

Eastern Mennonite University  
Undergraduate Council  
February 11, 2008  
CC301/302  
#8

Present: Beth Aracena, Kim Brenneman, Vi Dutcher, Cathy Smeltzer Erb, Joan Griffing, Cyndi Gusler, Doug Graber Neufeld, Nancy Heisey, Elroy Miller, Marie Morris, Patrick Reynolds, Gloria Rhodes, Deirdre Smeltzer, Mary Sprunger, Arlene Wiens

Student Rep: Lindsey Grosh

Absent: Spencer Cowles

1. **Opening Prayer** – Arlene Wiens led the opening prayer/reflection. Specific prayer was requested for Dr. Toni Flanagan, Associate Professor of Teacher Education, regarding the premature birth of her grandbaby twins. Prayer was also requested for the continued safety of the Guatemala cross-cultural group. Arlene noted that her departmental faculty have been working together at the *This I Believe* series, and Arlene read her very poignant reflection on what she believes.
2. **Approval of Minutes**  
The minutes of 10 December 2007 were approved as recorded and the 21 January 2008 minutes were approved as amended.
3. **Reporting** – Marie noted the following:
  - a) For upcoming Jenzabar EX Conversion we will need to begin a process of looking at new course numbers. Dave Detrow will initiate conversations with chairs in the upcoming course-scheduling 1:1 meetings.
  - b) Dean's Committee has received an initial prospectus on the JPCS & Applied Sociology merger. They are planning a follow-up work session with Gloria Rhodes, Terry Jantzi, Elroy Miller, and Jane Wenger Clemens to further refine the proposal before it is submitted to UGC.
4. **Action to Approve Undergraduate Graduate Candidates**  
Action: That we recommend the approval of the list of 2007-08 candidates for degree upon successful completion of their studies and satisfactory financial arrangements.

Approved by Consensus

Note that faculty questioned the need to take such a formal action when it seems somewhat perfunctory and not necessarily accurate at this early time of the year.

## 5. Important Conversations:

- a) 28 January 2008 Faculty Assembly Meeting – What happened with the French vote? What can we learn from this experience? Where do we go from here?
- b) GVC Foreign Language & Community Learning Requirements – We have a problem with regard to meeting student needs. We are seeking endorsement on possible solutions.

Nancy introduced present issues with regard to meeting the foreign language requirement for students especially given the recent vote to maintain status quo with the French major and minor. Beth Aracena first shared statistics regarding the number of students needing foreign language courses and the number of seats available. It was clear from the numbers presented that there are insufficient seats to meet that need. Nancy invited Vi Dutcher, chair of the Language & Literature Department, to share a proposal developed in consultation with language faculty. Vi opened by saying that last Friday morning she called together a meeting with Don Clymer, Mike Medley, and Moira Rogers to propose solutions to our current “language urgencies.” Out of their brainstorming a draft proposal was written which Vi distributed to council members. Vi reviewed the proposal and then invited questions of clarification and comments. It was noted that a primary issue yet to be defined is whether the foreign language requirement is an attempt at language competency or rather an extension of our commitment to cross-cultural learning and preparing students to live in a global context by way of exposure to a foreign language. Deciding this seems to be a significant step in guiding other decisions we must make regarding the foreign language requirement. It was noted that the current requirement of two semesters (i.e. through the elementary II level) is not competency. Another member commented that even study through the intermediate II level of a language is not competency. A suggestion was made that rather than talking “exposure” versus “competency,” perhaps it would be best for us to conceptualize the language requirement as another form of learning “engagement.”

One of the suggestions in the proposal presented by Vi was to build a language course into semester cross-cultural in addition to a language course the semester prior for a total 6SH language requirement. While there may be some significant logistical issues with this, it was affirmed that as much as possible language should be considered as a course included in semester cross-cultural. Another suggestion offered was that perhaps a semester cross-cultural could be followed up with language study. This strategy might further “nudge” students to pursue additional language study. One member noted that understanding the goal for language study helps to better frame course content. For example, if a language course is taken prior to a semester cross-cultural to better prepare the student for study in that setting one might construct the course differently than if the goal of the course is purely language acquisition. A question was raised about why only a third of the students do a semester cross-cultural and whether we should strive towards a larger percentage. It was noted that from a fiscal standpoint it is probably best that no more than three semester cross-cultural be offered each year as this is “lost” revenue in the residence halls. One member suggested that language study “in culture” seems the most effective way of learning through language study. And, a question was raised as to whether the semester cross-cultural could be offered for 18 SH (rather than the current cap of 15 SH) to accommodate additional language study.

UGC members affirmed the hard work of Vi and her language faculty in putting together a proactive response to meeting the needs of our students given this foreign language

urgency. Further, while no one wants to drop a foreign language major, affirmation was offered for taking a bold stance on the feasibility of sustaining the French major and minor. It was suggested that the question of maintaining a major and minor in French be taken back to faculty immediately for a revote so we can better meet the needs of our students. Members agreed that it was important for UGC to lead the faculty in making a wise decision with regard to French – we simply do not have sufficient students to sustain this major and minor and we have an urgent need with regard to meeting the foreign language requirement needs of our students. After further clarifications the following motion was made:

**Motion:** Given that the 2008-2009 academic year is a critical transition year, we propose that we utilize our 2008-2009 French language course offerings to meet the urgent needs of our students in meeting their language requirement.

We further recommend that we work toward piloting an Arabic course and encourage the Cross-cultural Sub-Committee to construct effective ways to link language requirements with cross-cultural programs.

**Action:** Approved with one dissenting vote.

It was agreed that Marie will request time on the February 18, 2008 Faculty Assembly agenda for Nancy Heisey and Vi Dutcher to present the proposed plan. Elroy Miller also volunteered to help present this and it was also suggested that someone from the Cross-cultural Sub-committee also stand up front for additional support.

- c) Academic Structure - There are continuing conversations regarding structure. How do we proceed with clustering? Should we be looking at a broader academic restructuring? What problems or challenges are we experiencing that might call for restructuring? ASTF met on Feb. 5, 2008 and identified the following examples:
- New faculty struggling to feel supported, including financially
  - Provost position that includes the role of graduate dean
  - Issues of faculty representation in decision making
  - Overwork (too many committees)
  - Enrollment challenges that create financial pressures
  - Differences between financial management (e.g. UG vs Grad)
  - Need for faculty development & support (beyond financial challenges)
  - Need for shared academic division across divisions
  - Students who need more support in learning and transition to college
  - Cultural change that would give permission to leaders to actually lead.

There was not sufficient time to address this item so it will be picked up at a later meeting.

**6. Next Meetings:** March 17, 2008; April 7, 2008

Recorded by,

Marie S. Morris