

Wayne State University

Academic Senate

Curriculum and Instruction Committee's 2020-2021 Report

The CIC met a total of 7 times during the 2020-2021 academic year, including one joint meeting with SAC in January, 2021. Since the joint meeting was organized by SAC, I leave it up to Naida Simon to report on the issues discussing during that meeting.

During the Fall 2020 semester, we met on Oct 2, Oct 28, and Dec 11. During the Winter 2021 semester, we met jointly with SAC on Jan 20, February 24, March 31, and April 21. The principal issues we took up during this academic year include the following:

1. **Report on General Education Assessment:** Jennifer Wareham and Jennifer Hart visited with us to report on General Education Assessment and the Survey on COVID-19's effects on the assessment. These guests presented information on the participation in the General Education assessments during the 2019-2020 academic year and how these assessments are used. They also presented a draft report from a voluntary COVID Survey given to instructors of general education courses in the Winter 2020 semester. Their report highlighted the challenges experienced by the faculty and changes related to assessment for general education courses last winter.

2. **Phoenix Reentry Program:** Naida Simon joined us in October to present on the Phoenix Reentry Program. This program was initially developed in 1988 to provide undergraduate students a second chance to return to the university. The program is currently available to students who have been gone from the university for over five years but have earned at least 30 credit hours. It provides forgiveness for undergraduate grades and a pathway for undergraduate students to return to the university. The program appears very helpful to a small number of students each year. Naida put forward a proposal for Phoenix 2.0 which would open the program to students who have been gone from the university for three years and have earned 30 credit hours, highlighting additional supports that would be available for Phoenix students, and suggesting that CIC and relevant Academic Senate committees would review the program every five years. A motion was passed to continue with the development of the Phoenix 2.0 program.

3. **Labeling of online courses:** We discussed at our October meeting how classes are labeled when they involve synchronous and asynchronous components and whether it is possible to identify courses that will include synchronous and asynchronous components in the course schedule.

4. **Report on Respondus Lockdown Browser:** Nathan Chavez from CIT joined us to review Respondus Lockdown Browser that is imbedded into Canvas to proctor exams electronically. Members of the committee raised a number of concerns about this software. As a result of this discussion, both CIC and SAC recommended that a motion be sent to the Policy Committee and Interim Provost Clabo that outlined these concerns and recommended that faculty be encouraged

not to use Respondus when administering exams in their online classes. As you all know, the Policy Committee has ultimately issued such a recommendation.

5. Scheduling of final exams in asynchronous classes: Since online courses we have been teaching this year are either asynchronous, synchronous, or a combination asynchronous and synchronous, scheduling of final exams by the university has become a complicated process. The biggest issue arises when asynchronous classes want to administer a final exam as if they were synchronous. The university registrar, Kurt Kruschinska, joined us to discuss this. We agreed that the registrar and CIC member, Richard Pineau, would use the grid for synchronous, face to face and group courses that has already been developed whereas asynchronous courses would be provided with guidelines on how to schedule their exams.

6. Updates on the CIC discussions of the Student Code of Conduct: Last year, CIC requested that the Student Code of Conduct be updated to clarify the faculty role in the grade appeal process in cases involving allegations of academic misconduct. With that in mind, David Strauss (Dean of Students), Kristen Cook (Office of General Counsel), and Nikolina Camaj (Student Conduct Officer) joined us to discuss the status of these updates. It appears that the pandemic has slowed down the DOSO's response to the CIC's concerns about the faculty members' role in the grade appeals process. Currently, the role of the faculty continues not to be clear. Faculty should have a clear and more involved role in the process.

7. Student challenges in the online learning environment: The Committee also listened to a presentation by David Strauss about the student difficulties with the online learning environment. This presentation included an update on Student CARE reports. As could be expected, technology remains a big challenge for students. As for the Care Reports, their number has doubled this year compared to last, demonstrating the emotional and physical health toll the pandemic has had on our students.

8. Accessibility in online teaching: Kelly Dormer, CIC Member and Disabilities Specialist with SDS, and Krystal Tosch, Web Accessibility Coordinator with OTL, discussed the special challenges that students with disabilities face in the online learning environment. They have talked about the importance of captioning videos for hearing-impaired students, ways to build a generally inclusive classroom for online instruction and improving faculty awareness about working with the need for accommodations that may arise any time during a semester. We also talked about the pros and cons of requiring students to turn on their cameras during synchronous class meetings.

9. Update on State Hall renovations: Ashley Flintoff (Director, Planning and Space Management) and Sean Campbell provided an update on the State Hall renovations project. A feasibility study has been done. However, the project is running behind schedule because the state has pulled promised funding after the start of the pandemic and the university had to step in and issue bonds to fund the project. Request for Quote (RFQ) was expected to be issued in March and a Request for Proposals (RFPs) was supposed to go out in April. The new design is supposed to preserve flexibility in the use of rooms and keep accessibility, longevity, energy efficiency, and maintenance needs in mind in the new building.

10. Our students' mental health: Jeffrey Kuentzel, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), joined us to give an update on the work of CAPS since the start of the pandemic. On average, about a third of our students have a diagnosable psychological disorder. The number has not changed since the start of the pandemic. Fewer students have been seeking help with psychological services since 2019 and this is consistent with nationwide trends. CAPS got some insight on the reasons for why this has been occurring by surveying students who had delayed coming to CAPS. In addition to counseling, CIC was reminded that CAPS provided wellness services whose goal is prevention rather than treatment of sickness.

11. Preliminary discussion of the Policy Committee's charge regarding the post-pandemic future of higher education: Our last two meetings of the year were devoted to a robust discussion of the Policy Committee's charge regarding the post-pandemic future of higher education. We have discussed the charge in a full committee meeting first and, in the follow-up meeting, we broke into three working groups to commence a more focused conversation about the choices we have made during this year of pandemic education and the lessons we have learned as a result – with a caveat that we have not finished processing the latter because we are still finishing out the semester. The three working groups will focus on 1) grades, 2) online course format, and 3) online exams. The plan is for the working groups to research these issues over the next few months in preparation for report to the full committee first and the Policy Committee second.

Submitted by:

Ewa A. Golebiowska

Chair