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

November 16, 2009

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

Three principal items were on the agenda:

1) a plan to finish our work as a committee, including the writing of a report
2) proposed team-taught upper level cross-school seminars
3) the oversight committee that will work with the Associate Provost to facilitate cross-school programs and courses

As for the first item, Porcher Taylor proposed that the committee meet together to write a skeletal draft of the report then parse out assignments to individual committee members to help fill in areas that require more information or amplification.

Concerning the second agenda item the Chair noted that the constituencies our subcommittee has spoken with favor team-taught upper-level courses, which are different from courses that are simply cross-listed. Students seem to want courses that will count as half units, in part because half unit courses are regarded as useful for fulfilling graduation requirements. Joan Neff added that the Dean of International Education is also interested in the idea because a seven-week course would give visiting scholars more flexibility than the present full semester system.

Crystal pointed out that the Jepson School has adopted the model of two separate, but consecutive seven-week sessions for their methods and critical thinking courses. Each class counts as half a unit. This model, however, raises certain issues, specifically the lack of a reading period and the problem of scheduling a “final” exam for the first seven-week period. The Chair offered the idea of running courses that required a final exam only during the second half of the semester so as to avoid those problems. Courses that required a final project or paper could be offered in the first half of the semester, which would allow greater flexibility for scheduling and for visiting international faculty.

These courses are envisioned as upper-level university seminars. We discussed setting up a program for a small number of team-taught seminars. These would have to be proposed to the oversight committee and approved. The understanding is that these courses would not have prerequisites. Because they are electives, these cross-school courses will need to attract students to be viable. An issue that needs to be addressed is how faculty across schools receive credit for teaching a half unit course. Perhaps a banking system will need to be in place for these university courses. Joan Neff suggested that people might choose to teach two sections to get full credit, or accrue credit over time to replace one course.
The third item on the agenda was the “Cross-School Curriculum Oversight Committee” that will need to work with the Associate Provost to administer the envisaged program of cross-school courses and cross-school programs.

How will the committee be constituted?
The discussion centered on the representation from the various schools. One suggestion was to follow the quadripartite system of Arts and Sciences, plus two representatives from the Business School, one member from the Law School, one from the Jepson School, and one from SCS. Joan Neff commented that a strong liaison with the Deans of the five schools is necessary. Kathrin Bower suggested that the Deans be included as “ex-officio” members of the committee.

The Chair pointed to the budget as the real concern. Joan Neff responded that the University is now examining budgetary issues, so this probably is a good time to ask for agreements among schools to support the kind of cross-school programming we are envisioning. It may be difficult for faculty in some schools to participate in cross-school programs because of resource limitations within their schools. This situation could be alleviated through the establishment of a centralized fund for cross-school courses and programs that is administered by the oversight committee. One such model is the A & S Faculty Research Committee which has its own budget and works in conjunction with the Associate Dean.

The Chair reiterated that the budget for cross-school programs should be independent of individual schools. The Cross-school Curriculum Oversight Committee and the Associate Provost should decide on release time and compensation for cross-school coordinators.

Besides the budget, the subcommittee discussed briefly how faculty who teach in cross-school programs would be evaluated. Porcher pointed to the Jepson School model, which is to include in the Tenure and Promotion Committee two people outside of the school who work in fields related to the particular faculty's specialty. In this model, according to Crystal Hoyt, both cannot come from the same department. The Chair added that a committee consisting of faculty from across schools might also be needed for annual reviews in such cases.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Denton.