

Graduate School of Public Health
Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee
Meeting Minutes | May 19, 2016

Present: Gerry Barron, Quinten Brown, Jane Clougherty, Mary Derkach, Ying Ding, Eleanor Feingold, David Finegold, Nancy Glynn, Mary Hawk, Robin Leaf, Jeremy Martinson, Zsolt Urban

Absent: Cindy Bryce, Melanie Callahan, Yue Chen, Kathleen Creppage, Hristina Denic, Patricia Documet, Julia Driessen, Taru Gupta, John Shaffer

The meeting was called to order at 1:33pm by Dr. Nancy Glynn, Acting Chair.

WritePlacer Discussion, Eleanor Feingold

Pitt Public Health has been using the WritePlacer writing test for the last two years, with the hopes of identifying writing issues in our first-year students. Recently, discussions have been taking place regarding the test's effectiveness of identifying students with writing deficiencies. Opinions vary throughout the departments within Pitt Public Health about the test. Some departments like the test, and others do not.

WritePlacer's writing prompts are similar to what one would encounter on the SATs, and the test attempts to see if the student can assemble coherent paragraphs. The consensus is that this type of writing test is ineffective for our school's needs.

Action – Eleanor will contact Pitt Public Health Program Directors to gauge their interest in discontinuing the WritePlacer exam.

Math Prep/Bootcamp Discussion, Eleanor Feingold

The faculty within Pitt Public Health have noticed that some incoming students are not where they need to be mathematically. The discussion amongst our community has centered on options we could provide students to gauge their math readiness.

After much discussion, Pitt Public Health is going to offer an optional math placement test to our incoming students. This test will be provided to our students before they arrive for orientation. The hope is that after students take the test, they will have a better understanding of their math readiness. The hope is that they will also be able to sharpen any deficiencies in their mathematical skills. Pitt Public Health will provide additional resources to the students, with the end-goal of having the students ready for the mathematical coursework ahead of them.

The topic of a math bootcamp was not discussed during this meeting.

Action – Eleanor will send a math placement test to the committee for their review.

Discussion of Writing Courses, Eleanor Feingold

The creation of writing courses within Pitt Public Health has been an ongoing discussion, similar to the previous topics discussed during this EPCC meeting. Over the last several years, faculty have noticed that the writing quality of our students, both academically and professionally, has been unsatisfactory.

Resolving the issue of what to offer the students have proven to be difficult. Different students have different writing needs, so a one-size-fits-all approach would not be effective. The two ideas currently being discussed are:

- A professional writing course
- A scientific writing course

The courses listed above would potentially be half-semester, 1-credit courses. Faculty/advisor buy-in would be critical for these classes to succeed. Students would be able to self-identify the need for extra writing work, but our faculty/advisors would also be asked to recommend students take the course(s) if they see a need.

This conversation has taken a step further, and the committee anticipates a resolution to this issue soon. The hope is to have the professional course in place for the fall.

Action – Eleanor will contact Steve Fine, a guest to a previous EPCC meeting, regarding the creation of a professional writing course.

The April meeting **minutes were** approved, with one minor edit:

- All of the syllabi being edited/created for the revised BIOST courses (2011, 2041 & 2042) will need to come back to EPCC for review. This was not clearly stated in April's meeting minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:28pm by Dr. Glynn.