Committee on Instruction and Curriculum

Minutes of Meeting of Monday, October 15, 2007

Members Present: Tom Cadwallader, Hongwei Du, Jennifer Eagan, Linda Ivey, Jim Mitchell, Fung-Shine Pan, Jeff Seitz, Mitch Watnik, Sally Murphy served as substitute for Carl Bellone

Members Absent: Carl Bellone (Sally Murphy served as substitute), Tom Bickley, Denise Delumen-Wong, Student Representatives (to be appointed)

Guests: Nan Chico, Rosanne Harris, Jean Wells

The meeting was called to order at 2:45 by Jennifer Eagan.

1. Approval of the agenda. MSP Seitz/Du, unanimous.
2. Approval of the Minutes. MSP Mitchell/Seitz. Some changes were recommended by committee members, unanimous.
4. GE Subcommittees. Sally Murphy read the names of the various subcommittees. The GE subcommittee needs members from CLASS and administration (the new institutional research person needs to appoint someone). The GE Subcommittee will not meet its next scheduled time due to the number of missing members. Critical thinking and Cultural groups also need some members to be elected or appointed. Linda Ivey agreed to be Technology and Instruction Subcommittee member, as was suggested at the last meeting. Jennifer Eagan indicated that she would let college representatives know if their college needs appointees to the subcommittees.
5. Review of ES 3120 The Civil Rights Movement. (Skipped initially due to presence of guests.) Linda Ivey noted that the syllabus included in the application gave a different title than the GE application. The course title was “The Civil Rights Movement” and so the application was incorrect. MSP Cadwallander / Eagan / unanimous.
6. Accessible Course Materials Policy. Jennifer Eagan noted that the Academic Senate had already passed the policy last year, as much of it is mandatory. Nan Chico distributed a draft material and discussed parts of it. Due to the WASC visit, the Chancellor’s Office has agreed to a postponement until Dec. 15 for the final approval of the policy. Issues such as web page readability and having all videos closed captioned. Also, getting syllabi onto Blackboard in advance would be helpful. Nan Chico also noted the Online and Hybrid Support Center part of Faculty Support Services. With respect to textbooks, the making of accessibility to students may be done in pieces. So, allowing a map of topics in order to be covered makes the task easier. There also is a template for syllabi coming from CEAS. The library is helping with the accommodations, particularly with respect
to the closed captioning for videos. MATS has pages on Blackboard to refer for specific resources and hints on accessibility on campus (see below). Jennifer Eagan noted that captioned videos for institutional use are expensive and hard to get (especially quickly) for the library. MATS uses a contractor to do the captioning at $211/hour of video. Providing extra materials, such as PowerPoint slides to disabled students in lieu of captioning Quicktime videos is not necessarily a way to satisfy this policy, in part because it forces students to self-identify. Jeff Seitz noted that part of the accessibility issues may be that faculty members won’t give extra-classroom materials because those materials might not fall under the category of “accessible”. Linda Ivey noted that the SDRC might request the materials on behalf of the student so there is no need to self-identify. Jeanne likened this to “curb-cuts” for those in wheelchairs. We don’t have to wait for the problem to come up before making the accommodation. Jeff Seitz and Linda Ivey noted that there are situations wherein the accommodation in advance is difficult, if not impossible, and might come at the cost of instructional capacity currently. Nan Chico noted that vendors are beginning to realize that the accommodations will be needed and taking care of some of the issues in advance, especially since other states are looking towards California to lead the way. The campus is looking to find who has come up with the best solutions. HTML is the most accessible format, especially with the <ALT=> tags that help text readers. Jeff Seitz noted that the transcripts in videos are prohibitively time consuming, especially in the context of online instruction and this is inhibiting the development of online curriculum. Jeanne noted that there are companies with automatic transcription software. Linda Ivey noted that some departments are proceeding with online development, probably unaware of the accessibility needs. Jennifer Eagan noted that a policy should require a “good faith effort” towards accessibility. Agreeing with the previous discussion, faculty should not be required to be experts in numerous software programs or have to transcribe their own materials for everything. Jeanne noted that faculty could be trained to purchase materials that are already accessible. There is an “organization” (IMAT-instructional materials accessibility toolkit) under Blackboard that instructors can select to see the issues and available resources. Jennifer Eagan noted that faculty may be automatically enrolled into this organization, if the CIC decides in its action to recommend this. Timelines for action are at www.calstate.edu/accessibility. Jennifer Eagan noted that the ultimate policy should note that it does not impinge upon academic freedom or faculty’s choice of pedagogical methods, as this might force faculty to go back to chalk and blackboard exclusively. Currently SDRC does not have complete access to Blackboard to see syllabi for courses with student with disabilities, but that is likely to change. Some terminology was discussed “universal design” (the course is set up so that everybody is accommodated equally, without need for SDRC or others to indicate specific needs) versus “accommodations as needed” (as is currently the case). Jennifer Eagan will send the draft accessibility memo to committee members by email for input on changes. Tom Cadwallander noted that student presentations in class must also meet whatever standard is set and that might discourage the inclusions of those projects.
7. Policy on Online (and Hybrid) Instruction. The Senate passed the policy under review last year. It was speculated that there was insufficient consideration in the Senate because there were numerous things that were unclear in the document. Jennifer Eagan noted that a discussion held online due to, say, faculty illness would make the course a “hybrid” by the definition of the online instruction policy. Jeff Seitz noted that, by the way courses are measured, these are, indeed, hybrid courses. The definition applies to the design of the course not by happenstance. Jennifer Eagan countered by noting it is “online instruction”, which appears to lower the bar for which this policy applies. Tom Cadwallander, who was on the task force that drafted the policy, noted that numerous changes have occurred since the task force, but that the task force was concerned with people trying to avoid the rules by designating online parts so that the policy would not apply. The policy states that courses must go through the college curriculum committee, except for GE courses, which needs to also go to the GE subcommittee. Jeff Seitz noted that the policy should include a classification code for online / hybrid and especially what the workload factor (which determines how instructors are paid) should be. The workload factor does not cover the material. According to Roseanne Harris, the Chancellor’s Office is “working on it”, but has not given a code or any suggested changes. With an online policy, Jim Mitchell pointed out that we might be “taking the teaching out of teaching” (or telling people how to teach the class online). Tom Cadwallander noted that the task force wanted the policy to be encouraging, rather than discouraging. Jeff Seitz noted that discussion boards are substantially different from posting audio/video lectures online (for which transcription might also be required). Jennifer Eagan said that the policy passed by the Senate requires online hybrid courses to seek reapproval and so they should say that this is an “online equivalent”. Tom C. asked how one can standardize the workload when it is well known that the amount of work is fairly unknown. The committee decided to table this discussion due to time concerns. Jennifer Eagan will seek guidance on how to send the results, when the Committee is done, through to the Senate and Executive Committee.

8. Adjournment. There was a brief discussion relative to GE Subcommittee appointments and some pending applications and how the Subcommittee could meet in time to get those courses to Senate late this quarter. MSP 4:48 PM, unanimous.

Respectfully,
Mitch Watnik (acting as Secretary for Tom Bickley)