

September 29, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to update you on the plans for the Educational Policy and Planning Committee (EPPC) of Arts and Sciences for the current academic year. The purpose of the EPPC is to coordinate educational policy across the schools that make up Arts and Sciences. As the new chair of EPPC, I am grateful for the tremendous support so many faculty members and administrators have provided in carrying out the thoughtful work of the EPPC, and in offering their valuable time in service of our educational programs. I also very much appreciate the strong foundation that Susan Pedersen, the founding chair, created for the EPPC during the first three years of its existence.

Much 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 share the work of the EPPC for wider discussion with faculty in faculty meetings, as well as with department chairs, institute and center directors, and directors of undergraduate and graduate studies in parallel with administrators. The plans and progress of our current subcommittees are summarized below.

Three subcommittees are completing work that was initiated last year:

The Task Force on Global Education in Arts and Sciences (chaired by Rosalind Morris) is continuing its work this fall. Over the summer and during the first weeks of the semester, the task force distributed four surveys to several constituencies—(1) departments, as well as institutes and centers that have large curricular programs, (2) instructors who have taught abroad during the last three years, (3) PhD students, and (4) students in stand-alone MA programs. In addition to these surveys, subcommittee members had extended discussions with the EVP of Arts and Sciences, the Deans of the College and General Studies, the Dean and Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the divisional Deans, the leadership of the School of Continuing Education, and the Office of Global Programs (OGP). Further meetings with groups of departmental representatives and students are being held by the Task Force throughout September and October. This semester will be devoted to the analysis of data provided by the OGP, as well as the survey data, and the informal responses received from faculty and students. The Task Force will be assisted in this process by the Office of Planning and Analysis. The Task Force will also be undertaking a review of the data available from our peer institutions and some of those that are aggregated by the Institute of International Education for national-level comparisons. The Task Force will commence writing its report when this process is complete. The Task Force plans for a final draft, including recommendations, to be with the EPPC in late December or early January, although some flexibility may be needed with the schedule.

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. The Working Group is working closely with CUIT to ensure that departments can add department-specific questions to their course evaluations, while instructors will continue to be able to add questions for their individual classes. As the work progresses, we need to consider how to best examine bias, as well as to explore various strategies to increase response rates. The original proposal can be found [here](#).

The Working Group on Implementation of the Course Number Guidelines (co-chaired by Barry Kane and Rose Razaghian) is implementing the EPPC guidelines, developed last year, for rationalizing course prefixes and numbers in the Arts and Sciences. The goal is to simplify course

identification and provide accurate and accessible information about the level of instruction and student population for every course. The Working Group has begun working with Arts and Sciences departments, institutes, centers, and programs over the summer to plan for this transition. We anticipate that the transition to new course prefixes and numbers will be completed by the fall 2016 semester. The proposal can be accessed [here](#).

We have also established three new subcommittees:

The Subcommittee on Best Practices in Teaching and Pedagogy (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. Kathy Takayama, the Executive Director of the new Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning has agreed to serve on the Committee. The Committee plans to consider a number of critical issues, including grading policy and its effect on student learning, criteria for the appointment of instructors, and novel pedagogical approaches such as blended classrooms and student-centered, project-based methods that have been shown to stimulate deep and long-lasting learning. The subcommittee will examine evidence on teaching methods and recommend a set of best practices for Columbia faculty within the Arts and Sciences, and also consider how Arts and Sciences faculty and students can benefit from the new Center for Teaching and Learning. This subcommittee is recruiting its remaining members and will begin meeting this fall.

The EPPC Subcommittee on Class Size and Education (chaired by Greg Wawro) plans to consider 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 class 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 the Arts and Sciences. The subcommittee will be recruiting its members and begin meeting this fall.

The Working Group on the HHMI Initiative to Improve Science Education for Undergraduate Students (co-chaired by Stuart Firestein and Kathy Takayama) is preparing a grant application to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in response to their [request for applications](#) to increase inclusive teaching in the sciences. The Working Group is exploring the General Studies (GS) cohorts as one of the core elements of engaging nontraditional students in STEM, collaborating with the administration of GS. The group also plans to focus on the difficulty some students may experience in introductory level science courses, particularly in biology and chemistry. The proposal may therefore concentrate on potential solutions to this problem, such as special sections for non-traditional students, preparatory coursework and even changes to curricula and syllabi.

The current membership of the subcommittees and working groups can be found below. Please be in touch with any of the chairs or members with comments, concerns or suggestions. You can also contact me directly with any feedback or suggestions for the work of EPPC.

Best wishes,
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Chair, EPPC

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