CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

April 8, 2015

Present: Faller-Mitchell, McCandless, Miller-Francisco, Oline; Adams, Ayers, J Smith, Waters

Guests: Miles Inada, Kasey Mohammad, Deborah Rosenberg, Craig Wright

The meeting began at 9:00 a.m. Guests from the Creative Arts and Creative Writing programs were welcomed.

Creative Writing

Inada gave an overview of the transition of the Creative Writing program (and degree concentration) out of the English and Writing department into the Creative Arts program of the Oregon Center for the Arts at Southern Oregon University. The goal is to take advantage of changes that occurred with retrenchment and restructuring. They propose a new BFA in Creative Writing, which will emphasize writing as a studio discipline focusing on creativity. The Curriculum Committee had posed some preliminary questions before the meeting, and the guests answered these questions.

Even though the creative writing faculty were formerly part of the English and Writing department, it is intentional not to overlap with the English program now, so the creative writing program can forge its own identity of creative writing, separate from what it was in English and Writing. However, the CW faculty have met with representatives from English about the possibility of eventually adding in some English courses (such as Steinbeck) as electives for creative writing majors, and English majors could also take some of the CW courses (some prerequisite issues would be worked out). Rosenberg added that that the new creative writing curriculum is part of the arts-based curriculum of their new neighbors instead of being aligned with their old neighbors.

There was a question about whether some of the CW courses are similar to existing WR courses that have remained in English; Mohammad said he doesn’t think this is the case, although some of the WR rhetoric and essay courses have some overlap with CW courses, but the orientation is different. The creative writing courses formerly taught in the WR prefix were changed to CW last year.

There were some questions about specific courses. Is new course CW 385 (Writing for Stage and Screen) similar to TA 371 (Playwriting) or VP 312 (Scriptwriting)? And should writing for the stage and screen be taught in separate courses, since they involve different skills? Rosenberg said that some students don’t know whether they want to write a play or something for the screen, and this helps them figure this out. Should one program (such as theatre arts) offer one level of instruction, and another program (such as creative writing) offer a different level? Inada said even though there can be discipline-specific approaches, there are also common principles. In the context of creative arts, the assumption is not necessarily just for the stage, or the screen.

Other questions concerned resources and the cost of offering the new degree program. Mohammad said they polled students in creative writing courses during winter term, asking if they would enroll in the degree program if it were available; if anything, the results are under-represented, because they only asked students who were currently enrolled in CW courses that term. Inada added that as they forge connections with other creative arts programs, they expect to attract other students not currently in creative writing. The creative arts team will provide clarification on an amount listed on the budget outline; it was unclear where the funds for one item would come from.

A draft of an anticipated teaching rotation for the first year led to some questions about courses that were missing from the rotation, or teaching load for faculty members. The proposers will provide an update on this teaching rotation.

Some of the courses would be good candidates for University Studies, so they will plan to propose these at a later time.

The team provided information on how a BFA degree differs from a BA degree. The creative writing degree is proposed as a BFA because it has a studio emphasis, similar to our BFAs in art and theatre arts. It is modeled loosely on theatre practice. Faculty supervise, guide, and mentor students; the degree would enforce community between students. J Smith asked whether there would be a type or audition to the creative writing major, similar to auditions for theatre arts or music. Mohammad said the application process would be through a portfolio of work. Rosenberg said the audition experience helps students focus their intent, and winnows out students who aren’t serious. The audition/application process for the BFA in creative writing would be a “soft” audition process and would also be considered a recruiting strategy.

When discussing some specific questions about courses, it became clear that some courses that had been proposed as variable credit courses would probably need to be changed to 4 credits or other fixed credits. Creative writing faculty will look at CW 385, 386, CW 420, 520, 530, and 541 to confirm the credits for these courses. Questions about new course CW 386 (Songwriting) included whether students needed a background in music; Wright said no music training is required. Students can collaborate with other students on music, if they wish, or use music technology available. (Wright said the Songwriting course is similar to a course proposed last year but later withdrawn, but some of the issues raised last year have been addressed in the new proposal.)

Recommendations from the Curriculum Committee included establishing a minimum GPA for the major, articulating how students will be accepted into the degree program (such as the presentation of a portfolio), confirming funding source of resources, re-working teaching rotation, and clarifying credits for some courses. The Creative Writing team will send updates to Penny Thorpe. The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.