Committee On Teaching
Approved Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2014

In attendance: Terence Ow, Shaun Longstreet, Maura Moyle, John Moyer, Jake Carpenter, James Pokrywcynski, John LaDisa, Evelyn Donate-Bartfield, Gary Meyer, Timothy McAuliff, Kathleen Hazlett

Meeting began at 3:30pm.


2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes were approved unanimously after corrections were made as follows: Point 7 - “D2L will no longer be archived” changed to “The librarians request to archive material on D2L is no longer being considered;” Point 6 - “them committee” changed to “the committee.”

Discussion Regarding Announcements and Information:

3. Gary provided copies of the book on high impact practices that was distributed several years ago to COT members who had not previously received a copy.

4. Terence introduced Timothy McAuliff, the new MUSG student representative, to the committee.

5. Reminder of upcoming deadlines:

   a. Timeline for the Way Klinger Teaching Enhancement Award was reviewed. Gary will send all packets to committee members in zipped files with instructions regarding the review process and how to provide comments. Reviews will be due around Jan. 7th and discussed as needed during the Jan. 14th committee meeting.

   b. Timeline for the Teaching Excellence Award was reviewed. Gary reported that 75 individuals have recommended one or more colleagues so far. This number is somewhat fewer than in the past. Committee members were encouraged to remind colleagues within their respective colleges about this award. The committee will review dossiers during the month of February.

   c. Update provided regarding the workshop schedule for the Way-Klinger Teaching Enhancement Report. Shaun Longstreet is meeting with Dr. Amy Van Hecke (last year’s award recipient) tomorrow to work on planning this workshop.

Continuing Business:

6. Graduation Requirement – 128 credits to 120 credits: Gary presented information regarding the recent change in the required number of credits for graduation. Last year, the Board of Undergraduate Studies proposed to the Academic Senate that the floor for graduation requirements be set at 120 credits. Previously, there had not been a university-wide credit minimum and this minimum requirement had been set independently by each college. Most colleges utilized a credit minimum around 128, though there was variability across colleges (lowest was 126). It was decided that a consistent university-wide minimum requirement should be set. Based on research regarding credit minimums at other Jesuit universities, a motion was
put forward and approved to set the Marquette University minimum credit requirement for graduation at 120 credits. However, colleges still have the flexibility to set their own requirements above the 120-credit floor if they so choose. Gary sought the committee’s feedback regarding the implementation of this new policy.

Specifically, the committee was asked to share their opinions regarding whether or not students who are already in the course of their curriculum should be allowed to choose which bulletin year they would like to use as the basis of their graduation requirements (e.g., should current freshman be allowed to switch from the bulletin year that was in place when they started at Marquette to the new bulletin year requirements when they are implemented for the 2015-2016 academic year?). Multiple colleges (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences, College of Communications, potentially College of Nursing) have decided to switch from their current credit minimums to a 120-credit minimum when this university-wide policy is implemented. The current proposal is that all students, regardless of when they began attending Marquette, will have the opportunity to adopt the new bulletin year requirements if they would like to. This option would be available for a limited amount of time (~1 year) and students who opted to switch would be required to accept ALL changes associated with the new bulletin, not just the change regarding credits (i.e., if class requirements changed, they must to conform to these changes as well). There is precedent for allowing students to switch bulletin years based on previous instances in which there have been changes in course requirements within a major.

The committee’s discussion raised the following points:

a. What are the financial implications of cutting the minimum number of credits? Gary indicated that this question has been posed in past meetings as well and concerns were minimal. It was also highlighted that this change may bring in more transfer students, which would be beneficial.

b. Many high school students are coming into college with numerous AP credits. Would decreasing the number of required credits to 120 lead students to graduate more quickly? Discussed that only 60% of Marquette students currently graduate in 4 years. If this policy were to reduce time to graduation, it would likely be a reduction to an average of 4-4.5 years, which would be beneficial overall.

c. Discussed the fact that students from many colleges that do not change their college-specific requirements would be unaffected by this change. Thus, the option of switching to the requirements of the new bulletin year would likely be limited to only the students who would be directly impacted by the change (i.e., students within the colleges that change their college-specific requirements).

d. Concerns were raised about whether there would be a reduction in courses provided on campus. This may also impact students in other colleges where credit changes were not made if the availability of core courses changes. It is yet unknown how the availability of courses may change if students opt not to take certain courses that no longer required. Additionally, the need for individual colleges to potentially add courses in order for students to meet particular certification requirements if these courses are cut was raised.
e. The use of waivers, as opposed to officially switching bulletin years, was proposed as an alternative option. Concern was raised regarding the extremely large number of waivers that would need to be processed and the accuracy of the academic advisement tool if the waiver approach were to be used.

f. The committee discussed how students would be able to compare their two options in order to make a decision about whether or not to switch bulletin years. Gary stated that he is currently working with the registrar to determine a way for students to see what the exact requirements would be based on each option.

g. A question was raised as to whether the university’s accreditation body typically makes recommendations about issues such as this. It was stated that the HLC does not make such recommendations.

7. Final Exams Update: We do not yet have data regarding which colleges, departments, etc. are affected by this issue. This topic will be further explored in future meetings.

8. Peer Evaluation on Teaching Progress: Reviewed the “Guidelines for Formative Reviews of Teaching - PART I: Background and Rationale” (prepared by John, Jake, and Kristin). Feedback/discussion from the committee included:

a. The “Purpose” section should be at the beginning rather than the end.

b. The font size is inconsistent throughout the document. Confirmed that this was unintentional and should be fixed.

c. Concerns were raised about potential focus on university enforcement of the peer evaluation process. In the spirit of formative development, it was suggested that the document focus on aligning with best practices, taking pride in one’s work, etc. Additionally, it was suggested that it would be beneficial to emphasize the importance of multiple points of contact for evaluation of teaching and that evidence of teaching practices (i.e., that documented through this type of formative peer evaluation) is necessary for recognition of good teaching.

d. Discussed how best to motivate departments, deans, and chairs to adopt this process.

e. Clarified confusion about whether a peer evaluation process was mandated following the HCL visit. A separate annual performance evaluation has been implemented, but it does not include a teaching evaluation and this specific peer evaluation process was not mandated.

f. Suggested change in terminology in the 3rd paragraph: change “salary increases” to “merit recognition.”

g. Discussed the degree to which the committee should be involved in decisions regarding how these evaluations are used. Should we stipulate what they can and cannot be used for/included in? Should the evaluation go in a permanent file? Concern was expressed
regarding the first paragraph on pg. 2 and the degree to which it implies that the committee will control the use of these evaluations after they take place. It was suggested that the document state that the faculty member who was evaluated should have ownership over the evaluation information and make the decisions regarding what it is used for.

h. Discussed the need for offering resources to those who receive poor evaluations. Would be beneficial to make a specific statement regarding support from the university and the goal of helping faculty who need assistance with identifying resources.

i. This document will be edited based on today’s feedback and discussion. A revised version will be reviewed at an upcoming meeting. The “Process” section of the guidelines will be completed and reviewed next.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Kathleen Hazlett.