

Minutes

Undergraduate Studies Committee

February 21, 2018

Present: Brendan Allen, Dick Brucher, Ben Friedlander, Elizabeth Neiman, Deborah Rogers

We focused in this meeting on the 100- and 200-level literature courses for non-majors. This has been on the agenda for review for some time but became a more pressing issue with falling enrollments and decreasing support for the funding of these courses. Conversation quickly moved from administrative matters to a more holistic discussion about the function of this portion of our curriculum within the department as a whole.

We began with some discussion about the purpose of these courses, the student populations and programs they serve, their staffing, the way students learn about them, the reasons for dropping enrollments, and the particular reasons they have lost support from the administration. A number of questions arose and Elizabeth Neiman helped refine them. Dick Brucher gave some background on the funding of these courses and Deborah Rogers spoke briefly about Laura Cowan's understanding of the issues while Chair. Brendan Allen looked up the current offerings on MaineStreet and the committee used this snapshot of that portion of the curriculum to determine a course of action. A decision was made to create a brief questionnaire for the faculty, which might then be used to formulate a proposal for the department; it was also decided to survey students currently enrolled in these courses to learn more about the population currently served.

As conversation unfolded it became clear that the department's uncertainty or confusion about or simply neglect of these courses in discussions of the curriculum was being communicated to the students and that this might be alleviated by taking a few simple but concrete actions. It was proposed that, in those cases where prerequisites do not make it clear, we identify courses on MaineStreet as "designed for non-majors" or "suitable for both majors and non-majors." It was also proposed that we create a separate set of course descriptions for non-majors on our website.

On another topic: picking up from last semester's discussion of the writing tracks, Elizabeth Neiman offered to initiate conversation with APTW.

Our next meeting will be in two weeks.