

JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
City University of New York
UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM & UNDERGRADUATE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of September 9, 2024

The Undergraduate Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee held a remote meeting September 9, 2024, via Zoom. Interim Dean Andrew Sidman called the meeting to order.

Present: Alexa Capeloto, Roosbelinda Cardenas, Jocelyn Castillo, Angelique Corthals, Virginia Diaz-Mendoza, Crystal Endsley, Nina-Rose Fischer, Sergio Gallegos, Penny Geyer, Thomas Herndon, Kathy Killoran, Ma'at Lewis, Cristina Lozano Argüelles, Daniel Matos, Shavonne McKiever, Kelly McWilliams, Fatma Najar, Judy-Lynne Peters, Amada Santiago, Andrew Sidman, Robert Till, Marisa Tramontano, Gregory Umbach, Roberto Visani, Anjalina Budhram, Dor Nave.

Absent: Gohar Petrossian, Shreya Subramani, Tiffany Rodriguez.

Non-Voting Members and Guests: Maggie Arismendi, Lorena del Pila Laverde, Melissa Dolan, Wynne Ferdinand, Stacy Nardin, Patrizia Pelgrift, Dyanna Pooley.

I. Dean's Announcements – Interim Dean Andrew Sidman

Interim Dean Sidman introduced himself and prompted everyone to do the same. He then welcomed everyone, and set up the pre-agenda content by announcing the work that will be conducted by the Office of Academic Programs to the theme of the student experience. This year will be about defining a set of standards for quantitative reasoning, and it will follow the same process set out by the Gen Ed assessment committee for the writing program. More writing instruction needs to be added to other parts of our curriculum, as English 101 and 201 are not enough.

Dean Sidman asked members to get involved in the subcommittees on programs, courses, and standards. Encourages the faculty to get involved in this work, if interested.

II. Approval of the minutes of May 17, 2024

No further discussion. All members voted in favor.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of May 5, 2024. The minutes were approved unanimously with 24 votes in favor.

III. Elections

A. UCASC Vice Chairperson

Interim Dean Sidman nominated to re-elect Judy-Lynne Peters from the Department of Public Management to vice chairperson. There was no discussion.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the re-election of Professor Judy-Lynne Peters to the position of UCASC Vice Chairperson. The motion was approved unanimously with 24 votes in favor.

B. Honors Program Governance Committee

Interim Dean Sidman read the list of nominees: Professors Crystal Endsley from the Department of Africana Studies and Angelique Corthals from the Department of Sciences. There was no discussion.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the election of Professors Crystal Endsley and Angelique Corthals to the Honors Program Governance Committee. The motion was approved unanimously with 24 votes in favor.

IV. New Business

1. Proposal for two courses (rev slate – drama)

Dean Killoran explained that there are two course revisions related to drama courses that were moved to the English Department, since it is overseeing the communications and drama curriculum now.

These courses are to give students the opportunity to participate in college productions. Drama 185, Drama In Production (3 credits) – this course runs both in the fall and spring, and students participate as actors or backstage staff. Instructor permission will no longer be required to make it easier for students to enroll.

Drama 301, Directing (3 credits) – students sign up, do the work in class, and they are expected to participate in the student productions. To this course, we are adding the experiential learning course attribute which allows students to keep registering for this class for two to three weeks into the semester. There was no further discussion.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the two-course rev slate proposal for the Drama courses. The motion was approved unanimously with 25 votes in favor.

2. Visiting Students (policy)

Dean Killoran announced a revised proposal for visiting students (or non-degree students) that come to John Jay primarily during the summer and winter. This proposal would expand the upper limit to 14 credits, and it has been devised to allow a smoother registration experience for those students who want to take courses with more than 3 credits. The math, science and psychology departments have courses that are all four or five credits, and this proposal will allow students to register without the special permission requirement.

Professor Capeloto from the English Department pointed out that one sentence in the proposal mentioned “12 credits”, and Dean Killoran agreed to amend that to state “14 credits” instead. There was no further discussion.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the proposal. The motion was approved unanimously with 25 votes in favor.

V. Other Business

A. General Education Program Overview and Report – Director Wynne Ferdinand

Director Ferdinand gave an overview of the general education curriculum at John Jay as well as the governance multi-year process involved in creating a more cohesive learning experience for students to prepare them for upper division coursework in their majors and into their chosen profession after graduation. More specifically, a rubric for the writing project was developed with support from graduate writing fellows. Faculty participating in committee work sent in writing samples, and approximately 60 assignments and 7,180 samples of student work were collected and scored using the above-mentioned writing rubric.

Faculty will be piloting new assignments in their courses this fall, after receiving feedback from Kim Lau in the vertical writing program. The purpose of collecting and scoring a random sample of student work is to evaluate the effectiveness of writing assignments and to gain insights into current teaching practices in General Education. This process aims to inform future assignment development and improve student learning outcomes.

Director Ferdinand also offered that she will be sharing her results on a public webpage so that, even those who are not directly involved in the work, can access the information.

In reference to the Quantitative Reasoning (QR) topic, Director Ferdinand mentions that they are in the "understanding the problem" phase, however they have collected information from departments on how the different majors address skill development for Quantitate Reasoning. There is a need for more research into how QR is incorporated into the various courses. There will be open sessions to gather more data and insights, and invitations will be sent out to students and staff who want to join the QR working group. Additionally, there will be efforts to collect samples this fall to assess current teaching practices in quantitative reasoning, and develop a rubric.

Director Ferdinand concluded by encouraging attendees to provide feedback.

Professor Greg Umbach from the History Department offers his expertise on the topic of Quantitative Reasoning. This was based on his experience while serving on an NSF funded CUNY Wide project, whose required rigorous assessment tests, he believes, will be useful to this project.

Lesson 1: the more exposure students received to Q.R. in their classes, the higher they rated their skills, though the lower their skills became. Only two campuses did not record a decrease of their skills, and John Jay was one of them.

Lesson 2: When faculty introduced Q.R. into their courses that were not math courses, the lower the students evaluated those faculty. Unsure as to why trained faculty found it challenging to teach this material.

Interim Dean Sidman acknowledged the importance of these findings, and offered that he is aware of the work of Professor Esther Wilder's project (she is in the Psychology Department at Lehman College). Dean Sidman also commented that these were lessons that ought to be carried forward, but that he was satisfied that John Jay had positive results, and mentioned that he noticed the same positive results in his own students.

Professor Thomas Herndon from the Department of Economics expressed an interest in reading the full report. Professor Umbach mentioned that it is not available yet, since there are two more years to go on the project. Interim Dean Sidman offered to reach out to Esther Wilder to check whether there is a public portion of the research.

B. Assessment Updates – Director Dyanna Pooley

Director Pooley conducted a presentation featuring statistics for the past academic year that included the graduate programs (similar to last year's). She is still waiting for 11 program submissions, and for nine minors that are unattached to majors. However, 41 unique courses

were assessed (from 100 to 700-levels, with most of the assessments occurring at the 400-level). There were 13 courses with 25% or more of students that did not meet expectations.

Director Pooley stated that they are in the process of improving the assessment measurements – this presentation was a sample of research with interesting results. Based on their fall assessment, Human Services and Community Justice made changes while in the midst of the year (after they found that 53% of students met or exceeded expectations, and 46% did not).

Their mid-year changes included making amendments to the modality of some sections for the online synchronous courses. Section 1: met once or twice a week online synchronously; Section 2: met once or twice a week in-person (more contact with instructors and more engagement with peers). These sections also had two different rubrics that were merged into one robust and detailed rubric for both sections. In the spring semester, they yielded the following results: 75% of students met or exceeded expectations (and fewer than before did not). Students were also given several opportunities to revise their papers. This additional feature contributed to positive changes, while students that did not take advantage of it performed lower.

Director Pooley also showed that the Anthropology and Deviance Crime and Culture programs are in the process of revising their program level outcomes in conjunction with their last program review from a few years ago. They identified two issues: 1) the language used was long and complex (this led to difficulties assessing the outcome); and 2) during the outcome application, the faculty conflated them on their syllabi. Therefore, they re-organized the outcomes, simplified the language, and have since streamlined them over this academic year. Director Pooley offered that she will have more comprehensive assessments for this section at a later date, but stressed the importance of holding a syllabus review for every department. The Department of Political Science is conducting the process on a small scale; however, it has already noticed that they may need to add writing as a learning outcome, and research skills should be embedded more thoroughly into the curriculum at all levels.

Director Pooley suggested that all faculty ought to send their syllabi in on time in order to expand the department's effort to assess their learning outcomes. Their assessment report will be due by the end of February. The Philosophy Department also wants to place a greater emphasis on assessment. The Chair, Michael Brownstein has already done research that he shared with his curriculum committee. The committee decided to maintain their current plan until the external evaluation in spring 2024. In the meantime, three immediate changes were implemented: 1) the curriculum committee would also serve as the assessment committee; 2)

the committee would review student work, instead of course faculty; 3) the sample size of student work for assessment will be increased. Their initial findings indicated that 1) most students met or exceeded writing expectations; 2) there was no significant performance difference between 200 and 300-level courses, 3) there was uneven construction of writing assignments, and 4) there was use of AI by students in their writing assignments. Director Pooley will follow up on the role of writing in their courses, and she will share the overall results of her entire findings with everyone here.

Director Pooley concluded by mentioning that there are three open seats on the Academic Assessment Committee, and those interested ought to contact her, Interim Dean Sidman or Karen Kaplowitz, the President of the Faculty senate. Students are also welcome to join.

Professor Judy-Lynne Peters mentioned her interest in Director Pooley's presentation, since she is the Chair of the Public Management Department's curriculum committee, and her department is preparing to overhaul their assessment plan. Director Pooley stated that she, Dean Sidman, or Director Ferdinand can attend the departmental curriculum committee meetings to provide assistance throughout the process.

Interim Dean Sidman encouraged all departments to revisit assessment plans for programs, especially those undergoing self-studies. He found that the current assessment practices are ineffective, if less than 20% of graduate programs conduct annual assessments, and that there is a need for better integration of assessment processes with teaching practices. He also encouraged departments that have already gone through this process to share successful assessment strategies with those departments that have yet to undertake this step.

Interim Dean Sidman concluded by inviting everyone present, or to spread the word to their colleagues, to participate in the Academic Assessment Committee's work, emphasizing the importance of their involvement in improving assessment practices, and making the process more useful and less tedious. He encouraged them to join the conversation and contribute in order to enhance the student experience through effective assessment.

The meeting concluded at 11:10 AM.

Submitted by,
Patrizia Pelgrift, scribe