

To: Executive Committee, Arts and Sciences Senate

From: Robert Cerrato, Chair, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

Re: 2000-2001 Annual Report

Date: September 17 2001

The curriculum committee met 20 times during the 2000-2001 academic year. Committee members were: Robert Cerrato (marine sciences and chair of the committee), Ruth Cowan (history), Stephen Cole (sociology), Andreas Mayr (chemistry), Judith Lochhead (music), Sarah Sternglanz (women's studies), Arlene Feldman (Transfer Office), Elaine Kaplan (College of Arts and Sciences, ex officio member), and Kathleen Breidenbach (College of Arts and Sciences, ex officio secretary).

Routine matters are handled by the secretary and announced to the committee at each meeting. There were a number of routine matters chiefly involving changes of course titles, descriptions, or prerequisites to bring them in line with current teaching and requirements.

Significant Curricular Initiatives

English major

The committee approved several changes to the basic curriculum resulting from the creation of additional topics courses to allow greater flexibility in scheduling and to accommodate developments in the field of cultural studies.

Economics

The committee regretfully approved the suspension of ECO 107 and ECO 109 and the re-introduction of ECO 101 (now numbered ECO 108) Introduction to Economic Analysis to meet extraordinary unmet demand in the introductory economics courses and to relieve the bottleneck for upper-division economics courses. The committee hopes that the department will have the resources in the near future to be able to return to teaching the two introductory courses.

Theatre Arts

The committee approved a number of new courses and significant changes to the theatre arts curriculum to change the major from a program in which students graduate with a particular specialty to a program producing generalists, graduates who will be equipped for various opportunities in theatre. In addition, the new curriculum addresses the emergence of electronic media and the expectation that practitioners will be involved in all aspects of production.

New Federated Learning Communities (FLC) Minor in Global Studies for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003

The committee approved an FLC minor in Global Studies which was modeled on the very successful Issues in Health and Society offered over the previous two years. The director of the program conducts the program seminars but does not play the intensive role that previous Master Learners have played. In addition, several more courses are federated than was the case previously and students have greater variety of choice in courses toward the minor. In this particular case, the growing strength among the faculty in global studies allows—and in fact encourages—this increased flexibility. Because of the difficulty some students have in completing the intensive FLC minor in one year, the new director, Hermann Kurthen, had requested that students be allowed two years to complete the minor.

Issues in Health and Society FLC

The committee approved a request by the director of the current FLC minor in Issues in Health and Society to allow students an additional year to complete the requirements for the minor. This was seen as consistent with the approach taken in the new FLC approved for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003.

Jazz Studies Minor

Because of a new instructor in jazz and the growing popularity of jazz courses, the music department proposed and the committee approved a new minor in jazz studies.

TESOL Education Courses

The committee approved a number of changes and additions to the TESOL curriculum that were proposed to address changes in theory and practice of education.

Latin American and Caribbean Studies Minor

The new director of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies minor proposed several revisions to the minor that would encourage more independent work and mandate an internship for students completing the minor. The committee approved the requests.

Statement of Inter-Unit Cooperation

The committee was asked by the dean of Arts and Sciences to comment on a proposal from the Undergraduate Council and CAPRA regarding establishment of processes for ensuring communication between units (colleges or schools) proposing curriculum that might impact another unit and the affected unit. The impetus for the proposal was primarily in the case of units that might require students to take coursework offered by another unit. In the event a new program attracted a number of new students to the university, the requirement could significantly impact the other unit. There was also some concern simply to encourage communication among units that too often view themselves as operating independently of each other. The committee, which had drafted with the CEAS curriculum and teaching policy committee, a proposal for inter-college cooperation the year before, saw no harm in extending this cooperation beyond the two west campus colleges.

POL 220 State and Local Government— online course

The committee approved the one-time offering of a new course proposed to be offered online through the SUNY Learning Network. Committee members, who had spent quite a lot of time considering issues of distance learning, were less troubled by the proposal to offer an online course than that the proposed course would be taught by an adjunct. Members believed that if the course were important to the curriculum, the department should be prepared to teach the course. In addition, there was some

concern that this course was identical to one taught by the same instructor through Suffolk Community College and also offered online under SCC's auspices. The committee requested a report from the instructor following the offering of the course on student performance and also asked for the instructor's observations.

General Education

The committee drafted a letter protesting the proposal from SUNY central that the Provost's Advisory Group on General Education review all new courses proposed for inclusion in a campus's general education program. The objections included the significant time delay that would result from such an approval process; that this was the purview of local curriculum committees; that it was an inappropriate intrusion into local authority to design courses and determine what courses were appropriate to which general education categories, especially since Stony Brook's own general education curriculum is considered by all who have examined it to be more demanding than the SUNY general education requirements. The letter was never submitted to the Senate because a University Senate letter of protest superceded it.

Committee Initiatives

Online Instruction

Concluding a two-year project which included significant consultation with people on campus who have the greatest experience with online instruction, the committee developed a set of guidelines for online courses. In order to make informed recommendations, the committee, during the previous year, had met with Doc Watson, School of Nursing; David Pomeranz, associate provost and chair of Provost's Task Force on Distance Learning; Patricia Baker, School for Professional Development, director of Distance Education program; Joseph Brannin, dean of the libraries; Nancy Duffrin, director of instructional computing; and David Ferguson, CELT.

During the course of their investigations, they learned that there are several types of distance learning:

- asynchronous seminar type—small courses with lots of written interaction between students and instructor.
- asynchronous "large lecture" where great numbers of students enroll with little or no instructor contact. "Lectures" are essentially "canned" and students learn on their own through reading the material.

- synchronous instruction—conducted either via the Web or video, which largely replicates in-person instruction and could be either “large lecture” with little or no interaction or small seminar with considerable amount of interaction.
- combinations of these and combinations with live instruction.

As a result, committee members elected to restrict themselves to those courses whose sole mode of instruction is via the Web; they did not address courses using the Web as a supplement to in-person instruction, nor did they address what they defined as computer-assisted instruction, in which computer programs are designed to help students learn. The guidelines were submitted to and approved by the Arts and Sciences Senate. They have since been slightly revised to incorporate some suggestions from the CEAS CTPC. Members believe there should always be an interactive and active component—that learning should never be entirely passive. This belief is reflected in the guidelines developed.

In addition the committee made note of two issues that were not strictly curricular and therefore beyond the committee’s purview:

- Distance learning does not save an institution money. In fact, distance learning requires an investment of funds to develop the infrastructure and to provide faculty with the support needed to make the transition to new modes of instruction. Money might be generated if the distance courses or programs attract students who would not otherwise attend Stony Brook.
- Instructors need development incentives and technical support to be able to develop courses for delivery in the new environment.

Experimental (Temporary) Course Proposals

The committee was happy to act upon a request from members of the Council of Distinguished Teaching Professors to create a streamlined approval process in order to encourage experimentation in curriculum development. These members felt that a protracted approval process often discouraged faculty from trying new things. While curriculum committee members noted that the committee is now extremely efficient and supportive of innovation, they agreed that a streamlined process for experimentation would be beneficial. Courses will be approved for a specific period of time; if the course proves successful, the instructor will re-submit the proposal through the regular process.