

Dear colleague,

I write to follow up on matters raised at the April faculty meeting and to report on the work of the Educational Policy and Planning Committee (EPPC) during its second year. The committee's purpose is to coordinate the work of the curriculum committees across the Arts and Sciences schools and to advise the PPC, the EVP, the Executive Committee and curricular committees of the schools on matters of educational policy and planning. A list of members is appended.

Course point values and student programs

The EPPC's main project this year was to examine our curricular structure, with particular attention to course point-values. We wished to address internal inconsistencies in our system and to ensure that our course point values are appropriately reflective of our expectations of student work and provide an appropriate framework for student programs. Following discussions over the summer of 2013 with department chairs, an EPPC Working Group on Points was established in the fall and undertook a major exercise in data collection. This exercise established that a five-course load is the most common load for an undergraduate student, and that the proportion of students taking heavier loads, 'bundling' electives into second programs, and undertaking multiple programs continues to rise. It also showed that the three-point course remains the most common type of course, with two-thirds of undergraduate enrollments in such courses at any time, and that – as a consequence – most students must take five courses for around five of eight semesters in their undergraduate career. Finally, it showed that the distinction between three-point and four-point courses was not robust. One type of course in particular – the lecture course with a regular discussion section – was considered to be heavier in time and work than was appropriate for a three-point course. The committee did not undertake a separate study of master's students in particular, but noted that, with courses valued at three points, a student taking a one-year 30 point program would need to take five courses per term, a heavier load than might be feasible. This data was presented at a Faculty Meeting in November 2013.

On the basis of this exercise, the EPPC wrote to departments in late fall asking for their views on two possible reforms: (1) raising point values for lecture courses with mandatory discussion sections from three points to four; and (2) raising point values for graduate courses to four when pedagogical best practice would justify such a move. At the same time, it developed guidelines to help departments assign point values in the future (these guidelines are appended), and surveyed undergraduates to seek to understand how CC and GS students make decisions about courses and programs, as well as how they manage stress. Possibly the single most interesting finding to emerge from that survey was that, while about half of our students felt that the course load (a norm of five courses per term) was appropriate, nearly half felt it was too heavy: only a tiny number felt students should be taking more courses at Columbia. The results of that survey were presented at the faculty meeting in April; a brief summary is also appended.

On the basis of this work, and the largely positive response from departments, the EPPC has recommended raising point values for lecture courses with discussion sections as a central part of the course to four points. A joint committee of administrators from EPPC and the COI has been formed to assist departments in making this change over the next year. That group will be in touch with departments individually as we proceed. There was no broad consensus about changes in point values for graduate courses; we will continue to follow that issue and to work (in conjunction with the graduate school) with individual departments to make changes where these seem well-grounded.

Other work:

a) *Middle States Re-Accreditation*

The EPPC has been asked to take responsibility for preparing the Arts and Sciences' materials for its reaccreditation by Middle States in 2015-16. To that end, a Subcommittee on Learning Outcomes, has been established under the chairmanship of Prof. Robert Friedman to help departments prepare materials related to assessment and learning. The EPPC is committed to making sure that this process does not impose excessive burdens on faculty and departments.

b) *Global Education*

The EPPC's Subcommittee on Global Education, which also serves as an Advisory Committee to the Office of Global Programs, has been ably chaired by Prof. Holger Klein this year. The Mellon Initiative and the Presidents Global Innovation Fund have together resulted in the development of several new study abroad programs, and the subcommittee, together with the OGP, have been discussing various issues that have arisen as a result of this expansion. These new global programs and the policies of Arts and Sciences in relation to global education will be discussed at the fall EPPC faculty meeting on Monday, November 10, 12-2pm. We hope you will join us.

c) *Online Learning*

EVP David Madigan has chaired the Provostial Committee on Online Learning, a subject of interest to Arts and Sciences and the EPPC. The Committee is just about to issue a report, one key recommendation of which will be the establishment of a teaching and learning center under the auspices of the Provost. The EPPC will maintain a watching brief over developments in this area.

d) *Instructional Technologies and Course Evaluations*

The EPPC has established a new subcommittee, chaired by Prof. Adam Kosto, which will work with CUIT to provide faculty guidance over all issues related to instructional technology, including Courseworks. So that the committee can begin to work on this subject next year, we invite you to send comments about your experiences with Courseworks, and suggestions on how this tool might be improved, to Rose Razaghian, rr222@columbia.edu. In the coming year, the committee will also work to examine how materials gathered through course evaluations might be appropriately made available to students. Committee membership will be posted on the EPPC website (link below) shortly.

e) *Science in the Core*

At the request of Dean Valentini, the EPPC conducted a review of the first-year science course, Frontiers of Science, in 2012-13. The recommendations from that review were turned over to a committee on Science in the Core appointed by Dean Valentini and chaired by Professors Philip Kitcher and Peter DeMenocal. That Committee has met throughout the year and is beginning a series of discussions with relevant faculty bodies (the EPPC review committee, COSI, the Executive Committee and fellows of Frontiers). The committee hopes to discuss its work with the faculty at a faculty meeting next year.

f) *Classrooms*

Early in the fall the Classroom Committee, chaired by Jean Howard, will be bringing forward to the faculty a short list of recommendations aimed at alleviating the increasing crisis surrounding our shortage of classrooms and difficulties in scheduling our limited classroom stock fairly and

efficiently. Please read the Classroom Report carefully when it is delivered as it requires some important changes in the schedule of classes and in the process of assigning rooms.

Five faculty representatives on EPPC will cycle off the committee at the end of this year: Bachir Diagne, Robert Friedman, Cathy Popkin, Jack Snyder, and Jacqueline van Gorkom. I am intensely grateful for the dedicated work of these colleagues over the past two years.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Pedersen
Professor of History and James P. Shenton
Professor of the Core Curriculum
Chair, EPPC

Educational Policy and Planning Committee, 2013-14

Susan Pedersen, Professor of History, Chair

Members, in alphabetical order:

Carlos Alonso, Vice President for Graduate Education, Dean GSAS, Professor of Latin American and Iberian Cultures

Peter Awn, Dean General Studies, Professor of Religion

Kristine Billmyer, Dean School of Continuing Education

Adam Cannon, Senior Lecturer in Discipline, Computer Science, SEAS

Richard Clarida, Professor of Economics and International and Public Affairs

Marina Cords, COSI Chair, Professor of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology

Bachir Diagne, Professor of French and Romance Philology

Robert Friedman, Professor of Mathematics

Patricia Grieve, Chair Committee on Global Core, Professor of Latin American and Iberian Cultures

Ido Haimi, Student, General Studies

Matthew Jones, Chair Committee on the Core, Professor of History

David Madigan, Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences, Dean of the Faculty, Professor of Statistics

Margaret Mattes, Student, Columbia College

Cathy Popkin, Professor of Slavic Languages

Lucy Sheehan, Student, GSAS

Jack Snyder, Chair of PPC, Professor of Political Science

James Valentini, Vice President for Undergraduate Education, Dean Columbia College, Professor of Chemistry

Jacqueline Van Gorkom, Professor of Astronomy

For membership of the subcommittees and working groups,
see <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/vpas/about/PPCEPPC.html>