

## **Committee on Academic Operations Meeting Minutes**

16th CAO meeting of 2015-2016

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015 in Beckett Conference Room, Fuller

**Chair:** Rob Lindeman (CS)

**Secretary:** VJ Manzo (HUA)

### **In Attendance:**

William Clark (CHE), Mark Claypool (CS), Heather Jackson (Registrar), Chuck Kornik (Administrator of Academic Programs), Rob Lindeman (CS), VJ Manzo (HUA), Paul Reilly (Academic Advising), Stephan Sturm (MA), Justin Wang (BUS), Kris Wobbe (Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies)

Student representative: Whitney Davis, Colette Pelegrini

Called to order at 3:02pm

Minutes approved with amendments

### **Administration:**

1. Elected Stephan Sturm as new chair beginning Spring '16 through Fall '16
2. Renewed V.J. Manzo's term as secretary for Spring '16

### **Old Business:**

1. Motion from HUA to add a New Permanent Course, HU 2230 (liaison Clark)
  - Still with originator
2. Motion from MA to Change the Distribution Requirements for MAC (liaison Sturm)
  - Conditionally approved
3. Motion to Add a New Course, GPH 1000 (liaison Wobbe)
  - Still with originator
4. Motion to Add a New Course, GPH 2000 (liaison Wobbe)
  - Still with originator
5. Motion to Add a New Course, GPH 4000 (liaison Wobbe)
  - Still with originator
6. Motion to Establish the GPH Designation (Global Public Health) (liaison Wobbe)
  - Still with originator

7. Motion to Establish a WPI Minor in Global Public Health (GPH) (liaison Wobbe)

- Still with originator

8. Student Petition (liaison Jackson)

- Denied

9. Student Petition (liaison Jackson)

- Approved

**New Business:**

1. Registrar's Special Report (H. Jackson)

- CAO recommends that CAP help establish a policy on special approvals for courses, perhaps something that takes into account certain recurring courses (HU3900, HU3910, etc.) that require special approval that are fundamentally different than ISPs (see summary notes below from Registrar's Special Report that summarizes the clusters of courses)
- Outgoing chair will make a formal recommendation to CAP

2. Motion from MA to change title & description of MA 3627 (liaison Sturm)

- Put recommended background in standard template form; list topics
- Last five sentences should be listed as bullets
- Conditionally approved

Meeting adjourned at 4:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
V.J. Manzo, CAO

**SUMMARY NOTES: REPORT ON SPECIAL APPROVAL COURSES**

As WPI undergraduate courses do not have formal prerequisites, there should be a limited number of courses that have restrictions limiting students' ability to register.

CAO reviewed a report by the Registrar listing all previous course offerings that required special approval by the instructor in order for students to sign in. In total, there were 388 such courses, with breakdown as follows:

Graduate classes (159 offerings)

HU 3900 INQUIRY SEMINAR (130 offerings)

HU 3910 PRACTICUM (39 offerings)

ID 2050 SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH FOR THE IQP (51 offerings)

MA 1971 BRIDGE TO HIGHER MATHEMATICS

MA 2071 MATRICES & LINEAR ALGEBRA I

MA 2631 PROBABILITY

MU 2633 BRASS ENSEMBLE

MU 2634 JAZZ ENSEMBLE

MU 2635 STAGE BAND

MU 2638 VOCAL PERFORMANCE LAB

PE 1117 MISCELLANEOUS

SP 1523 ELEMENTARY SPANISH I

CAO discussed the courses and made some observations:

1. Unlike undergraduate classes at WPI, graduate classes *do* have formal pre-requisites. Moreover, graduate classes are not under the purview of CAO.
2. HU 3900 and HU 3910 arose from the Humanities and Arts Sufficiency, which required instructor permission.
3. ID 2050 is taken by students who are part of a subsequent IQP.
4. The special approvals for the MA courses were explained as being a mechanism to enforce students to consult with the instructor to be sure they intended to take that particular course and not an alternate MA course (e.g., one not designed for MA majors). CAO recommends the MA department consider other ways to achieve the same effect (e.g., changing course names).
5. The special approvals for the MU courses are because these courses require a musical audition.
6. The SP course is for students who have not had Spanish in high school. The special approval is so that the instructor can verify this stipulation with any students who sign up.

7. The PE "Miscellaneous" is a designation to grant credit to any student who wishes to engage in a PE activity that is not covered by any other existing PE course, but is approved by PE as appropriate to earn PE credit. The special approval is so that they can screen the students and activities before they register.

Overall, there does not appear to be rampant course restrictions at WPI. With the exception of a few MA courses, the special approvals required seem appropriate.

However, there is currently no formal policy in place. As it currently stands, the registrar can, and does, get requests from faculty members to require a particular course to have special approval. CAO recommends that CAP make a policy regarding such requests, allowing special approval only under unique academic circumstances. At the very least, CAO would suggest that individual faculty members not be able to request special approval for his/her course, but that such infrequent requests should come through a department head.