# ASCRC Minutes 9/22/15

GBB 205, 2:10 p.m.

## Call to Order

Members Present: M. Boller, T. Bundy, D. Coffin, I. Crummy, J. Eglin, P. Frazier, B. Hillman A. Lawrence, T. Manuel, S. Smith, G. St. George, E. Uchimoto, M. Semanoff, W. Smith, G.G. Weix  
   
Ex-Officio Present: J. Hickman, N. Lindsay, B. French  
Members Excused: E. Engebretson J. Zink

Minutes: The minutes from 9/9/15 were amended and approved.   
  
Communication

* On October 6th Associate Provost Zagalo -Melo and Julie Cahill will be joining ASCRC to discuss the current international undergraduate English language proficiency requirements and possible additions such as PTE Academics and Cambridge English Exam. There are some issues with the English Placement exam for international students. Chair Manuel asked that faculty with international students in their courses think about whether they have specific challenges related to English comprehension.
* Over the summer a Taskforce worked on developing a first-year transition course to help with retention. Students may be leaving because they don’t have a cohort experience. The University retention rate for first-year students is 73%. About half UM students graduate. The proposal was developed using best practices and will include academic content geared toward effective writing and critical thinking, as well as introduce students to the various campus resources and the required tutorials (PETSA, Alcohol EDU). It will address the transitional issues students face from high school to college and how to navigate Cyberbear, financial aid, and etc. The course will have a Facpac, but not a textbook, and will connect the first-year reading experience. There are 25- 30 learning outcomes that will be assessed. Information literacy is one of them.

Several sections of the course will be offered experimentally either this spring or next fall with the anticipation that it will be required in the future. Any members interested in teaching or have colleagues that would be should contact Associate Provost Lindsay. There will be a $1000 stipend. The pilot courses will enroll new student admits and will be offered through the Office of Student Success. This spring there are 135. In the coming weeks Academic Affairs will decide whether there are sufficient instructors to begin the pilot.  
  
It will not replace the existing courses for athletes on those offered through the Honors College. It was suggested that the course be housed within an academic unit rather than the Undergraduate Advising Center. The proposal will be shared with ASCRC soon. Eventually a similar course may be considered non-freshmen transfer students.

* The Chief Academic Officers discussed OCHE’s proposed program review process for Level II proposals. The new guidelines were shared with ASCRC last year. The Senate leadership has communicated its concerns, and many of them were incorporated into the revised draft. There is still concern that the OCHE has the power to veto a proposal before it is presented to the Board of Regents, and that the additional steps may add to the time required to review a proposal. The intent is to improve communication among the various MUS campuses. The Board of Regents is entertaining preliminary discussions on joining an interstate effort to coordinate general education across states. ASCRC will be apprised of this issue as it develops further.
* A senator brought a concern regarding the College of Humanities and Sciences syllabi policy to the Faculty Senate last week. ASCRC was asked to discuss the issue. The communication sent to faculty indicates that the College’s preferred grading option is the student option. The student option allows students to change the grading option from traditional to credit / no credit (or vice-versa) on CyberBear up until the 15th day of the semester, and from the 16th day to the last day of instruction via a Drop/Add form. Chair Manual sent the communication appended below to Dean Comer. He was willing to clarify the statement, but wanted to retain the preference for student option. This puts more of a burden on faculty to make sure students understand the potential limitations related to credit / no credit grades on their transcript. Moreover, the grading method is a faculty prerogative, so ASCRC is concerned that the College is infringing on a faculty prerogative. It was suggested that a follow-up communication be sent to Dean Comer.
* Chair Manuel and past Chair DeBoer will be meeting with DSS on Thursday to streamline the process of appealing substitute General Education courses for DSS students. Students should be able to have an accommodation or substitution approved prior to applying for graduation. The decision to approve a substitution must remain with a committee of the faculty rather than with DSS or an advisor. A process should be put in place that provides a clear path for DSS students. Substitutions could be verified by the General Education Committee to alleviate some of the Graduation Appeals Committee workload.
* The Prior Learning Assessment Policy was approved by the Board of Regents. ASCRC has some concerns related to the portfolio review and the time and cost involved. Student member Engebretson attended the BOR meeting. She circulated an email indicating there is a $350,000 grant to implement the policy.   
    
  Registrar Hickman commented that UM already accepts prior learning assessment such as AP. The only new item is the portfolio review. The Registrar’s previous institution (Alaska) accepted portfolio reviews, and had approximately 80 over the period of five years. The average number of credits granted was 12-15. These were mostly from students with military careers.

The committee would like to invite Steve Lodmell to discuss the implementations of the policy and examine a sample portfolio

* ASCRC members were notified of the Writing symposium on Friday, September 25, 9:10 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Mansfield Library Theta Rho Room. Faculty who teach writing intensive courses across the disciplines are especially encouraged to attend one or all of these sessions:

[**9:10-10:00 a.m. UPWA: The state of student writing at UM**](http://apps.umt.edu/fdoevents/home/course/84)  
Discussion of findings from the 2014-15 University-Wide Program-Level Writing Assessment (UPWA), a programmatic assessment aimed at identifying trends in students’ writing strengths and weaknesses.

[**10:10-11:00 a.m. A student perspective on feedback**](http://apps.umt.edu/fdoevents/home/course/85)  
A panel of undergraduate and graduate students from across the disciplines will discuss the kinds of feedback they find most helpful.

[11:10 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Across the disciplines: Cultivating student ambition and critical](http://apps.umt.edu/fdoevents/home/course/86) Hear how faculty from various disciplines design writing activities that promote synthesis of ideas, application of knowledge to new situations, and pursuit of sophisticated questions.

## Business Items

* Professor Eglin was confirmed as Chair-elect.
* Chair Manuel asked the Committee whether changes to prerequisites should continue to be reviewed. The following statement for evaluating new courses is included in ASCRC Policy 201.30, Criteria for Evaluating Curriculum Changes:

**Prerequisites**: Normally does not bear review unless there are so many prerequisites, including hidden prerequisites, that too many students are effectively barred access to the course.”

After discussion ASCRC agreed that certain prerequisite changes should not require review. Departments should be notified of changes to their courses that are used as prerequisites. The following language was added to Policy 201.30.3, Editorial Catalog Changes.   
  
“Prerequisite or co-requisite changes within the same department or cognate discipline that do not impact other departments”

* The School of Business is interested in the University purchasing “TurnitIn,” an Internet-based plagiarism-prevention service. The IT Senate has been considering the purchase. It can integrate with Moodle. The committee briefly discussed the problems of plagiarism on campus. Some believed that if the system is purchased it should be used as a teaching tool where students check themselves rather than a policing tool. There were questions regarding whether the program will check papers in languages other than English, the cost of the software and how it may be funded. It was also noted that students often recycle papers from courses. Turnitin would supposedly prevent this. Members were asked to poll their departments to see whether there was an interest in pursuing the purchase. Chair Manual will talk with the Writing Committee and find out more information about the cost. The final decision would be made by the Provost and IT.

## Good & Welfare

* Chair Manuel encouraged members to attend the Conference on [Defining a 21st Century Education for a Vibrant Democracy](http://www.umt.edu/21stcenturyeducation/default.php) on October 26 and 27th, and particularly the component on General Education on Monday October 26th:

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| **9:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.:**[Fostering Engaged Citizens through General Education](http://www.umt.edu/21stcenturyeducation/Fostering%20Engaged%20Citizens%20through%20General%20Education%20One%20Pager.pdf)  **9:15-10:00 a.m.:  Keynote Speaker**UC Theater **10:15-11:15 a.m.:  Panel Discussion**UC North Ballroom **11:30 a.m.- 12:15 p.m.:  Breakout Sessions**UC #326, UC #327, UC #329 |

## Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 3:53p.m.

## Appendix:

Dean Comer,

A question came up in the September 10th Faculty Senate meeting concerning the following statement that is suggested your faculty members include on their syllabi (see the attached file and below):

**Syllabus Content: Other Considerations**

The instructor’s policy on grading options. Courses are set up as traditional letter grade only (T), CR/NC only, or student option (O). Because some students do encounter unanticipated difficulties in their personal lives, the College’s preference is “student option” which allows students to switch from letter grade to credit/no credit later in the semester. However, if an instructor chooses to set up the course as “traditional letter grade only (T),” this policy should be stated on the syllabus.

General Education courses and courses required for majors and minors must be taken for traditional letter grade, and there was concern the statement may cause confusion for students taking these courses.  There is also a limit on the number of CR/NC hours a student can count towards graduation.  There is only a limited time for a student to change the grade option without filing a Course Add/Change form.  There are also other concerns as indicated in the following excerpt from the Grading and Academic Standing portion of the catalog:

“The University cautions students that many graduate and professional schools and some employers do not recognize non-traditional grades (i.e., those other than A through F) or may discriminate against students who use the credit/no credit option for many courses. Moreover, students are cautioned that some degree programs may have different requirements regarding CR/NCR credits, as stipulated in the catalog.”

The default grade option for most courses is the traditional letter grade, and we are concerned that the statement may lead to confusion and problems for students trying to use courses to meet University requirements.  Would it be possible to clarify the statement to address these concerns?

Sincerely,

Tim Manuel

ASCRC Chair