

University Academic Affairs Committee

October 9th, 2017, 3 pm
111 Hurley Convergence Center

Committee: Davis Oldham (chair), Karen Anewalt (secretary), Beverly Epps, Rachel Graefe-Anderson, Gonzalo Campos Dintrans

Ex officio: Tim O'Donnell, John Morello, Wes Hillyard

Student representative: Lindsey Kowaki

Guests: Dave Stahlman, Betsy Lewis, Wes, Tim, John

Ex officio not attending: Kimberly Buster-Williams, Rita Dunston, Nina Mikhalevski

Call to order: 3:04

1. Old Business

a. Discussion of 75-minute Monday, Wednesday tracks

The UFC passed a proposal to the committee from Dave Stahlman to add two new 75-minute timeslots to the regular Monday/Wednesday track options. The proposed new timeslots would be MW 8:30-9:45am & 2-3:15pm.

The rationale for the new timeslots is that:

- they offer additional options for both faculty and students. It may prove particularly attractive to commuter students or non-traditional students who might prefer the longer class meeting with fewer meetings per week.
- the MWF 8-8:50am and MWF 3-3:50 timeslots are not frequently used. Only about 20 courses are offered in each of these time slots. More courses are offered in the 9-9:50 and 2-2:50 timeslots but even if courses were offered in a traditional 50 minute timeslot, they would overlap with these popular timeslots anyway. By expanding to 75 minutes, the new timeslot only adds conflicts with the 8-8:50 timeslot and 3-3:50 timeslot.
- several departments have courses approved in the timeslot this semester however other departments requested the timeslot and were told that it was not possible to offer courses during the timeslot.
- other COPLAC schools offer courses in this type of MW 75-minute block.

To further minimize potential scheduling conflicts for students, it is proposed that the new timeslot only be an option for courses that do not count as a Gen Ed course.

The committee discussed the proposal noting that adding additional timeslots may make it more challenging to schedule final exams.

The committee also discussed the need for standardization. Would the 75-minute block need to start on the hour 8-9:50 or could faculty choose to use 8:30-9:45?

Unfortunately, Rita Dunston was unable to attend the meeting and the committee felt it would be unwise to make a final decision without consulting with her.

A motion to table the issue until the November meeting passed unanimously.

2. New Business

- a. Awarding of back credit to students based on placement exam score and appropriate placement in foreign language class

Betsy Lewis provided an overview of the proposal brought forward by the Department of Modern Foreign Languages to award “back credit” for some students who take the foreign language placement exam and complete a subsequent language course at UMW.

This proposal grew from work done by an ad hoc committee studying the foreign language gen ed requirement and ways to improve the delivery. The committee recommended using a different placement exam and the department has adopted a new placement test. Students take the exam online and receive a preliminary placement recommendation. The placement is non-binding. Some students who score very highly on the online exam are invited to take an additional proctored placement on campus to completely exempt out of the requirement.

As a way of encouraging students to accept their placement and begin their studies at the recommended level, the department proposes that if students place at the 201 or 202 level and begin their studies at that level and complete the course with a grade of B- or better, the student will be awarded 3 retroactive credits in addition to the credits earned for taking the recommended course. In other words, students placed in 201 and completing 201 with a B- or better will earn 3 credits of SPAN 102 credit and students placed in 202 and completing 202 with a B- or better will earn 3 credits of SPAN 201 credit.

The rationale is

- The Department of Modern Foreign Languages believes that awarding of back credit will discourage students from deliberately performing poorly on the placement exams, as well as from enrolling in a language course at a level below their proficiency.
- Other institutions award between 3 and 9 credits in similar situations. The Department of Modern Foreign Languages feels that 3 credits would keep the amount of retroactive credit awarded in line with UMW’s policy of awarding only three credits for a foreign language AP exam.

The committee discussed whether a B- was the appropriate grading cutoff for awarding credit. Alternatives for awarding back credit for a C or better in the 201 or 202 course would bring this policy more in line with UMW's transfer credit policy and policies for awarding AP credit.

Additionally, the committee considered concerns that the policy would be seen as punitive by students who struggle academically. It was noted that these students can still take courses in the foreign language sequence and complete the gen ed requirement by earning a D or better in the 202 level course.

The B- threshold was suggested by the ad hoc committee as a way of demonstrating proficiency with the prior material. Additionally this threshold encourages students to go "above and beyond" in order to earn the additional credits. It was noted that 60% of students taking 201, 202, and 205 across all languages earn a grade of B- or higher in the course.

The committee voted on the motion as submitted:

Motion: The Department of Modern Languages & Literatures recommends that back (or retroactive) credit in the amount of three credits be awarded if the student, upon taking a UMW language placement exam, then takes the same language at the level in which (s)he placed, and successfully completes that level (course) with a B- or higher. We recommend that the amount of retroactive credit be three credits in the course (excepting 101) immediately preceding the language course successfully completed.

The motion passed.

b. Capstone issues for students who major in WGST and a related discipline

UFC received a request from the Women and Gender studies major wishing to crosslist their capstone courses for students who are double majoring in Women and Gender studies and a second discipline. Students pursuing a double major often must complete a capstone in each major as part of the major requirements. Many students choose to complete a single research project that spans both disciplines.

Until this semester, Women and Gender studies faculty had agreements with their affiliated department to have students submit two registration forms for the two departments. This year, the registrar rejected the process, arguing that the student should not earn 6 credits for a 3-credit project.

Now, the registrar's office has insisted that one of the student's two major departments must request an exception to the major for the student to receive credit for the capstone, thus waiving the requirement. The Women and Gender Studies faculty are not willing to accept this as a long-term solution because it does not accurately represent the fact that the student's capstone project has met the requirements of two different majors or appear on the student transcript.

Rachel summarized the discussion of the issue that was occurred at the last UFC meeting. The issue is that the capstone course can't be cross-listed on a case-by-case basis. So if one student is double majoring in Women and Gender Studies and History, then every history capstone course would have to be cross-listed with the Women and Gender Studies capstone course, and this would hold for students whose project did not span both departments.

The committee discussed splitting the credits so that students earned between 1 and 3 credits in each department. This seemed overly complicated, as it would require all the affiliated departments to change their capstone requirements.

In the end, the committee recommends that the Women and Gender Studies faculty advising double majors ask students to select their primary major. Then in all cases, the secondary major agrees to submit an exception to the major to count the capstone course from the primary major in place of the capstone course for the secondary major. In this way, the student controls which course appears on their transcript.

A second option for students who wish to have both capstones on their transcript is to complete two separate 3-credit capstone projects, one in Women and Gender Studies and one in their other major. This option would not require an exception to the major as the student has fulfilled the major requirements for both majors.

In the future, it may be possible to add a special notation to courses that satisfy multiple capstone requirements on the official transcription. This would appear on the "key" that is printed with official transcripts.

3. The meeting adjourned at 4.21pm.