

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Annual Report of the Educational Policy Committee to Faculty Council
April 13, 2018

Membership:

GerShun Avilez (Co-Chair, English and Comparative Literature, At-Large, 2018); David Garcia (Co-Chair, Music, At-Large, 2018); Brenda Temple (Biochemistry, replacing Prof. Loeb until end of his term, 2018); Kristin Reiter (Health Policy and Management, At-Large, 2019); Sherick Hughes (Education, At-Large, 2019); Gidi Shemer (Biology, At-Large, 2019); Hassan Melehy (2020); Marsha Penner (2020); Meg Zomorodi (2020); Carter Vilim (Undergraduate Student); Chastan Swain (Graduate Student, GPSF); Lauren DiGrazia (Assistant Provost, University Registrar, ex-officio); Christy Samford (Deputy Director, University Registrar, ex-officio); Nicholas Siedentop (Curriculum Director, Office of Undergraduate Curricula); Abigail Panter (College of Arts and Sciences, ex-officio)

Committee Charge:

The committee is concerned with those matters of educational policy and its implementation as to which the Faculty Council possess legislative powers by delegation from the General Faculty under Article II of the Code. The committee's function is advisory to the Faculty Council and the University Registrar.

Summary of Major Activities:

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the EPC considered the following topics and/or took the following actions:

Final Examination Policy Clarification

EPC addressed this agenda item in the meetings of August 31, October 5 and 31, November 28, 2017, and January 18, February 16, and March 29, 2018. After much deliberation over the course of these meetings, the EPC worked on and agreed to propose the following forms for approval by Faculty Council (anticipated on April 13, 2018) so that the Registrar's Office and the University have a workable, consistent, fully vetted, and centralized policy on final exams. The forms submitted for resolution to Faculty Council are: 1) *UPM 08 - Examination System*; 2) *UPM 08 - Final Examination_Procedure on Final Examination Excused Absence*; 3) *UPM 08 - Final Examination_Procedure on Final Examination Schedule Change*; and 4) *UPM 08 - Final Examination_Standard on Undergraduate Course Exceptions*.

Work on developing these documents was initially prompted by the [On Clarifying the Policy Regarding Final Examinations](#) resolution (approved by EPC on May 15, 2017) whose language affected all undergraduate courses. That document did not include a separate policy document that contained additional information about final exams/assessments as stated in the [General Education Criteria Document](#), which was approved by the Curriculum Review Steering Committee in March 2003 and revised several times by the College's Administrative Boards (12/06/06, 11/05/08, 10/13/10, 3/30/11, 4/22/14). In addition the On Clarifying the Policy

Regarding Final Examinations resolution covered a portion of the existing [UPM #8 – Examination System](#) (effective date: May 2012). However, five sections that were present in that policy document were not addressed in the resolution. Another inconsistency in regards to the Final Examination Policy emerged when EPC addressed the miscalculation of credit hours in UPM#29 (see “UPM# 29: Definition of a Credit Hours” below). The policy on credit hours requires a final exam in part, and because of this stipulation instructors are expected to use the final examination period as required instructional time. EPC agreed, however, that this stipulation should not be applicable to all classes (e.g. courses that are less than 3 credit hours and First Year Seminars), because it’s not always appropriate, and instructors/Department chairs should be able to have an exemption policy in place that reflects good pedagogy.

In the course of discussing these inconsistencies, EPC agreed to conduct a comprehensive revision and updating of the Final Examination Policy for consistency and to reflect current practice. We also noted that the current final examination document is not part of the university template, and thus it was agreed that our proposed fully vetted final examination policy be stated in one Policy form, two Procedures forms, and one Standards form. EPC worked on resolving these inconsistencies and designing these forms in every meeting from October 5, 2017 through March 29, 2018. EPC approved the forms on April 4, 2018.

Class Attendance and Approved Absence Policy

Faculty Council at its meeting of Friday, February 9, 2018 approved the Class Attendance and Approved Absence Policy. EPC review of this proposal began when Deborah Clarke (Consultant to the Provost) and Joy Renner (Associate Professor and Director, Allied Health and Faculty Advisor, Academic Advising) first presented to the EPC on October 5, 2017. Clarke and Renner discussed the class attendance and approved absence policy. They noted that they spent seven to eight months talking to people around campus about these policies and received lots of feedback. The proposed new policy changes the term from excused absences to university approved absences with a goal of preserving faculty discretion in working with students for other absences. It was noted that the student body is changing and students have many more needs for excuses. The proposed policy will give authority to the Office of the Dean of Students to verify illnesses or emergencies and e-mail faculty. This is a change as they don’t currently have this authority. The policy also creates a university approved absence office. This will be a centralized place where all three categories of University approve absences will go. Faculty will now get a notice from a single source. Renner noted that at the time they (Renner and Clarke) didn’t know trends in absences. This new process will help us understand why students are absent and how many times they are absent. These data will help with future policies, and development of student support. The university approved absence office will probably be a single person, and they are still working on where the office will sit. Faculty will have the ability to refer students retroactively to this office. It provides an outside entity looking at all absences including athletics. It also gives the students some flexibility to use the office for absences if they don’t want to go to Accessibility Resources and Services because they don’t want faculty to know.

The policy requires faculty to provide make-up coursework and assessments to students who have university approved absences, but the policy does not specify the form that the make-up work must take. Panter has implemented a secure testing center that offers proctored secured sessions every week. The policy will provide a link to the testing center and links to other resources such as Center for Faculty Excellence best practices and options for make-up work. It was suggested to add resources for how to deal with missed group work. The policy provides a timeline for the instructor to contact the student and student to respond to the instructor. This puts some accountability in the hands of the student.

In January 18, 2018 Renner and Clarke gave an updated overview of the policy, and shared a draft of it for EPC to provide feedback before they introduced it to Faculty Counsel. There was a unanimous decision to approve the policy.

UPM# 29: Definition of a Credit Hours

At the October 31, 2017 meeting EPC voted on changing the wording of the Definition of a Credit Hour policy to reflect accurate calculation. Samford explained that a mathematical error had been corrected involving the total number of minutes in a semester for a 3-credit hour course: the correct figure is 2100 minutes (p. 2 of UPM# 26). Questions from EPC members pertaining to UPM#29 included how the requirement that all classes meet during their assigned final exam time would work if an instructor gave a nontraditional exam; and whether 180 additional minutes (the time requirement of a final exam) taught before the end of the semester can substitute for a mandatory final exam. These questions contributed to EPC's decision to revise and update the Final Examination Policy (see above).

The language in UPM#29 was corrected, and EPC unanimously approved the changes at the November 28, 2017 meeting.

UPM #30: Independent Study Policy

The Administrative Boards of the College of Arts and Sciences approved recommendations submitted by a task force who reviewed the independent study policy in April 2017. The task force recommended: changing registration deadline, removing the "traditional independent study" designation, and providing an exemption for internships and practica so that faculty can have more than two students per semester. EPC spent significant time discussing the registration deadline in particular, because this deadline can affect things like funding. Registration must at least take place before census day so that the registrar's data is accurate. However, the current deadline does not align with registration deadlines for 'regular' classes. EPC unanimously approved these changes at the November 28, 2017 meeting. Subsequent discussion involved taking steps to ensure that the approved UPM #30 policy is updated and Departments are notified in anticipation of Summer Sessions 2018, and that UPM#30 is distributed in the new format for revising UMPs.

At the February 16, 2018 meeting EPC reviewed the new policy format for the revised Independent Study Policy. EPC discussed a communication plan for the new policy to include having it as part of enrollment in the independent study management system; and inviting Geneva Collins (Director of Communications, College of Arts and Sciences) to help develop a communication plan, or someone from the policy office—to include the professional schools.

IDEAs (Identify, Discover, Evaluate, and Act) in Action Curriculum Proposal

The EPC has been in regular conversation with members of the IDEAs in Action Curriculum Coordinating Committee. Kelly Hogan (Teaching Associate Professor, Biology and Assistant Dean of Instructional Innovation/Director of Quality Enhancement Plan) and Viji Sathy (Teaching Associate Professor, Psychology and Neuroscience and Special Projects Assistant, Undergraduate Education) were the first to present to the EPC on October 5, 2017. They presented an overview of the new undergraduate curriculum, focusing on the rationale for the new curriculum design. Andrew Perrin (Professor, Sociology; Director, Carolina Seminars; and Special Assistant to Dean, College of Arts and Sciences) and other members of the IDEAs in Action Curriculum Coordinating Committee visited with EPC for the meetings on January 18 and March 29, 2018 to present updates on their work and the work of the feasibility and design working groups. For every meeting EPC members asked many questions about the rationale, design, and planned implementation of the new curriculum; the implications of the new curriculum design on other new curriculum proposals in some professional schools; implications on graduate students in regard specifically to the proposed III course design and support for those students from the university; the degree of consultation with faculty not involved in the designing of the new curriculum; implications to transfer students and student athletes; and the role of EPC in its capacity as an advisory committee to Faculty Council.

At the February 16, 2018 meeting EPC discussed previous presentations on the new curriculum. We invited guests Sharon James (Professor, Classics; on phone) and Donald Haggis (Professor, Classics) who shared their response to the curriculum proposal. A discussion took place regarding concerns about structure of the IDEAs working committees, reporting structure, and communication of conversations. EPC agreed to continue discussion of the work of the new curriculum committees and the role of EPC in that process, as well as implications of this proposal as necessary. The new curriculum oversight should give updates to EPC so they can inform faculty council. EPC also needs to work with faculty council to insure that engagement and communication are also occurring.

At the March 29, 2018 meeting IDEAs Coordinating Committee members presented updates on the new curriculum design. Andrew Perrin discussed the process and principles in developing the current draft of the IDEAs in Action Curriculum. Items mentioned included an email last week to campus (Geneva Collins, 3/20/2018), a slowing down of the process to address comments, and a testing of innovations. A document was presented that described the current draft proposal of the IDEAs in Action Curriculum. Since November 2017 eleven feasibility and design committees with different focuses were appointed to address two issues: can we do it and how can we do it?

The feasibility committees reported back in February 2018. The IDEAs Coordinating Committee incorporated materials from the feasibility and design committees. The current goal of the IDEAs Coordinating Committee is to have a new draft available later this semester. There is no plan to ask for approval of the proposal until well into next semester. The goal for this meeting, however, was to discuss certain pieces of the plan as a joint committee meeting between the IDEAs Coordinating Committee and EPC. These pieces were the following:

- 1) There is a need to discuss the role of EPC and the plan to have it more involved, including the role of EPC with respect to pilot efforts. Pilot efforts are planned to begin next year. Perrin indicated a willingness to consider different structures for the interaction; IDEAs is seeking advice and input on how to conduct the pilot, among other issues. There was a suggestion to include at least one graduate student representative and one EPC committee member on the committee.
- 2) During the overview of “Focus on the First Year”, discussion centered on making the first year seminar a requirement. It was suggested that perhaps students should be allowed to substitute with a small faculty-led course with an environment that was not as research intensive as the first year seminar. Discussion included identifying the many ways of piloting small first year faculty-led courses and if we are already doing some of this; how the small faculty-led courses would be titled; some of the courses are intended to provide depth in first year, while the ideas, information and inquiry courses would provide breadth in first year (these would involve active ways of doing inquiry, be broadly interdisciplinary, and provide skills at a rudimentary level); rhetoric/composition classes would be co-curricular; THRIVE courses; tracking student’s engagements with the courses was desirable along with helping to make their transition robust.
- 3) Graduate students and discussion sections in the proposed III (Ideas, Information, and Inquiry) courses. Would more graduate students be needed, and what are the implications in regards to funding for graduate programs and students? Discussion included: proposed course/sectional development may not require a big increase in number of graduate students; new curriculum committees are studying the difficult question of resources and the need for pulling graduate students out to cover courses; III courses will be homed in their own department but that resources might be needed from multiple departments; interdisciplinary teaching is not as integrated in course design cross departmentally and remains a challenge; there is a need to avoid adding extra burdens on departments, rather we need to push boundaries and encourage faculty to imagine these new innovations; yet interdisciplinarity has to do with bringing what departments are already doing into new model.
- 4) A second document was presented (from the Feasibility and Design Committee on Student Learning Outcomes for General Education Courses) which depicted three models side-by-side: the current one involving focus capacities, a new one the committee generated independently that involves modes of inquiry instead of capacities, and the hybrid model that combines capacities with modes of inquiry. Ten focus capacities might be too many and there was a need to create a curriculum which doesn’t go above a certain number of credit hours. It is possible to take best of both models (yellow in document) and create a hybrid as well as the new model being considered.

5) The meanings of capacities and skills. The concept of capacities is defining what a liberal arts education actually does for students. We are currently not good about articulating why liberal arts are important or addressing what students gain; through this education. There is a relationship between capacities and skills; skills can be done in one particular spot; capacities are skills exploded into multiple different contexts that involve transferring skills to new contexts. Capacities are not something we measure; a capacity includes a number of skills and understanding that apply across a number of contexts. Measuring capacities is an evolving field. How does this affect students' active research experiences? Students have engaged research experiences that are not necessarily in student's major. An experiential education requirement and active experience will remain a component. Every student should have active research experience and also active high impact experience. Combining service learning with reflection is needed.

The decision was made for members of the IDEAs Coordinating Committee to meet with the EPC to discuss updates on the General Education Curriculum Design in April 2018.

Textbook Affordability Pledge

At the February 16, 2018 meeting Daniel Hooper (undergraduate student who is working with Student Government) presented to EPC on efforts by UNC student government and PURGE to raise awareness among faculty about textbook affordability. His group is getting feedback from faculty about their affordable textbook pledge and gathering faculty signatures. Hooper provided information about the textbook affordability campaign. The group conducted a needs assessment of costs on national average and presented this data to EPC. The faculty pledge was also distributed during the meeting. Goal is to have faculty sign the pledge and to raise awareness of textbook costs. A resource page is also available to professors regardless of whether they sign the pledge. Once the pledge is signed, faculty receive a sticker indicating that they have taken the pledge. Comments and suggestions from EPC included the advocacy for anti-trust that could occur with this initiative; suggestion that the students collect data to look to see if there have been changes in textbook purchasing, and how much savings they have encountered with this pledge; the difference in prices between book store and other package options, and to let students/faculty be aware of this; suggestion about how to let students know about options outside the book store; and suggestion to send this resource guide out prior to bookstore requests being due, and perhaps add the pledge link in syllabi as well as a link to the resources page. Hooper indicated that their next step is to send their proposal out through the Student Body president.

Report Respectfully Submitted by GerShun Avilez and David Garcia, Co-Chairs, April 6, 2018