MEMO

To: Jill Dumesnil, Faculty Senate President; James Everett, Provost
From: Mike Boyer Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Chair
RE: Curriculum Committee Report for Fall 2007/Spring 2008
Date: Nov. 18, 2008

Thank you for this opportunity to provide an overview of the recent issues and changes related to this dynamic and vital committee in our learning community here at UAS.

Attached are the following: (1) an overview of the changes in the past year for curriculum committee; (2) an overview of the proposals passed and considered along with a detailed curricular post-mortem; (3) an explanation of a few confounding factors faced by the committee; (4) a snapshot of the Fall 08 timeline and timeline logistics in general; (5) a summary of member responsibilities and the new process and forms for proposals; and (6) four packets of e-mails labeled 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D.to provide evidence and support for any issues or items raised in this report.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Boyer

Assistant Professor of Law Sciences

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I. Overview of Curriculum Changes and Process Fall 2007-Spring 2008

A. Formalized Shift of Cross Disciplinary Issues to the Faculty Senate Better Delineates Curriculum Procedure and Policy Issues

The formalized shift of curriculum policy issues that impact multiple disciplines, departments or schools-- e.g., General Education Requirements—from the Curriculum Committee to the Faculty Senate was one of the more profound and beneficial changes of the year. Clearly, the Senate is the best forum for debating the *merits* of curriculum issues that touch multiple disciplines and schools while the Curriculum Committee remains the better forum for looking at the *form* and procedures related to such a proposal. This allows each body to exercise its competency and better analyze proposals that will be interwoven into the complex web known as the UAS Catalog. Programs often build on existing courses, and this means that even minor changes in one area can ripple through other programs with unintended consequences. Having the threshold policy question debated (i.e., is the proposal acceptable to all programs on the merits) by the Senate before coming to the Curriculum Committee best fits the competency of that body and the expectations and role of its members as outlined in the Constitution. The Curriculum Committee will address the details of how such proposals will appear in the Catalog and interact with other programs and requirements.[1]

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[1] This Senate's pre-requisite approval, of course, applies to proposals impacting multiple departments (such as eliminating a course that another discipline uses as a degree requirement, the GER's, etc) and Curriculum committee is the arbiter of all other proposals.

B. New Categories of Forms, New Faces, Accolades

In the past, the adobe forms have proven to be Rube Goldberg contraptions for faculty. Ideally, the new form regime will be easier for faculty to use and better answer the perennial question: "What form do I use?" You will see in part V that there are forms for various purposes.

There were also new faces. Of course, I was new as the Chair and stepped unwittingly into that role (probably as the person who resisted the least), and —I think— avoided any major curriculum catastrophes. I think the process, even from my years as a member, has been blessed with the leadership of the dynamic duo from the Registrar's Office—Barbara Hegel and Jan Crichton. We hope someone new also steps up to help with the web aspects of the committee that were deftly guided by Heather Hadley in the Provost's office (be sure and have the replacement e-mail asap). Terry Dean, of course, did a splendid job of getting everyone curriculum packets (literally thousands of pages to dozens of people across three campuses). Also, almost all committee members from all schools (but see III, infra) did exceptionally commendable work.

II. The Proposals Passed and Considered: A Curricular Post-Mortem

In Fall 07/Spring 08, the UAS Curriculum Committee rigorously analyzed and eventually passed hundreds of proposals and dozens of programs. I will ask Terry Dean to forward on a copy of the proposals to you, Jill, so that you can peruse them without me re-listing hundreds in this report. On the post-mortem, however, it is probably more insightful to look at the small number that died as "Old Business" at the final Spring meeting. In summary, except for the short list below, all other items in the Fall 07 and

Spring 08 agenda passed (many with minor catalog language revisions) or were

withdrawn:

Expired Spring 08 As Old Business:
> Dist Lab Issues
> 08-41
> 08-42
> 08-44
> 08-45
>
> Skin Sewing Issues:
> 08-131
> 08-132
> 08-139
> 08-140
> 08-159
>
> GIS OE Standardization Issues
> 08-177

I will comment briefly on each as they yield some insight into the institutional

curriculum challenges and opportunities faced by the University of Alaska, Southeast.

First, the unresolved Distance Lab Science agenda items (08-41 to 08-45) highlight both

the Manichean approach to distance learning at UAS and also the inter-campus territorial

issues still present 25 years after UAS integrated the patchwork of state-owned higher

education institutions in Southeast Alaska. The somewhat reluctant merger of the

Southeast community colleges with UAJ in 1982 still shows the occasional curricular

scar when a smaller campus—like Sitka—seeks to implement what that campus views as

an innovative and appropriate technical program—here distance lab science courses

related to water quality. Both the distance aspect of a science lab and, to a lesser degree,

the technical tenor of these proposals apparently formed irreconcilable barriers for their

Juneau Natural Science counter-parts. Despite my requests for them to meet and confer, the distance was too great to bring the parties together. The challenges ones finds in this curriculum autopsy is a need for a more coherent institutional vision of distance learning at UAS and also a greater sense of how the often uneasy relationship of our academic and technical programs should be structured when and where they interact. The second issue—Skin Sewing (08-131 etc)—is very similar in that it comes from a small campus and did not resonate in Juneau; however, it best highlights the challenge of cultural sensitivity and the fostering of Alaska Native and Northwest Coast Culture while still maintaining rigorous curriculum standards. In short, the Sitka campus sought an innovative partnership to offer skin-sewing (seal and others) courses, but the commitment did not translate into the Carnegie Credit Hour, and there where even legal issues about what those who were not Alaska Natives could or could not do with Seals and Seal Skins. Several questions related to the proposal were left unanswered. However, the larger question for UAS is how to tailor a curriculum that integrates Alaska Native cultural values into rigorous state of the art educational practices. Finally, the GIS OE (Occupational Endorsement) item reveals the ever-present quest to align programs with national standards. Here that may have been the undoing of the proposal. However, I think we also must analyze the incentives and disincentives for faculty making proposals at UAS .My sense is that there could be much more incentive offered for developing new programs, especially since the bar is continually raised for standards, requirements and criteria. Meeting the requisite guidelines can sometimes entail many hours of work and even considerable expense.

III. Confounding Factors: Duties, Turn Over, Addressing Criticism

Since becoming chair, I have been told the meeting were scheduled too soon, too late; that they should be on Friday afternoon, that they should not be on Friday afternoon (I even had a campus rep complain to the Senate President about Friday afternoon); that they went too slow, that went too fast; that they were too open, too controlled, etc. In fact, I even had one complaint about my e-mail address not listing my initials and not my full name! So you have to have pretty thick skin as Chair. That said, I think most issues were resolved or overcome, but I did find a few common themes that proved to be confounding factors.

The first confounding factor would be membership duties (see V attached). It seemed that some departments could either not forward a member or could only do so several months into the process (see 6A on Humanities Participation). In fact, I have e-mails showing my repeated requests for a Humanities member (some of which got quite vociferous responses). Under the guidelines of member duties (See V), you see that a member must find a replacement if unavailable. I cannot appoint people to the committee, so I must rely on them to come forward and on departing members to announce their replacements. Most all schools do this *very well*, but there was a glitch related to Humanities that caused them to miss part of the Fall 2007 meetings.

A second consideration is the turnover of faculty of staff at UAS. I was glad to see Heather Hadley in the Provost office taking care of the web aspects of the committee, and I got a bright and encouraging e-mail from her about the curriculum committee in the late summer (see 6B on Provost Office Communications). I sent quite a few e-mails back this fall and it did not hear back. Only after some checking, I found she had relocated.

Similarly, I have been e-mailing another faculty member that was on my membership list all semester only to find she has left UAS! So some delay and the lack of web presence this year can be partly associated with turnover (see IV). This is a campus wide issue. Turnover-- faculty, staff, and administrative—can gum up the works across the MAU and prevent it from functioning at its optimum level. My recommendation is that the Senate urge the university to implement a *Balanced Scorecard* evaluation process campus wide that includes turnover as a key metric in evaluating both departments and administration.

Finally, I find that communications can be problematic as certain people want to be on the e-mail list, other people ask me to take them off the list and, of course, someone always feels left out. Actually, I have been asked to include close to 50+people on curriculum e-mails, but when I do, several bounce back and ask me to take them off the list, and I have also been asked from time to time to add another person that has moved to a new position. We can certainly give the faculty senate or just the senate president all the e-mails (beware!); I have provide a list of the e-mails (in and out box) to date with Curriculum in the title in 6C, but there were even more as some people send them to me with varying titles.

IV: The Time-Line Logistics

The timeline is not well understood for curriculum committee, and when I requested Provost Stell articulate the needs for the deadlines and the possibility of altering them, I was generally informed that the process is largely dictated by the catalog printing process (see 6B).

Here is the Fall 2008 Time Line, just for your information, and because I have had some questions about the dates and the constraints related to our fall schedule.

- The deadline for proposals is **Sept 15th**. All members were well informed and tasked to inform their departments.

- The packets are then organized, printed and bound. I know this is a huge task, so I allow 3-4 weeks minimum (see e-mail about packets in 6B) before inquiring about them. That places us at **Oct 15th** minimum.

- Then I e-mail all members about possible dates. This is where it gets interesting. This year we had key members (including the registrar and others) out of town off and on until **November 15th** (and I have documentation of this). Moreover, the membership is not always completely stable until later in the fall as was the case this fall when changes were coming in through October and into November.

- So we have set the first date **Nov 21st** and will have another sometime the following week to wrap up the relatively light packet of Fall 2008 proposals. Part of my stated philosophy has been to have members spend considerable time out of the meeting preparing and then go more quickly through the proposals in the meetings. Many of the issues can be resolved by meeting in advance with the registrar's office, also a policy I strongly encourage. So come join us if you like; anyone may attend or observe.