

May 3, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to update you on the activities of the Educational Policy and Planning Committee (EPPC) of Arts and Sciences in the spring semester. The purpose of the EPPC is to coordinate educational policy across the schools that make up Arts and Sciences. I am grateful for the support that students, faculty members and administrators have provided in carrying out the work of the EPPC, and in offering their valuable time in service of our educational programs. I am especially grateful to Rosalind Morris, who served tirelessly as chair of the Task Force on Global Education in the Arts and Sciences, even during her sabbatical this semester, and Dan Rabinowitz, who served as chair of two subcommittees involving course evaluations and labored to navigate the issues involved in bringing us into the new era of making them accessible to students. I am also grateful to Rose Razaghian for serving as the backbone of EPPC, and to Rose and Barry Kane for co-chairing the Working Group on the Implementation of Course Number Guidelines. Finally, I would like to thank David Helfand and Greg Wawro for chairing new EPPC subcommittees, both of which will be continuing next year, Stuart Firestein and Kathy Takayama for leading the HHMI application process, and the entire EPPC membership for their devoted service to making our educational programs in Arts and Sciences as strong as they can possibly be.

Most of the work of the EPPC is carried out in subcommittees that report back to the full EPPC for discussion of their findings, progress and recommendations. We regularly provide updates on the activities of the EPPC for wider discussion in faculty meetings, in meetings with department chairs, institute and center directors, and in meetings of the directors of undergraduate and graduate studies. The updates of the current subcommittees are provided below.

The Task Force on Global Education in the Arts and Sciences (chaired by Rosalind Morris) completed its work this spring. The final report of the task force will be made available to the Arts and Sciences faculty in the near future, and we look forward to receiving your feedback. The report makes recommendations related to the three main areas of educational activity of the Arts and Sciences: undergraduate education, graduate education, and teaching abroad. In brief, the report proposes the following principles to guide activity in pursuit of global education: (1) it should maintain or enhance the academic standards of the University, (2) it should not increase existing inequalities or introduce new ones and (3) the scope and quality of the Morningside campus's curricula and overall mission should be an absolute priority in all decision-making about teaching and programming abroad.

The most significant recommendations for substantial changes can be summarized as follows:

- Establish a joint subcommittee of the PPC and EPPC to generate policy and advise the Executive Committee, and to oversee quality control of the academic and scholarly content of global education, as undertaken abroad. This faculty committee will work with the Office of Global Programs (OGP), and other offices at Columbia, and supervise periodic review of programs abroad. It would also give voice to Arts and Sciences' interests in relation to other 'globally-oriented' pursuits across the university, especially those conducted by the professional schools.
- Establish a 'Graduate Office of Global Scholarship,' analogous to OGP but smaller and attuned to the research needs (rather than study abroad ambitions) of graduate students. In addition, the report recommends that Arts and Sciences enhance funding for doctoral and pre-dissertation research mobility, increase levels of travel support for conferences and professional training purposes to enable support of international travel, extend current funding initiatives to cover non-US citizens who are not eligible for federal travel support for international research, and promote, and where possible, underwrite doctoral student participation in research with Columbia University PIs on projects around the world.
- Make enhanced funding available for undergraduate students, especially during the summer months, to ensure that global education is not limited to those with means. Without additional financial aid resources, teaching the Columbia Core abroad during the summer should not be pursued.
- The report suggests that teaching abroad should be pursued in limited measure, and calculated in terms of the loss of classes at Morningside relative to those gained elsewhere.

- The report endorses the continued investment in language education and translation as crucial components of global education, with enhancements to the Language Resource Center.
- Overall, an integrated communications portal should be developed based on the current Beta.Global.Columbia site. Standardized categories and metrics, and coherent information systems and educational technology should be developed to enable better data tracking and self-study.

The Subcommittee on Innovative Practices in Teaching and Learning (chaired by David Helfand) takes as its remit the critical examination of research in teaching and learning, a survey of current practices in light of the best research, and the formulation of recommendations and preparation of resources for Arts and Sciences faculty who wish to take advantage of them.

The subcommittee has continued its efforts to provide pathways toward simple and non-threatening teaching innovations to Arts and Sciences faculty, and to assist the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in their efforts to encourage faculty members to take advantage of the resources they offer. The Chair met with the Directors of Undergraduate Studies (along with the Director of the CTL) and received positive responses from many present, including offers of individuals to join the subcommittee in its work. The Chair also attended the CTL meeting for departmental faculty liaisons; 8 of the 27 Arts and Sciences Departments were represented by faculty members or lecturers, as were the majority of the Engineering School departments. We encourage all departments to be represented at such CTL meetings.

The subcommittee Chair and CTL Associate Director Suzanna Klaf staged a trial departmental “intervention” with the Department of Political Science by attending a regular faculty meeting. This was quite successful. They demonstrated active learning by having the faculty debate a current issue with their neighbors (an animated discussion that proved difficult to terminate), elicited examples of active learning that faculty were currently utilizing (unbeknownst to their colleagues), responded to questions with specific information, solicited ideas for how CTL could be helpful (and distributed materials), made appointments for individual consultations, and generally had a positive discussion about teaching and learning that extended to an hour from its allotted 20 minutes. The subcommittee intends to incorporate lessons learned and use this as a model to schedule similar interventions in other departments in the fall.

One valuable idea that emerged from this discussion and a subsequent subcommittee meeting was how a short list of active teaching ideas currently distributed by CTL could be expanded and made Columbia-specific in a web format; the subcommittee plans to work on this over the summer.

The subcommittee also addressed the critical need for flexible classroom space designed for those faculty members who wish to adopt active learning practices. EPPC has sent a letter to the EVP of Arts and Sciences that illustrates how far we are behind our peers, and asked the EVP of Arts and Sciences to be mindful of these needs in the short term as well as in the medium-term, as in the pending acquisition of Uris and in other renovations to create classroom space.

The Subcommittee on Class Size and Education (chaired by Greg Wawro) is considering the impact of class size on students' educational experiences, access to classes undergraduates need to complete their programs, assignments of teaching assistants and the impact on time to degree for graduate students, possible lower limits on class sizes, as well as best practices for size of language classes. The mission of the subcommittee is to examine evidence and practices regarding class size and recommend a set of guidelines for Columbia faculty within Arts and Sciences.

The subcommittee has begun preliminary analysis of an incredibly rich data set spanning an eleven year period, from 2004/05 to 2014/15. The data include over 65,000 observations on program declarations by undergraduate students, about 40,000 course-level observations with detailed information about enrollments, and approximately 1.7 million observations on student-level course choices at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. This semester was spent building, cleaning, and working to understand the many nuances of the data. Initial analysis involving visualization of descriptive statistics has provided the necessary groundwork for more detailed analysis. Although the subcommittee has only scratched the surface, they have a baseline understanding of trends in enrollments across class size categories, broken down by divisions and departments. They have begun modeling efforts to better understand variation in class sizes. Work on this

data will continue over the summer, which will put the subcommittee in a position to conduct surveys of students, faculty, and administrators to assess the impact of and responses to changes in class sizes.

The Working Group on the HHMI Initiative to Improve Science Education for Undergraduate Students (co-chaired by Stuart Firestein and Kathy Takayama) submitted a pre-application to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in response to their request for applications to increase inclusive teaching in the sciences. The application explored the General Studies (GS) cohort as one of the core elements of engaging nontraditional students in STEM, collaborating with the administration of GS. The group also focused on the difficulty some students experience in introductory level science courses, particularly in biology and chemistry. The proposal therefore concentrated on potential solutions to this problem, such as special sections for non-traditional students, preparatory coursework and changes to curricula and syllabi. GS students share courses with other Columbia undergraduates, but the percentage that graduate as science majors is half that of traditional students. The proposal aims to provide all GS students with the skills and confidence required to complete training in the sciences. Approaches to be used include intelligent-tutor and blended-learning strategies in preparatory courses, the first year Frontiers of Science course and introductory major courses that develop fundamental mathematical and scientific reasoning skills. Recent findings on affirmation interventions will be used to increase confidence in student success. The proposal also notes that there will be greater use of CTL. The Working Group expects to hear whether Columbia will be invited to submit a full proposal in May; if invited to submit a full proposal, it will be due in July.

The Working Group on Implementation of the Course Evaluation Guidelines (chaired by Dan Rabinowitz) is charged with implementing the EPPC Course Evaluation Guidelines, which were accepted in a straw vote by an overwhelming majority of faculty at the May 2015 faculty meeting. The guidelines include a revised set of evaluation questions and also identify the questions for which students will be able to view responses. As the work progresses, there needs to be consideration of how to best examine bias, as well as to explore various strategies to increase response rates.

The subcommittee has made some progress in enhancing the interfaces with evaluations and with responses. In particular, the subcommittee hopes that starting with the evaluations in the Spring 2016 semester, instructors will receive by email the responses to their course evaluations that will be published.

In response to feedback from students and faculty, the Working Group is considering extending the timeline for completing the evaluations. As it remains important for students to complete the evaluations before receiving final course grades, an extension of the timeline will have implications for students' access to final grades. The Working Group will actively engage with faculty throughout the fall term to explore the merits of such a change.

The Subcommittee Course Evaluation Standards (chaired by Dan Rabinowitz) continues to develop standards for the resolution of redaction requests. At this point, the guidelines accepted by the faculty - that only the most egregious of comments would be redacted - remains unchanged: concerns about publication of potentially misleading and negative comments have been viewed as less pressing than the value of representing students' expression of subjective, especially as it is presumed that readers of evaluations are capable of critically assessing the published comments. Outstanding issues include promoting awareness of the research on bias in course evaluations, bias related to gender, race, and other factors, among faculty and administrators tasked with hiring and promotion decisions.

The Working Group on Implementation of the Course Number Guidelines (co-chaired by Rose Razaghian and Barry Kane). The implementation of the new course prefixes and changes to course numbers is now well underway and an updated guide to course prefixes and numbers can be accessed [here](#). Many departments made adjustments to their four digit course numbers to reflect the new designations at the thousands level or to align course numbers within and across subfields. These changes are now implemented for all courses where the renumbering was submitted to the Registrar's Office by the appropriate departments. The switch over to the two character prefix will occur in early July for fall 2016 courses at which point the Directory of Classes and SSOL, among other sites, will show Arts and Sciences

courses with a two character prefix, including courses offered by the School of the Arts and the School of Professional Studies. Various communications to faculty, students, and staff have gone out with subsequent messaging at key points of the transition, including in June, July, and September.

Proposal on Thanksgiving Week. EPPC discussed a proposal from Jim Applegate on the Senate Education Committee that the Wednesday before Thanksgiving become an academic holiday. This change would make the number of Tuesday/Thursday and Monday/Wednesday class meeting times equal in the fall, as currently there is one additional Wednesday in the fall academic calendar. The change would also provide students the opportunity to travel home in time for a relaxing Thanksgiving break. No regulatory issues have been identified with this change by the Provost's office. EPPC has discussed this proposal and asked the Senate to seek further guidance and feedback from other faculty groups including department chairs, DUSs, and DGSs, among others. If any faculty members would like to comment on this proposed change, please direct your comments to the EPPC or to Jim Applegate (jha@astro.columbia.edu).

I wish you a successful end of semester and a productive summer.

Sincerely,
Brent R. Stockwell

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