in two or more schools, 2) an advisory board made up of faculty from different schools, 3) a substantial number of courses from two or more schools, 4) faculty from two or more schools teaching in the program. The subcommittee decided to retain 1 and 2 as the minimum criteria for cross-school major programs, minors, and concentrations. Members thought, as Kathrin Bower said, that these criteria would make such cross-school programs more viable and ensure their sustainability, an issue that Steve Thompson raised. He thought that faculty members who participated in cross-school teaching should be given some assurance that they would have the opportunity to continue this teaching. It was generally agreed that the presence of an advisory board would greatly facilitate communication among the different schools involved in specific cross-school programs.

Other points of discussion concerned assigning course designations. The Chair stated that cross-school majors should have a program prefix for courses that could be taught by approved faculty in any of the schools contributing to the program.
Chris Cotropia brought up the issue of new cross-school major programs as opposed to existing ones. The subcommittee recognized that both new programs and new courses connected to such programs would have to be approved by the schools involved.

Kathrin Bower summarized the two issues that we are addressing as a committee: access to teaching cross-school courses and the opportunity for students to take cross-school courses.

The Chair ended the meeting by asking Chris Cotropia to look into how a cross-school seminar open to graduate and professional students, referred to as UNIV 501 and carrying 1.5 hours’ credit, might fit with the curriculum of the law school. She also asked Porcher Taylor and other subcommittee members to make a list of barriers to cross-school initiatives identified by the constituencies interviewed by the subcommittee (SCS, Program Coordinators, etc.) Kathrin Bower will also follow up on the existing cross-school majors in Modern Literatures and Cultures and Latin American and Iberian Studies that have an international business option. This information will be included in the subcommittee’s final report.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Denton