

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 6, 2006

Jorge Nobo, chair, convened the Academic Affairs Committee at 3:30 pm in the Boswell Room of the Memorial Union. Members present were: Pat Munzer, Jane Carpenter, David Pownell, Shaun Schmidt, Bill Roach, Steven Elisha, Patricia Renn-Scanlan, and Loran Smith. Invited guest present was: Sarah Cook

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The committee voted to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2006 meeting.

AGENDA 1. Approval of New Programs

This item removed from agenda because new programs have not yet been approved by the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences.

AGENDA: 2. Discussion of University General Education Mathematics Requirement. No Action Taken.

Sarah Cook was asked to discuss the University's Mathematics requirement. She said that students could meet the requirement either by taking MA 110, MA 116, or completion, with a C or better, of a higher numbered Math course which has MA 116 as a prerequisite. She noted that MA 110 and MA 116 have prerequisites: either a C grade in MA 104 (Intermediate Algebra), a score of 22 or better on the Mathematics section of the ACT, or a score of at least 15 on the Mathematics Placement Test.

In response to questions from committee members, the following information was obtained:

- The General Education goals of MA 110 and MA 116 are:
 1. reason mathematically and understand numerical data;
 2. read intelligently
 3. think creatively

- The General Education objectives are currently being implemented through assignments, analyzing data, and exams. In MA 116, a question might be: what can you infer from a graph, in MA 110, it might be what a student can infer from a data set. All faculty use the same text in each class and starting this year, there will be a common final exam for both MA 110 and MA 116, and, of course, common

expectations of knowledge.

- Common problems related to student learning involve the feeling that math abilities of many transfer students are lower, students often surprised that they can't redo homework and can't do extra credit, lack of responsibility among students, and also, there seems to be an expectation that they don't need to remember anything after they've taken a test.
- The fundamental difference between 110 and 116 is that 110 does contain a lot of algebra within it but it is done in the context of application problems including statistics, math of finance, etc.
- MA 103 is very useful for nontraditional students who have been away from math for a long time and it can serve as a confidence booster for all students who think they are weak in math.. Covers the same material as MA 104 but it goes slower.
- In determining how a student gets an A in a course or a C, the decision is made essentially on exam grades and homework. Because so many faculty (both full-time faculty and adjuncts) are involved in teaching these courses, the department has gone to a common exam and students must score at least 60% on that exam to earn a C or better grade in the course. The final exams will be graded through common grading: one person will grade the entire first page of the exam for all students, another person will grade the second page, and so on. Generally, a curve is not used in grading but that may be altered according to the situation. The department does not intend to use a curve on the final exam but that is dependent upon results.
- The Mathematics faculty generally does not give dispositions (extra credit for attendance, participation, being respectful, etc).
- Shaun Schmidt and Jane Carpenter noted that students often have difficulty making an adjustment to a new way of doing some of the calculations. Application of knowledge is always a difficult problem.
- Asked what should we do to improve our students ability in Math, Sarah had no specific recommendation. The Math Dept.

is pondering what to do with MA 103 and MA 104. Some ideas they are considering: make the courses self-paced, and have MA 103 taught by Continuing Education. Another idea is to require a 60% grade on MA 104 final to go on to MA 110/116. Also, some discussion on whether students can bring a crib sheet to exam with formulas on them.

- No changes in course objectives are foreseen in the near future. The department has made some significant changes in MA 110 which has "toughened" it up. One implementation change they are considering to have ALL exams in MA 110 and MA 116 be common exams. The major obstacle to that is finding enough available classrooms to do it.

The committee made some observations of its own. For example, we have an opportunity to create some sort of electronic guidelines where students could log in, find out what they would have to do to get to a certain level. (Sarah Cook pointed out the the Math website has a link to a study guide for the Math Placement exam.) It was also suggested that maybe the Math requirement could also be involved in a Self-Placement program such as the committee discussed in regard to English 101. Jane Carpenter noted that students need to take responsibility and accountability. Bill Roach said that Math and English are tools for acquiring other tools. In a sense, if one performs poorly in Math and English, the student has changed his/her entire life. So students HAVE to get this stuff.

Some ideas the committee has been floating as possible recommendations are: faculty need to give comprehensive exams, eliminate extra credit work. and an attendance policy that would exclude a student from exam (final exam?) if the student exceeds a certain number of absences.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Next Meeting is Monday, November 20, 2006 at 3:30 pm in the Boswell Room of the Memorial Union. Dr. Bill Sparks, or the Coordinator of the PE 198 course, will be invited to attend.