Subcommittee on Upper Division Cross-School Curricular Opportunities

Meeting of December 10, 2009

Present: Chris Cotropia, Kathrin Bower, Crystal Hoyt, Steve Thompson, Porcher Taylor, Joan Neff, Del McWhorter, Margaret Denton

At the previous meeting of November 30, 2009 the Chair asked members to make a list of impediments to cross-school initiatives identified by the different constituencies with whom the subcommittee met during the fall semester. Crystal Hoyt drew up a list, which was sent to subcommittee members prior to the December 10 meeting. In that meeting the subcommittee primarily discussed three issues: impediments to cross-school cooperation, in particular calendars and compensation, the organization of the subcommittee’s final report, and the makeup of the proposed committee responsible for cross-school curricular oversight.

The subcommittee first took up the issue of the Education minor and the impediments to student teaching. The Education Department collaborates closely with the teacher preparation program in SCS, including student teaching. Sometimes student teaching takes place in the semester after graduation, however, only students who enroll through A&S can earn a minor. Those who complete the same student teaching experience through SCS do not earn a minor. Del McWhorter suggested that the University might need to make Education a cross-school program with SCS.

The other issue is that of tuition. Committee members expressed concern over the tuition differentials between students enrolled in student teaching for A & S credit versus those enrolled for SCS credit.

Another impediment for collaboration between A & S and SCS has to do with their respective calendars. Porcher Taylor does not see any conflicts between A & S and SCS in the spring schedule however the fall schedule does present certain problems. One of them is the fact that SCS students have Labor Day off whereas A & S students do not. Porcher Taylor explained that the Labor Day holiday is important for the adults who make up the SCS evening classes especially since SCS does not have fall break. Steve Thompson added that Graduate Business School does not have fall break either.

Porcher Taylor and Jim Narduzzi, Dean of SCS, note that all UR school academic calendars are solely driven by the Registrar’s Office, and neither SCS nor any UR school has any control over that process. Porcher Taylor and Dean Narduzzi think that the calendars of SCS and A & S can be reconciled, perhaps through a rule that determines which calendar is followed according to the professor’s home school. Joan Neff pointed out that the hidden day is the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, prompting Del McWhorter to ask if SCS would consider holding classes on that Tuesday as in A&S. Chris Cotropia suggested that one reason SCS chooses not to
hold classes on that Tuesday is because their classes are held in the evening, which makes it more difficult for students traveling for the holiday.

Chris Cotropia also brought up disjunctions between the A & S calendar and that of the Law School. For example, the dorms close for A&S students before exams in the Law School are completed. Del McWhorter responded with the idea of the subcommittee’s recommending that the Law School make a policy to accommodate the enrollment of undergraduates with respect to exams and turning in grades. Law School grades are not due until January 13, well beyond the A & S deadline.

Kathrin Bower noted that SCS grades are due on Dec. 15, three days after the fall term ends. This prompted Joan Neff to say that we need to clarify why these dates have been decided upon, that is, what is the rationale behind them. Chris responded that Law School grades are due January 13 because faculty feel they need the time to grade.

The discussion then turned to the availability of summer school classes for undergraduates. Chris Cotropia said that there are summer school classes in the Law School, but that these would not be taken by undergraduates. Porcher Taylor commented that SCS has multiple sessions during the summer. Steve Thompson added that the classes offered in the Business School during the summer are basic courses.

The second issue discussed extensively by the subcommittee was the order of the two proposals offered thus far: 1) cross-school, team-taught, upper level seminars, and 2) cross-school infrastructure and governance. Kathrin Bower and Crystal Hoyt suggested changing the order of proposals 1 and 2. Their suggestion was to first define “cross-school” in the introduction of the report, then discuss the cross-school opportunities that already exist at the University before introducing a new one (the seminars). Chris Cotropia commented that the structure proposed by Kathrin Bower and Crystal Hoyt follows the order of goals stated in the Richmond Promise.

Kathrin Bower said that the inventory of current cross-school opportunities is a logical beginning as it shows the process the committee went through to reach its recommendations. Joan Neff agreed. Kathrin Bower thought that the proposal concerning the infrastructure was the major element of the report.

Chris Cotropia suggested that perhaps we could avoid using the word “cross-school” in discussion of the new seminars. Joan Neff reminded us that our charge included ways to facilitate upper division cross-school cooperation and that the proposed upper-level seminars are part of that. We have to define “cross-school” for that purpose.
There ensued a discussion about the seminars being an enhancement of the existing programs. The Chair brought up the fact that because the cross-school seminar proposed by the subcommittee was for undergraduates only, we did not need two different numbers, one for the undergraduate level and one for graduate students. Joan Neff suggested acknowledging that graduate students could be included in these seminars, that some mechanism could be put in place to permit this.

Chris Cotropia brought up the banking system that is part of the cross-school seminar proposal. He stated that it does not work for law professors teaching in undergraduate programs. Joan responded that recommending a banking system would make people aware of the importance of this cross-school initiative. The idea is that when these curricular contributions are being made, whether they are the first year seminars or the proposed cross-school seminars, they relate to a new line. Chris Cotropia said that the difference is that professors in the undergraduate schools are teaching those whom they teach anyway. The relation between the Law School and the undergraduate schools goes only one way, he said. Banking makes no sense for the Law School.

Steve Thompson commented that the fundamental issue is not the distinction between graduate and undergraduate constituencies, but the available resources. Chris Cotropia answered that the contributions are all one direction. Sources flow from the Law School, but not into it. The Chair pointed out that this is a small program; the banking system is to make sure that teaching these seminars does not become an overload.

Chris Cotropia said that he wanted tradable credits, a monetary compensation from the provost for teaching a cross-school course. Kathrin Bower said that banking could be thought of in terms of a cash system or course load reduction. Crystal commented that we may want to recommend that the schools decide what their banking system should be.

Joan Neff pointed out two issues in this discussion: the individual level, and the larger issue that concerns the infrastructure of the University, that is, exchanges between schools. There has to be a perception that this is a University endeavor.

Chris Cotropia said that there needs to be a re-allocation of funds, for example, SCS should be paid for teaching A & S students. Joan Neff noted that there is a tuition system for each school and an operating budget. The attempt to reach across silos is a reason to bring up budget issues between schools. She added that we can recommend that the University set up a system to facilitate cross-school cooperation.
Kathrin Bower commented that compensation to SCS should be a percentage of students enrolled rather than individual numbers. Steve Thompson noted that this is not a problem if undergraduates fill up existing seats in a class in the Business School. The problem is when teaching them siphons off resources needed for the Business School.

The final item the subcommittee took up was the makeup of the proposed oversight committee. The subcommittee proposed that the committee be composed of fourteen members: Deans of the five schools, one representative from each of the five schools, three at-large members, and the Associate Provost.

There was a short discussion of cross-school combined majors. Kathrin Bower, Chair of Modern Languages and Literatures, reported that she had consulted with Tom Cossé in the Business School and Sharon Feldman, Chair of Latin American and Iberian Studies, regarding existing combined majors with International Business and French, German, Italian and LAIS and that they had decided to call these cross-school majors. They also agreed to work more collaboratively on marketing the opportunity to students and supervising majors.

The meeting finished where it began, with a discussion of the impediments to cross-school cooperation. Joan Neff observed that we need to have a big section on these in our report and that we need to group together those that are most common. Chris suggested that we separate them by rubric, for example, those that are registrar related. Joan Neff added that we need to be aware of pre-requisites that may impede the goal of cross-school opportunities. She suggested that perhaps schools could look at their pre-requisites and come up with ways that students from the other schools could take those classes or develop similar classes without those prerequisites. Crystal Hoyt added that this information would be helpful within schools. Sometimes no one seems to know about upper level classes that are available.

The meeting ended with the Chair’s outlining the body of the subcommittee’s forthcoming report.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Denton.