University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire  
University Senate Academic Policies Committee  
Vol. 58, Meeting No. 12  
Tuesday, March 8, 2022  
VL 1128 or via Zoom

Present:  
Members: Scott Clark, Rahul Gomes, Abby Hemmerich, Mary Hoffman, Marquell Johnson, Carol Koroghlanian, Bill Miller, Kati Morley, Dalete Mota, Jamie Tester Morfoot, Evan Weiher  
Guests: Margaret Cassidy, Sean McAleer, Jean Pratt, Jill Prushiek, Aleks Sternfeld-Dunn

Presiding: Chair Marquell Johnson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Approval of minutes from March 1, 2022
   ▪ Motion to approve the minutes of March 1, 2022, as submitted. Motion was seconded and approved (9-0-0).

2. Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies Program Review
   ▪ Sean McAleer was in attendance to provide information and answer questions. Valuable process, understands department’s contributions to LE are appreciated. Were at 8 tenure lines and now 4 due to departures/retires (3 PHIL and 1 RELS). Numbers of majors has decreased, also a concern nationwide. Don’t think they’ll receive additional faculty until the number of majors increases, but the number of majors won’t increase without the faculty (especially RELS). Near crisis point. Appreciative of the reviewers and dean, gratifying to read that others value what department does, and are in support of faculty lines. Understands budget concerns and the need for a Plan B.
   ▪ How has faculty reduction impacted majors/minors’ ability to complete their program?
     · Impact felt by RELS more. Restructured RELS major, scaled back some requirements as there isn’t faculty to offer them, made it broader in terms of the area requirements, still feel the major has integrity. Offering substitutions. Some PHIL courses can only be offered every other year. Philosophy of Mind has demand but can only be offered every 3rd semester. Course is required by and immediately fills with neuroscience majors, would like some seats for PHIL majors/minors and others who are interested. Tried to make the RELS major more navigable but combination of the change from GE to LE and the declining number of majors makes it difficult to fill courses.
     ▪ Due to the decrease in majors/minors, does the department consider itself as “institution serving” or “major producing?” The department has been able to function primarily by providing LE.
       · Not arguing against the department and whether it makes sense to continue as is. Students attracted to UWEC don’t typically choose PHIL or RELS. Could offer minors only with faculty teaching one upper-division course + an additional large LE course, instead of two upper-division courses that typically don’t fill. Negative connotation surrounding not having a major, but less interested in PR than whether it makes sense to continue as is. Not advocating for this, but could be a Plan B if additional positions don’t emerge.
       · Disappointing to hear requirements were rearranged to reflect faculty losses. Appreciate that the department is thinking about options.
     ▪ The external reviewer mentioned decreasing the credits required within the majors. Is this an option?
       · University requirement that standard majors have 36 credits. There aren’t rules on how many prefixes can be used, could include 6 credits from different departments. Comprehensive majors have some indisciplinarity.
▪ Where have the discussions surrounding workload and consolidating with another department gone and is it still being considered?
  • Don’t think identities are bound to being a member of a standalone department. PHIL & RELS disciplines are very different. Would like to be major producing [AND] institution-serving. Faculty value teaching well, their scholarly endeavors, and engaging majors/minors in 300- and 400-level courses. If instructors can teach courses they enjoy and are important to them, don’t feel that teaching in a combined department would detract. Teaching only intro/service courses isn’t ideal for morale. Also possibility of not dismantling the department and creating an interdisciplinary Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) major. It would be good prep for law school and would be an interesting comprehensive major with distinctive academic features that no one else in System and few in the region offer.

▪ Where would the PPE major be housed (PPE), who would create it, and does the department have the manpower?
  • Would need to determine where it would be housed. Chairs in POLS and ECON have been briefed and are interested. Wouldn’t need to create new courses, could repurpose and teach current offerings. Would benefit with the addition of another social/ethics philosopher, but think it could be offered with current staffing. May spend time during the summer speaking with others in the field to see what it would take and whether it’s a feasible option. Dean Sternfeld-Dunn has been discussing with chairs a variety of topics: Institute for Public Policy, Master’s in Public Administration/Policy, offering professional development to generate revenue.
  • What would happen to RELS if the PPE major is pursued?
    * Would need to be considered, delicate issue. Maybe continue with a minor. It’s not a natural place, but could make contributions to PPE. Not a natural connection between PHIL and RELS. They get along, but individuals also recognize they could end up in different locations. Need to fully investigate whether there’s a more natural fit.
    * RELS aspect is worrying, pondering where it could still have a role in constitutional law. Law schools push at least one externship, pushing skills more than philosophy. Like the idea of PPE preparing students who want to be an advocate in society, providing them with a broad understanding of PHIL, ECON. Sounds like an amazing major to consider and is worth time and effort to prepare students for those fields.

▪ Program Review Form Discussion: No. 1 – would like faculty lines but department doesn’t expect them, can’t sustain at current level. Leave blank. No. 7 – Leave blank and expand on merging and/or exploration of interdisciplinary approach for a new major.
  • All in favor of leaving Nos. 1 and 7 blank on the Philosophy and Religious Studies Program Review Form and all others in agreement with the chair and dean. Approved (10-0-0).

Chair Marquell Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Forcier
Secretary for the Meeting