

From Susan Pedersen:

30 June 2015

Dear colleague,

I write to report on the work of the Educational Policy and Planning Committee (EPPC) for the year 2014-15. To remind you, the EPPC was formed in 2012 to “coordinate the work of the major curriculum committees of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences”. It is “advisory to the Executive Committee (EC) and also collaborates closely with the Policy and Planning Committee (PPC)”. It is composed of key administrators and deans, chairs of curricular committees, a number of faculty members appointed by PPC and by the Executive Vice President, and students.

Over the past three years, the EPPC has sought to create a structure that will allow the Arts and Sciences to make policy on curricular matters – especially those matters that cross the borders of individual schools – in a deliberate and collaborative way. To that end, the committee has sought to gather data on key issues, to listen to relevant constituencies on all matters, and to develop proposals through regular consultation with faculty, administrators and students. Much of the committee’s work is done by subcommittees with specific charges. Here follows a brief summary of those subcommittees’ work this past academic year.

The **subcommittee on Learning Outcomes**, chaired by Professor Brent Stockwell, worked with the Provost’s office, the departments, the ARC committee and the administration to provide all of the information needed for the reaccreditation process. That work is now complete. Going forward, departments will be incorporating learning outcomes information at the program level as part of their ARC review. The committee discussed the idea of providing learning objectives at the course level; at its final meeting this year, the EPPC endorsed asking faculty to consider this step. The EPPC will continue discussion of how to promote and evaluate student learning.

The **subcommittee on Instructional Technology and Course Evaluations**, chaired by Professor Adam Kosto, took up the issue of open course evaluations, carrying on work done by undergraduates, the Senate, and the Committee on Science Instruction. The committee met with TRAC, department chairs, ADAs, language instructors, and other groups, to devise a proposal that includes a small set of common questions, some of which would be open to students, with faculty and departments able to add further questions for specific purposes. The committee was able to take advantage of the experiences of our peer institution. It also wished to meet faculty concerns about the possible impact of evaluations on novice teachers (especially junior faculty) and about bias. The proposal thus provides that faculty may close evaluations to students for two years and incorporates a plan to work with the Sociology Department to analyze the process for bias and to propose means of addressing it. The final proposal, which will be implemented as a three-year pilot, was approved unanimously by the chairs and passed by an overwhelming majority at the May faculty meeting. A transition team, chaired by Professor Dan Rabinowitz, has been appointed to oversee implementation.

The **subcommittee on Curricular Structure**, which I chaired, continued with an ongoing investigation aimed at understanding and standardizing point values for courses across the Arts and Sciences. Data collection and analysis undertaken in 2013-14 revealed that some graduate courses were undervalued (a problem since resolved by point value changes approved by the GSAS Executive Committee) and that some proportion of our undergraduate courses were also undervalued vis-à-vis our peers and state requirements. At the end of 2013-14, the EPPC asked departments to review point values for its courses and recommended that lecture courses with mandatory discussion sections, which have

four contact hours, normally carry four points. As a result of that review, the five social science departments put forward proposals to raise particular classes of courses to four points, based usually on contact hours and occasionally on workload. The College and General Studies Committee on Instruction (COI) states that it is now working with the Provost's office to lay out a process for departments to submit any such proposals for changes in point values for approval.

A **working group on Course Numbering** was also constituted under the aegis of the curricular structure subcommittee to propose a means of systematizing course numbers across the Arts and Sciences. A proposal was brought to EPPC, to faculty meeting, and to other curricular committees; Arts and Science administrators are working with departments over the summer to make sure that the proposal meets departmental needs. That work will continue through the fall, with the aim of introducing the new course numbering system in 2016-17.

The **subcommittee on Global Education**, which doubles as the **Advisory Committee to the Office of Global Programs**, chaired by Professor Holger Klein, took up the important issue of language and regional requirements for College and General Studies students studying abroad. Working with Dean Michael Pippenger, the committee devised new language aimed at balancing our commitment to deep cultural knowledge with our desire to expand opportunities for students abroad. The new language was reviewed by EPPC and accepted by the College and General Studies COI. The subcommittee also worked with OGP to bring together faculty developing courses and programs under the aegis of the Mellon grant to share information and experiences, and reviewed Study Abroad data for summer and semester/year-long courses and programs in an effort to establish common criteria for a future evaluation of OGP programs.

Finally, at the request of the Executive Committee, the EPPC constituted a **Task Force on Global Education in Arts and Sciences**, chaired by Professor Rosalind Morris, to study our current commitments and programs abroad, both undergraduate and graduate, and to advise on how we should proceed in the future. The Task Force was asked to take into account that we cannot do everything, and to weigh trade-offs (in terms of intellectual values, staffing, and finances) in making recommendations about priorities and practices. The Task Force has begun its work and plans to gather information from students, faculty and departments through the fall, with the aim of reporting in December.

I am stepping down as Chair of EPPC after three years; Professor Brent Stockwell replaces me. It has been a privilege to guide the committee through the early days of this experiment in faculty governance. In retrospect, I feel there are some lessons to be learned. It seems clear that EPPC has been most effective when it has had a clear charge from the Executive Committee or a Dean (as with the review of Frontiers of Science or the current Task Force on Global Education) and when agreements about implementation are worked out in advance. EPPC has also been able to resolve fairly painstaking and technical issues that exist across or in the interstices of individual schools (such as course numbering or course evaluations) and has been effective at gathering and analyzing complex data (as with point values) so as to allow for better-informed consideration of educational policy within faculty committees and at general faculty meetings. The committee has sought to model appropriate processes by consulting widely on all questions and by reporting regularly to faculty about its work. It has not, however, really become the vehicle for curricular policy-making and coordination across the Arts and Sciences as a whole. This is, I think, an inevitable consequence of the devolved governance structure of the Arts and Sciences and the awkwardness of attempting to work through complex issues in a committee chaired by a faculty member. Nonetheless, it has been able to do useful work.

I would like to close by thanking the devoted members of EPPC, Rose Razaghian (who provided administrative support), and the many faculty members, administrators and students who unstintingly gave their time to this work.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Pedersen

Professor of History and James P. Shenton Professor of
the Core Curriculum; Outgoing Chair, EPPC