The meeting began at 8:00 a.m.

The Chair welcomed the members of the Committee back from the winter break.

Consent Agenda:

The following items remained on the Consent Agenda and passed unanimously.
1. Dept. of Chemistry
   a. Changing Graduation Requirements in a Major (Premedical Chemistry)
   b. Changing Graduation Requirements in a Major (Biochemistry)

Agenda Discussion Items:

The following item was tabled until the following meeting by a vote of 13-2-0.
2. College of Psychology and Liberal Arts – Adding a New Course to the Curriculum
   CWE 3003 (Engineering Cooperative Education)

A question arose as to how this course is different from EPE 3100 (Protrack Cooperative Education) which passed the Committee at the previous meeting. It was stated that the EPE course was designed specifically for the Protrack students while CWE 3003 was meant for traditional co-op students. Furthermore, by separating the courses, students taking the EPE course could be more easily tracked through their program. It was also asked why this course is being offered by the College of Psychology and Liberal Arts (COPLA) rather than the College of Engineering since it is meant for engineering students. The response was that all the traditional co-op courses are housed within COPLA, and this would be no different. A further question was asked about how this course would be evaluated. While the answer was a bit uncertain, it was stated that the employer writes a report that is reviewed by the student’s advisor who in turn recommends a grade to the co-op coordinator. A motion was made to table this item until Dr. Kalajian (Associate Dean of Academics for the College of Engineering) could better address the Committee’s questions.

The following item was discussed and passed unanimously as amended.
3. Dept. of Biological Sciences – Adding a New Course to the Curriculum
   ISC 2501 (Scientific Diving Tech. and Cert.)

There was a typographical error on the “Adding a New Course” form. The prerequisite to the course was amended to be PED 1154 (Introduction to Open Water Diving). The original prerequisite course number (PED 1054) does not exist.
The following item was unanimously tabled until a future meeting.

4. Dept. of Humanities and Communication – Adding a New Major or Minor to the Curriculum – B.A. Individualized Studies with Prelaw Concentration

Several concerns arose. The first was that this item seemed to be a concentration lacking a core major. A preference was expressed to have a core major defined first, to which concentrations could be added. Alternatively, it was suggested that the Individualized Studies – Pre-Law Concentration be made into its own major. It was further suggested that perhaps Humanities was the core major, but this raised the question why the proposed program was not presented as “Humanities with a Pre-Law Concentration.”

In response, it was noted that there are several other types of courses within the concentration other than humanities (business, for instance) and that few schools have a pre-law major. In most instances, law schools do not look for specific degree programs as a requirement for law school admission. Furthermore, it was envisioned that the “core” would be in the concentration itself and that this and other potential concentrations were being billed as an incubator to test out new programs which might ultimately be turned into full-fledged majors. The word “option” had started to be used synonymously with “concentration” and it was emphasized that they do have distinct meanings: a program with an “option” has a separate major code and the program and option title are printed on diplomas; conversely, a program with “concentrations” has only a single major code and the concentration title does not appear on the diploma. The point was repeated that law schools do not look for specific degrees from their applicants, and it was suggested that terms should be formally defined so that their meaning is understood (individualized studies, for instance).

Another issue that was raised was the use of the phrase “…a course of study customized for their own needs and interests.” It appears from the proposed curriculum that there is actually very little choice that the students can make, and thus it seems inappropriate to say that the program can be “customized [to the students’] own needs and interests.”

In response, it was clarified that several of the restricted electives are “Special Topics” courses that each have a menu of topics available to the students, and that students could retake the “Special Topics” courses, selecting a different topic each time. This is where most of the customization takes place. It was also suggested that perhaps, considering this is a pre-law concentration, that several of the courses in philosophy, social sciences, and others could be eliminated. In response, it was noted that the American Bar Association guidelines were taken into consideration when the concentration was developed, and that those guidelines suggest students should have a background in philosophy, social sciences, etc. It was again reiterated that a degree in Humanities would seem to be better defined as a core than one in Individualized Studies. There was also an expectation expressed that the Individualized Studies curriculum would closely parallel the Interdisciplinary Science curriculum which appears to have much more flexibility, and the parallel did not seem to exist.

A final point raised had to do with the requirement for students to take four semesters of language courses with the same language. The concern was that while there are several language courses in the catalog, could they all be offered frequently enough to allow the student to satisfy the demand, even if it meant only a very few students
enrolled in each course. In response, it was hoped that that would be the case.

A motion was made and passed to table this discussion until a future meeting after additional changes had been considered. After the motion to table passed, another motion was made to form a subcommittee to work on this program, in consultation with the Humanities Department and the Admissions Office, to help facilitate passage of the program through the Committee. It was proposed that the subcommittee members would be Dr. R. Turner (Biological Sciences), Mr. M. Jones (Psychology), and Dr. K. Crooks (Aeronautics). The motion to form the subcommittee passed unanimously.

Other:

1. UGCC Chair for Fall 2011 – Spring 2013
The Chair asked for the members to consider who might succeed Dr. Archambault as Chair, to begin in Fall 2011. The Chair said he would like to resolve this question and submit an approval request to the Provost’s office by the end of the semester.

2. Faculty Senate Resolution to Lift Age Restriction on Online Courses
The Chair opened discussion of this item by introducing the President of the Faculty Senate, Dr. Alan Brown (Chemistry) and noting that the Faculty Senate has a resolution pending before it to recommend removing the age restrictions for online courses and programs. Dr. Brown was invited to the meeting to hear the comments of the Committee so that they could be considered by the Faculty Senate. To start the discussion, it was asked why the age limits were imposed in the first place and whether, in retrospect, they were a good idea. In response, it was said that the limits were imposed both because the online programs were designed for older (greater than college-age), non-traditional students, and because there was a desire that the online courses not compete with the on-campus courses. There was no clear answer as to whether this was a good idea in retrospect.

A point raised against removing the restrictions focused on the difference in admission standards of the online and on-campus students. It was noted that it appears that the admission standards for the online programs were established to be essentially “open enrollment” to allow adults, those who might have been out of school for a long period of time, the opportunity to enroll in courses and provide equal access to the University. For instance, several branches of the military have certain standards that require schools teaching their members to have “open enrollment.” It was also noted that having such admission standards has raised a number of remedial instruction issues. The story of another school was recounted where that school began an online program with age restrictions, only to remove the restrictions after three terms, citing the students’ desired to take online courses and that the quality of the online and on-campus courses were the same in any event. It was asked, with regards to Florida Tech’s online courses, if a student who might occasionally want to take an online course have to take the preparatory Academic Support Center course that all students enrolled in online programs must take. The answer to this was ‘no’, that most students would easily be able to navigate the online courses and should already have the necessary skills.
Another point raised against removing the age restrictions was the concern, originally considered when the age restrictions were imposed, that the online courses would compete with the on-campus courses. It was suggested that students taking online courses for whatever reason, who might otherwise take on-campus courses, particularly in the summer, might contribute to more on-campus courses being cancelled due to low enrollment. It wasn’t clear how many courses this might affect or how often.

Dr. Brown asked what the Committee felt about the provisional admission statements outlined in Bob Niebuhr’s draft report about the age limitations. The report proposes changes to the catalog’s admission text stating that “[p]rovisional admission may be made if the prospective student does not meet the usual requirements but, in the opinion of the Admission Director, has the qualifications needed for academic success in a particular program.” It was stated that it is not clear what those qualifications (or standards) are, and that the catalog does not really outline them. It was further noted that provisional admission may require more remedial instruction resources and/or contribute to greater attrition numbers. Another concern was that such an admission policy could result in lower standards in various courses. It was again emphasized that the admission standards for both online and on-campus students should be the same.

Finally, a concern was raised about whether, over time, the financial aid rating of the University could be affected. Several students are admitted to online programs and drop-out after one or two terms, and it was suggested that financial aid defaults could possibly affect the University’s rating.

3. Informational

The Chair noted the following informational items.

a. Approval of an Undergraduate Online Course to Have the Same Course Number as an On-Campus Undergraduate Course
   COM 2223 (Scientific and Technical Communications)
   HUM 2250 (Literature: Voice and Vision)

b. Spring 2010 meeting schedule:
   January 29       February 26
   March 26         April 30
   May 7 (if needed...note that this is the same day as Commencement)

Our next meeting is Friday, February 26 at 8:00 a.m. in the Physical Sciences conference room. Agenda items are due Friday, February 19.

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Archambault – Chair