

Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Tuesday, November 12, 2013, 3:30 – 5:00 pm

Commonwealth Auditorium, Sadler Center

Dean Kate Conley called the meeting to order at 3:37 p.m.

Attendance at the start of the meeting: 40.

Minutes from the October 29 meeting were approved:

<http://www.wm.edu/as/facultyresources/fas/minutes/20131029.pdf>

John Gilmour: guides the discussion to COLL 400 – the projected capstone experience. It has been the goal of the curriculum review and the EPC to interfere as little as possible with major requirements, but this component/proposal does so to a substantial degree.

Many/most students may be able to fulfill this requirement through current departmental capstone requirements. COLL 400, however, need not necessarily be fulfilled within a student's major area of study. Some programs and departments may begin to offer such courses; others may find it unattractive or unfeasible to develop such courses. Thus, the EPC suggests various types of experiences to satisfy this requirement including a capstone seminar, honors thesis, or mentored internships.

- *Diane Shakes: this language seems to work for the Business School and School of Education with whom we will need to interface at the senior level.*
- Jack Martin (English): queries if there is an independent requirement that limits the number of courses that can be double counted. E.g., between the college core requirements and major requirements.
- Rowan Lockwood (Geology, Faculty Director of Academic Advising): there are no overlapping rules between the GERs and major requirements, only between majors and minors, and double majors. This may be something we will want to revisit.
- Sarah Stafford (Economics): expresses concern over “mentored internships.” It is problematic to accept internships for academic credit. Internships can be a legitimate way to fulfill such a requirement with the right oversight – e.g., attaching a 25 page paper/independent study (many students find such requirements more onerous than actually taking a class).
- *JG: there is no credit awarded for an internships, there must be an academic component. As internships are hardly the crucial component, we can easily remove them should the faculty consider them problematic.*
- Mike Tierney (Government and International Relations): expresses some curiosity over the phrase “to communicate effectively with a diversity of audiences” – a perfectly reasonable goal but not what happens in government seminars. What exactly does the EPC have in mind?

- *JG: e.g., in government, writing an op-ed for a newspaper, for example. This is an intellectually and pedagogically responsible thing to do, to write something (e.g., a memo) for an alternate audience can be a useful exercise.*
- Gul Ozyegin (Sociology): suggests that such a requirement (COLL 400) is already fulfilled in sociology – at least two other faculty members visit the seminar and contribute the student’s grade; students doing capstones projects are encouraged to submit material to conferences and publications.
- George Rublein (Mathematics): recounts the failed experiment in the Mathematics capstone, as encouraged by a Dean, a mathematician himself (who shall remain nameless). The capstone course quickly turned into a narrowly defined topics course that primarily interested only the faculty member or it rambled off into things not necessarily valuable to advanced students in mathematics. At the undergraduate level, there is still too much that they do not know, and our seniors are better served to choose from the menu of advanced offerings. The capstone idea failed and was abandoned.
- Sarah Stafford (Economics): queries about whether student teaching might fulfill this requirement in the School of Education (as well it should).
- Lu Ann Homza (History, Dean for Educational Policy): not only is the School of Education enthusiastic about COLL 400, it is also anticipated that student teaching will count.
- Gul Ozyegin (Sociology): observes that internship experiences vary widely and can be an important experience for the students. She recounts an anecdote about student whose internship at a transgender clinic in Richmond has turned into graduate level research.
- Sarah Stafford (Economics): is hardly suggesting that internships are not valuable. She is only concerned about students who “intern” (e.g., work for free) at “Joe’s Bank” over the summer bringing pressure to bear to receive academic credit for this “internship”. We need to focus on independent study as the vehicle for awarding credit for “mentored internships”.
- Josh Erlich (Physics): observes that the COLL 400 language may be more inclusive than we’d like. Some internships might not be appropriate for this requirement, and the language could be adjusted, but it seems that we agree with the spirit.
- Silvia Tandeciarz (Modern Languages and Literatures): some courses in Hispanic studies cannot count as a capstone for the discipline, but they could very well count as a capstone for the college experience. As with other requirements, the EPC could certainly determine if something would count toward fulfilling the requirement, e.g., do these mentored internships have a sufficient academic component? Where precisely does the jurisdiction lie in terms of COLL 400?
- *JG: The EPC prefers to defer to departments in such cases.*
- Diane Shakes (Biology): the EPC had exactly this conversation.
- Silvia Tandeciarz (Modern Languages and Literatures): just as with honors projects, for which criteria are applied across the departments and projects, the EPC could develop criteria that mentored internships must meet in order to count towards

COLL 400. Although she has no problem with the language, she detects an issue with implementation.

- Lu Ann Homza (History, Dean for Educational Policy): yes, there is an implementation issue, but there are also theoretical implications. The Dean's office envisions that the EPC and College Fellows will write up guidelines during the spring.
- Joel Schwartz (Government): recalls that a similar conversation occurred during the last curriculum revision when the College dearly wanted a capstone experience at the senior level but "we didn't have the courses at W&M to do it" then. So we have a choice between the mishmash that is the EPC language or the Archibald amendment which offers a more homogeneous/integrated experience. Since most departments and programs already have a capstone requirement, the interdisciplinary choices under the EPC proposal may not be attractive as there will be three or four majors represented, hardly a cross-section of the student body. If we go with the EPC language, this capstone option must be made available in the majors.
- Michael Lewis (Computer Science): it may not be physically possible for some departments to offer a capstone for their majors.
- Joel Schwartz (Government): observes that we cannot place value pinned to this description. There is too much ambiguity.
- *JG: notes that original material is not the same as original research. Students could pursue novel presentations of prior research.*
- Sarah Stafford (Economics): if we implement this requirement, resources will have to go to programs without capstone experiences – to create for all the students the same opportunities that we have decided are so critical that we are featuring them in the curriculum. If we say this is important, then we should let everyone do it. The interdisciplinary option is not necessarily something that students will want to do – or it should be so exciting that students will want to do it in addition to a major capstone course.
- Bill Cooke (Physics): suggests that Professor Archibald present his amendment.
- Bob Archibald (Economics): introduces his amendment to replace COLL 400 (likely to be fulfilled as part of the major – such a capstone experience is not a part of **general** education) with COLL 450 which is intended to sustain the COLL experience, encourage interdisciplinarity (e.g., students otherwise might think that it is ok to stop doing interdisciplinarity once they complete COLL 200 – not the message we really want to send to our students) and center around topics that will engage a number of disciplines. This is to emphasize that a Liberally educated person can engage with lots of different ideas, with people with different viewpoints, in lots of different ways. In the Public Policy Program, students engage in a particularly rich experience as students from different disciplines mix, the experience is all the richer since these students now know something about their disciplines.
- Suzanne Hagedorn (English): finds the suggestion attractive, entirely in keeping with the Center for the Liberal Arts, and entirely in keeping with the spirit of the new curriculum, and she suggests that this is exactly the kind of interesting project that would make for an ideal fund raising opportunity. She hopes that the new

curriculum will be an opportunity for us to rethink how we do things, instead of just tweaking what we already have/do.

- Bill Cooke (Physics): The major track for the sciences is a carefully orchestrated (and highly successful) program, and a part of the reason why so many of our majors go on to graduate work is because they become focused on their majors (instead of general education requirements). And he does not want to tell his majors “here is another requirement to distract you”. Although interdisciplinarity is a good thing, it is not good to require it of seniors who are already overburdened by senior research (a full year) and a second major.
- Gul Ozyegin (Sociology): observes that this additional interdisciplinary requirement is a great rehearsal for real life professional experiences. Although she thinks that the capstone in Sociology is working well, she would consider deleting that requirement in favor of COLL 450.
- Bob Archibald (Economics): never intended for departments to eliminate their own capstone experiences.
- Silvia Tandeciarz (Modern Languages and Literatures): observes that we need more information. Under the current GER system, there seem to be more required courses. Our seniors are already taking GERs and this does not seem to interfere with their majors, etc. Considering what our students are currently doing, balancing GERs with major requirements, this should certainly be possible under the new system. The idea of an integrated, holistic experience across the four years is attractive, so the students can explore at the end of their college experience how their major disciplines fit in with their broader intellectual experiences.
- Bob Hinkle (Chemistry): as much as he would love to vote for this amendment, the criteria for undergraduate certification in Chemistry (and Physics, as well) is dictated by national and international organizations. He suggests excising “diversity of audience” and clarifying the language about mentored internships in the EPC version of COLL 400.
- Diane Shakes (Biology): both the School of Education and the Business School will oppose COLL 450, and it will be impossible for PreMeds. Should this go through, no science major will ever minor or double major again.
- Ben Boone (Dean of Students): transfer students will also find this onerous to fit into their years here.
- Mike Tierney (Government and International Relations): under the new system will the problem of crowding in the fourth year persist? How does this one three-credit requirement suck up an extra space in a four-year program? Could not some of these major courses be taken at different times?
- Bill Cooke (Physics): In Physics and Chemistry, there is a delicate system of prerequisites and sequencing of courses, which courses need to be taken and when. The major course load expands as a cone as students approach their junior and senior years. Taking COLL 400 before the senior year (e.g., as a sophomore) defeats its purpose.

- Mike Tierney (Government and International Relations): Nor does it seem true that this is fundamentally different from a science student now fulfilling GER 7 in the senior year. Regarding communicating effectively with a diversity of audiences, we don't do it now. Perhaps we should add some language: e.g., "**learn how to communicate...**" As it stands, this requires a lot of extra steps.
- Teresa Longo (MLL): queries about Professor Archibald's proposal to delete the COLL 100 requirement.
- Bob Archibald (Economics): that is a separate amendment that will be offered once the seriatim discussion is complete. He also suggests that excising COLL 100 will help us afford COLL 450. But these are separate issues.
- Suzanne Hagedorn (English): calls the faculty on the obsession with double majors. Only one major is needed to graduate, a minor is not even required. This three credit requirement hardly seems onerous – especially with the VA Gazette slamming us for “dumbing down” our curriculum by requiring fewer courses – but if we are requiring **better** courses, then there is no issue with requiring **fewer** of them. And, from her experience, so many students have petitioned the Committee on Degrees to waive one GER requirement or another because it “interferes with the second major”. Often even double majors can sneak in an elective or yet a GER in their senior year. COLL 450 seems highly doable in addition to the capstone. Besides, double majors are not necessarily a good idea, as they produce students who are hyper-specialized, and they lose out on a lot of what defines a Liberal Arts education.
- Matt Wawersik (Biology): notes issues with both proposals, but likes the concept of synthesis featured in both. Could it be either/or?
- Bob Archibald (Economics): the intent is to encourage mixed classes. The two proposals offer very different experiences.
- Bill Cooke (Physics): assumes a small enrollment cap not unlike the freshman seminar. Presumably COLL 450 would be as expensive as the freshmen seminars. This proposal would make the new curriculum unobtainable, so expensive that it would be impossible to implement. Thus if it is so important, it should a central focus of the curriculum, not an add-on at the end.
- Monika Gosin (Sociology): expresses concern over the labor-intensive nature of offering both capstone courses and COLL 450, despite the fact that it seems a great idea.
- Silvia Tandeciarz (Modern Languages and Literatures): the goal seems to be synthesis. Perhaps some rethinking could facilitate coming to a middle ground. Perhaps the EPC could draft some criteria of the elements it envisions as satisfying the synthesizing aspect. Perhaps this could be turned into a four-credit requirement.
- Bob Archibald (Economics): in response to Professor Cooke, given the nature of the seriatim discussion, we cannot call COLL 400/450 an “add-on” and charge it with being the component that breaks the bank. We are here to decide what is the best curriculum, then we work on how to implement it.
- Barbette Spaeth (Classical Studies): also suggests a “Middle Ground”. Perhaps capstone courses in two different areas could be paired together so, for example,

sociology and physics students would have to explain their fields to each other. Class meetings could be scheduled in which paired classes would meet – incurring no additional costs.

- John Riofrio (Modern Languages and Literatures): intrigued by COLL 450, but does the default have to be a small seminar? Perhaps students from a wide variety of majors could come together to explore (for example) the consequences of migration (in classes of ~50 students). Groups of 4 or 5 students with diverse intellectuals backgrounds could then explore together different interpretations.
- Heather Macdonald (Geology): likes Rio's proposal and is intrigued by Bob's proposal. This is an opportunity to come together as a faculty and bring our creativity and intellectualism to bear on significant questions; we could do phenomenal things with a senior seminar, as we did with the Freshmen Seminars (which many said could not be done at a public institution). This could be something really exciting that sets us apart.
- Suzanne Raitt (English): calls the question (but then withdraws for the moment).
- Josh Erlich (Physics): cautions against comparing the requirements between the old and new systems. Both curricula require a similar number of courses and similar credit hours. A smaller fraction, however, of the new requirements can be fulfilled through AP or transfer credit under the new system.
- Sarah Stafford (Economics): suggests adopting more general language than the implied equal division of Domains.
- Bob Archibald (Economics): rejects the amendment as not friendly.
- Suzanne Raitt (English): again calls the question.

the faculty vote unanimously to close discussion.

Professor Archibald's amendment is defeated.

- Sarah Stafford (Economics): moves to strike “mentored internships” from COLL 400, emphasizing that this does not change the substance, but only “what students get credit for”.

the amendment passes, with a shout out from JG to SS “Way to go, Sarah!”

- George Rublein (Mathematics): moves to strike the penultimate sentence (as it is completely incoherent).
- Barbette Spaeth (Classical Studies) and Jack Martin (English) observe that some extra commas are needed.

the amendment is defeated.

- Sarah Stafford (Economics): moves to adjourn.

Dean Conley adjourned the meeting at 4:57 pm.

The secretary again thanks Steve Otto for compiling the list of faculty who spoke on the Curriculum Review, Trina Garrison and the cheerful staff at Technical Services for the audio recording, and John Gilmour for reviewing these minutes.

Respectfully Submitted,
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