Graduate School of Public Health
Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee
Meeting Minutes | June 4, 2020

Present: Cindy Bryce, Jessica Burke, Mary Derkach, Ying Ding, Patricia Documet, Jim Fabisiak, David Finegold, Nancy Glynn, Robin Leaf, Karrie Lukin, Susanna Qiao, Giovanna Rappocciolo, Kimberly Rehak, John Shaffer, and Yi-Chuan Yu

The meeting was called to order at 1:31pm by Dr. Patricia Documet, chair.

GRE School Requirement, All [vote required]

Committee members agreed on the language for the motion that they would submit to the Pitt Public Health Council regarding dropping the school-level GRE requirement for admissions. Prior to the vote, Dr. Nancy Glynn thanked Dr. Patricia Documet, the chair of the EPCC committee, for her leadership through the process and allowing the time necessary to work and think through this decision. Dr Documet extended the thanks to the student representatives for their efforts in surveying and compiling student opinion on the issue.

ACTION: 7 committee representatives voted in favor (1 vote was cast after the meeting), 1 committed member voted "opposed," and 1 abstained from voting. The motion passed.

Curriculum Update: PUBHLT 2022 Public Health Grand Rounds, Jessica Burke

Dr. Jessica Burke asked the committee members for feedback on whether the graduate school should retain the PUBHLT 2022: Public Health Grand Rounds requirement. Recently, the course experienced numerous academic integrity violations with students swiping out and then leaving before the event ended, something Dr. Cindy Burke said was embarrassing and showed students who lacked professionalism to outside speakers invited to the school.

Because of the impending restrictions to holding large events in the fall term, Jessie wanted to see if committee members thought that Grand Rounds should still be a school requirement or if changes to the course implementation (eg, new tracking system, move to remote events) should be made or if some other requirement should replace Grand Rounds.

Yi-Chuan Yu suggested students have requirements throughout their program and be required to write a short paragraph of what they learn—which would help with academic integrity violations and tracking. Susanna Qiao, another EPCC student representative, stated that the course was important to expose ourselves to different topics and areas. She added that while the workload was not difficult, working around the timing sometimes was; and she suggested that events around noon or after 5pm might be better for students' schedules.

The committee members brainstormed additional changes for Grand Rounds, most of which were positive takeaways from the virtual COVID Conversations speaker series offered by Pitt Public Health. Suggestions included: having the ability to record events so they are available later, having set time lengths, having either program directors or event organizers help to read the student response essays, having a theme for the term (eg, contact tracing), marketing the events to promote both public health and the school to the greater community. Dr. Patricia Documet mentioned having a theme could be tricky as it may mean that lesser-known topics, like Latino health, would be pushed aside.

ACTION: No action necessary.

Faculty Academic Integrity Module, Jessica Burke

Robin Leaf gave a background on the Faculty Academic Integrity Module, which was started in 2009 and which faculty have to complete once every five years or if there are any major content updates to the module. Robin stated that while there is some overlap with CTI training modules, the Faculty Academic Integrity Module has school-specific information. Committee members agreed that the module needed to be discussed and its content updated. Whether the module would remain in its current form or modified to a one-page summary could be discussed further once jurisdiction was. Robin said that who would track the module completion or send out reminders to do so was also unclear.

ACTION: Dr. Patricia Documet will contact the associate dean for research and faculty affairs regarding next steps for the Faculty Academic Integrity Module.

Discussion of Process to Review Fall 2020 Course Plans, Jessica Burke

Dr. Jessica Burke stated that the university updates for fall 2020 were to be announced soon, including the most likely option of starting the term early. Faculty will need to provide remote and in-person instruction adhering to mitigation strategies. This means that faculty have to change their approach to teaching courses and adapt to the Flex@Pitt approach. Nevertheless, Pitt Public Health leadership needs to get a sense of what is happening across the school and ensure everyone teaching in the fall has a plan as to how to implement these different options.

Dr. Jessica Burke wanted to ask how to involve the EPCC committee in the review process, and see if having a subcommittee to review that all faculty have a comprehensive plan was feasible. Dr. Patricia Documet suggested having documentation for CEPH that shows how the school has taken care of this, and she suggested having groups of two review the plans, if necessary. Dr. John Shaffer suggested having departments have a first pass and then EPCC could review the department plans. The former could be beneficial for the departments as a way to disseminate plans and ideas. Dr. Nancy Glynn concurred and said that the Department of Epidemiology proposed a similar plan that would look at plans at the program-level. Dr. Shaffer added that a subcommittee would be a great way to share the work, review plans, and would be a great opportunity to provide feedback to departments. Dr. Ying Ding agreed the committee/subcommittee should share information with departments.

While there is some flexibility about how courses are to be offered, Dr. Jessica Burke stated that student choice had to be accommodated, with the exception of lab-based courses. Dr. John Shaffer suggested that top-down guidance with regards to class scheduling would be helpful for instructors as they plan their courses for the fall 2020 term.

ACTION: No action necessary.

Discussion of Credit Hours for HyFlex Courses, Jessica Burke

Dr. Jessica Burke announced that Pitt Public Health leadership was still waiting for university guidance on how to calculate contact hours for the Flex@Pitt plan, especially with regards to asynchronous content. In terms of credit hours, she said that the school needed to come up with a way of calculating how much should be synchronous v. asynchronous. However, the general sentiment is that having a 100% asynchronous course is not ideal and does not fit with calculations for contact hours.

ACTION: No action necessary until further details are available.

Approval of EPCC Bylaws, All [vote required]

The committee reviewed updated EPCC committee bylaws. Dr. Jim Fabisiak suggested to change "at each level" regarding student representation to a more specific "master's and doctoral level." Dr. Ying Ding said to remove the space between Associate/ Assistant Deans in first and second paragraphs.

ACTION: The committee voted to approve the bylaws with the two suggested edits incorporated.

Approval of May 2020 Meeting Minutes, All [vote required]

ACTION: The committee voted to approve the May 2020 meeting minutes provided a typo ("web" to "wet") is fixed.

New Course, IDM 2019: *The Emergence and Global Spread of COVID-19*, Mackey Friedman [vote required]

Dr. Mackey Friedman presented an application for a new 2-credit course for fall 2020 intended to provide students with a background of the COVID-19 epidemic. Due to changeable nature of the course's content, flexibility was built into the syllabus by establishing basic themes that help students gain knowledge of the immergence and spread of the virus. While the course will have an infectious disease prevention and control focus, it will also cross-cut with all the major public health disciplines. Topics to be explored include: origins and pre-origins of COVID-19, globalization and the quick spread of the virus, statistical modeling of the pandemic, health policy and countries' different responses, community response, and genetic predisposition and change.

Course delivery will be online course, but Dr. Friedman mentioned that he would be open to offering outdoor, socially distanced flex / hybrid options.

Dr. Jim Fabisiak asked if students would compare and contrast COVID-19 with past pandemics. Dr. Friedman answered that the class would look at the 1918 pandemic as well as both SARS and MERS to compare and contrast how communities responded to outbreaks in the past and how worldwide conditions have contributed to spread of this virus.

Dr. David Finegold remarked that this was an interesting and timely syllabus and asked if the course would be marketed to students in other health sciences schools. Dr. Friedman said that while the course is intended for MPH students, the course content is accessible to students outside of public health disciplines—but he remarked that course materials and homework assignments might need adapting depending on the number of students in the class. Dr. Patricia Documet suggested that the course be offered in both the fall and spring terms if the demand for enrollment increased exponentially, whereas Dr. Jessica Burke mentioned that sponsoring support faculty to assist with the delivery of the course at the school-level could be discussed and investigated if need be.

Dr. Fabisiak warned that opening up the class could result in students accessing the course materials but not doing the work for the course; to which Dr. Friedman replied that it would not be possible to complete the expected work for the course, for instance: peer reviews on pre-print literature, by only accessing the lecture materials. Dr. Fabisiak replied that he liked the fact that students were analyzing literature as part of their course work.

Dr. Patricia Documet made two final suggestions: that the course catalogue description should broader to be useable for future terms, and that Learning Objectives 3 and 6 did not have measurable verbs.

ACTION: The committee voted to approve the course provided that Dr. Friedman change Learning Objectives #3 and #6 to include measurable verbs and modify the course catalogue description to make it more generalized.

New Course, HUGEN 2071: *Genomic Data Processing and Structures,* **Ryan Minster [vote required]**

Dr. Ryan Minster presented an application for a new 3-credit course created as part of the department of Human Genetics new master's degree program in bioinformatics. The main focus of the course is to provide an introduction to program in R and Unix as it is used in the analysis, manipulation, and storage processing of genetic data as well as to delve into the data structures used to human genetic and genomic data and phenotypes.

Dr. Minster expects that HUGEN PhD students interested in bioinformatics for their training and research would also be interested in taking this course although anyone with previous courswork in programming would be eligible to register.

Dr. Nancy Glynn asked if the course material would have a crossover appeal, for instance: to students enrolled in the public health genetics certificate program, and Dr. Minster said that the course could be especially relevant to public health students in epidemiology and biostatistics interested in programming and that there was an intake form to gauge the understanding of R, biostatistics and genetics for students who want to enroll but do not have the necessary prerequisites.

Dr. Patricia Documet stated that the term information for the course would need adjusting to the academic calendar as the number of credit hours was slightly off.

ACTION: The committee voted to approve the course provided that Dr. Minster correct the number of credit hours and list the percentage of instructor effort on the EPCC application form.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15pm.

Upcoming Meeting(s):
July 30, 1:30-3:30pm
* Fall 2020 new course proposals due to Student Affairs by August 10, 2020.