

# Curriculum Committee

## Discussion

November 13, 2009 – HUB Student Senate Room

## MINUTES

Present: Julie N. Bernier (4 pm), Christian Bisson, Mary E. Campbell (non-voting), Elizabeth A. Cox (Chair), D. Benjamin Dearth, Robert G. Egbert, Jr., Lindsay E. Harrington, Karolyn Kinane, Joyce C. Larson, Lisa D. Spradley, Anil Waghe

Excused: Bonnie L. Bechard, Stephanie M. Caron, Francis M. Williams

### Exhibits:

- Report to the Faculty, administration, Trustees, and students of Plymouth State University, Plymouth, New Hampshire by an evaluation Team representing the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges; Prepared after study of the institution's Self-Study Report and a visit to the campus, October 19-22, 2003
- March 18, 2004 letter to President Wharton, continuing its accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- Completions of Bachelor Programs, Options and Certifications, 1995-2008, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, November 19, 2008
- Self-study of the PSU History program
- 2009 Program Review Report of the History Program by Denise J. Youngblood, Professor of History, University of Vermont, March 27, 2009

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm. She announced that Mary Campbell had recently received the Patricia Storer award for service and the Committee congratulated Mary.

### Overview of NEASC Reports

#### *1. Mission and Purposes*

It is dedicated to preparing well-rounded graduates who will serve their communities with distinction. (p. 3)

#### *2. Planning and Evaluation*

##### **Suggestions** (p. 6)

- Develop a University-wide academic plan to guide program and curriculum development.

#### *4. Programs and Instruction*

A meeting with undergraduate students revealed a high level of satisfaction with their educational experience at PSU and praise for the faculty. Their primary dissatisfaction was with academic advising. (p. 10)

##### **Areas of Concern** (p. 11)

- The institution has a commodious offering of majors (and options), some of which have low enrollments and have had few degrees awarded during the past decade.
- The present dynamic at PSU is to overreach by expanding programs and services, while putting less emphasis on assessing the effectiveness of programs and services that would lead to program adjustment and elimination. It appears that in trying to be all things to all people, everything becomes equally valid and valued.
- Despite the obvious scarcity of resources, PSU does not demonstrate that program development and elimination are guided by a clear set of priorities central of achieving the institutions' mission and purposes.

##### **Suggestions** (p. 13)

- After determining key reasons for first-year student attrition, take appropriate actions to improve first-year to second-year persistence, especially of out-of-state students.

Concerns: size of major; number of options; too specialized.

We don't have an academic plan. Low enrolled programs do not mean small classes.

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Academic advising: curriculum that needs some work. What is student definition of “academic advising”? There are some things an advisor has no control over. There is a spectrum of advising from really great to can’t get a hold of the advisor; advisor does not answer student’s e-mail or phone messages. Taking the right courses; going through their Curriculum Planning Guide; taking the wrong class; taking the wrong course for General Education. Can’t get first year students into classes now for spring because there is no room. The capacity of the room per the Fire Marshall determines the cap for classes held in that room. There are no seats now in General Education courses, no options for students who register last. It is a retention problem if they can’t take classes they wanted. Are there patterns/trends of majors and when they need/can fit in Gen Ed? Could plot data and see if there is a trend; then could take the data to Chairs for planning the upcoming semester.

Don’t we have data on course enrollments? We see that upper-level courses are filling. What is low enrolled? We don’t have wait listing. Should we limit juniors/seniors from taking Gen Ed courses as electives? Takes choice away from students. Can we wait list? Joyce is reading Banner regarding this topic; student would get an e-mail from Banner that seat is open. How do we manage that due to time constraints? For example, the first student being wait listed would have 24 hours to decide. We would have data on how many were waiting and perhaps that could open a new section. Wait listing may give students false hopes. Perhaps advisors could report the number of their advisees who need/want a specific course. A report of all such responses could be compiled. Some advisors would do this and some would not. Would want some confirmation that a section would be opened if the demand is there. Needing a course doesn’t ring true to our mission. Taking any course, verses some course that they need/want. Is it a problem of the major or of General Education? An advisor not being available is inexcusable. New PSU students entering as undecided are not matched with an advisor in a discipline for which the student has some interest.

Determine first year attrition: have we done this study? Need more seats; need money for more sections/teachers.

### Academic Plan:

- Some should be five year degrees.
- Reduce number of credits in major
- Advanced core disciplines
- Pursue market drive strategy
- Current faculty interests and preparation
- Remind ourselves that it’s a baccalaureate degree, not a mini master
- Simplicity
- Much student choice
- Gen Ed taught by faculty
- Flexibility
- Breadth and depth within disciplines
- Regional workforce needs

For those without a full schedule, there will be classes somehow but probably not what they want. It would be nice to give them a choice.

Is this because Gen Ed is too big, or the major is too big, or there are not enough faculty?

Most majors require more than 50 credits. Some are too big for no reason. We can understand when there is external pressure (accreditation); competency versus individual courses. Perhaps the “normal” major should require 40-50 credits. Bring the “big” majors down to 60 credits.

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Should there be a different gen ed for the BA and for the BS?

The BA and the BS should be different. When we divide into colleges, then we could split gen ed. In Canada a BA has lots of breadth, is very broad. The BS is professionally oriented and is very focused. In Quebec, students do two years of general education; college/university is five years of study after high school; go into hard science or human science.

Academic Plan: define it. Philosophical or practical? Effectiveness versus under enrolled. Does under enrolled mean not effective? Would like to see assessment.

We don't execute definition of BA. BA and BS are different. What distinguishes them? Only the foreign language requirement?

Scheduling: very serious problem. Time slots are robbed because some classes are scheduled over two periods, take two or three blocks. Twice a week versus three days a week. No one told me I was out of the grid. No one has stopped me from scheduling my class in this manner. There may be pedagogical reasons for using two blocks and that's okay. It's not okay if the reason for doing so is personal. The clusters in the Childhood Studies program are okay because they move students as a group. There are blatant wholesale violations of the grid. Do we sell ourselves as an education driven school? Have we lost our focus? Our mission is that we are student centered. Whatever we do has to come out of being student centered. Still has to be student centered. If we are student centered, we will have more students stay and graduate.

Do we want to make recommendations about

- the General Education program?
- BA and BS degree programs?
- having a different gen ed program for the BA than the BS?

Redefine BA and BS? Prescription versus choice. Great number of electives. How do we look at each to see if it has too much. There are currently 22 (out of 36 or 61%) BA majors and options that require more than 50 credits.

Do we ask departments to tell us if they can meet 40 credits for a BA or 60 credits for a BS, or whether it has to be a five year program? Accountability.

What defines a major that is too large? Provide general guidelines/goals and in a year we will talk to the departments that have not met them.

Christian agreed to research and write about the differences between a BA and a BS.

### Completion of Bachelor Programs, Options, and Certifications Report

- Drop half of our options?
- Don't want to measure the effectiveness of the program based on the number of its graduates. Maybe that would be okay for dropping an option.
- What is really under enrolled?
- Do we need xxx program?

We need to get information first:

- What's happening in those courses? Are they Individual Enrollments? What are the enrollments?

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- Why are the numbers low? Is it the classes or the lack of interest?
- How many are enrolled versus how many graduated.
- Get list of courses with their caps and their enrollments
- Which courses being offered are only for the major?
- Number of who entered the major as a first year and did not continue in the major
- Generate a report of all courses taught by each department
- Enrollment in minors

Look at the following majors:

- BA Biology
- BA French
- BA Humanities
- BA Philosophy
- BA Spanish
- BS Biotechnology
- BS Computer Science
- BS Public Management

Stop building things to cater to everyone.

### Program Review of BA History

- Lack of European historian.
- We have five historians. Our comparator institutions average nine historians. The Social Science Department has a list of faculty needs, which the Department discusses. Adding an historian is not #1 on the Department's list. Some of the other disciplines have four faculty. History generates the most credits. Four historians and one faculty member who is shared with Social Studies Teacher Certification Option of BS Social Science. Social Studies Teacher Certification is usually in the history program at other institutions.

There are proposals for the BA History program on the November 20<sup>th</sup> Curriculum Committee meeting agenda, which appear to be in response to its Program Review.

The Provost's office will provide the data on the courses of programs that have graduated few students as well as another Program Review.

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm. The Curriculum Committee has agreed to meet the second Friday of the month, from 2:30 to 5 pm, for the purpose of discussing the curriculum. All regular business will be conducted on the third Friday of the month. The next Discussion meeting will be **December 11<sup>th</sup>**.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary E. Campbell, Scribe  
Director of Curriculum Support