

Core Curriculum Steering Committee Meeting October 15, 2007

Present: Swati Bhanderi, Brad Filippone, Mary Kennedy, Joe Kirschvink, Dan Merion, Dan Rowlands, Mitchell Wang, Richard Wilson, Brian Yu

The meeting was called to order at 12:07 p.m.

Chem 3A: the issue has been the backlog of non-freshmen students who still need to take this course. The Chemistry Division is attempting to remedy this by adding extra sections. A possible problem has been the rumor that this course will be “going away”, so freshmen try to drop the course. The Registrar will attempt to automatically schedule this course if it has not been taken by third term. Also if it is taken either first or second term, it is a Pass/Fail course; otherwise, it is a Graded course. It was questioned as to why Chem 3A is required – why can't another lab course be used? This is an issue with a long history and could be re-examined in the future (see 4th topic below).

Scheduling of Freshman core courses: HSS had requested rescheduling their 1 hr and 2 hr slots to two 1 ½ hr slots– this has been done. The problems with Bi1 and Ph12 have also been addressed – so far no problems yet. We have received a request from the Bi1 instructors. They find that it is more difficult to get undergrads interested in Bi1 topics. They are more interested in their grade. Swati stated that Bi1 is not taught well. The course became very detailed and boring and there was little correlation between problem sets and exams. Also Brian Yu stated that most of the students taking Bi1 are not biology majors.

Report on Student Affairs: Melany Hunt will be reporting on Student Affairs. One topic regarding the core was: how can the core be taught so as to not overload the less-prepared students? An ad hoc committee (possibly including some members of this committee) will likely be formed to readdress the core. Currently, grades are given for third term courses, but P/F during the first and second terms. Joe Kirschvink related some history: in the 60s, all courses were on grades. A survey done by the Registrar revealed that top students were leaving CIT. To solve this, it was decided that the entire first year would be P/F so it would not be apparent which students were leaving. In the 1990's shadow grades were used for the second term, and real grades were used for the third term. Shadow grades were seen as informative. Brad Filippone questioned whether grades for third term should be reconsidered? Also shadow grades are not always reported because the professors and TAs do not file them. We should try to fix this. There should be a way of filtering shadow grades so that they do not appear on a student's transcript, but will be on file. Some students (e.g., pre-meds) want the shadow grades – they need to report grades to potential graduate schools. Brad Filippone reported that the Registrar is not in favor of Pass/No Record – there was some concern that it was dishonest. It might be possible to have Pass/No record for the first two terms, but internally, all grades would be on file, however a failure would not appear on a student's transcript. MIT already does this for the first semester.

MIT Survey: An exit survey was shown (part of the Student Affairs report discussed above) that indicated that for tutorial help and quality of instruction, MIT students are more satisfied than CIT students (based on a senior exit survey). Mitchell Wang said that since CIT is a much smaller campus than MIT, most students usually go to their friends and other students for help.

Menu course replacement: Specifically this applies to substituting AY20 for AY1 and GE11a for GE1. Menu courses are a problem because the divisions have no ownership for the courses. If a professor is not available to teach a menu course, the course is simply not taught. Should students be able to substitute higher level courses for menu courses? We have provided some guidance to the Curriculum Committee last year, but the issue continues to be an issue for that committee. The current CCSC policy statement says that it does not endorse replacement courses, but acknowledges that some exceptions can be made. Joe Kirschvink said that substituting GE11a for GE1 has been done in certain cases in the Geology department, but it is not a blanket policy. If it were, enrollment in GE1 could potentially decrease.

Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for November (date to be determined) at 12:00 noon in the Lauritsen Library (Room 6 Kellogg Radiation Laboratory). The meeting was adjourned at 12:58 p.m.