Sherry, here is an issue our Department Undergraduate Program Committee has asked be brought to the ECAC for discussion in Faculty/Academic Council. The new (just a week before classes) strict adherence to minimum student numbers per section that has been implemented this semester has become a major problem for our students and faculty. Several problems that are occurring are:

Many sections that otherwise would have been kept open are now being closed because of this policy and creating difficulty for our students.

Many of our lab sections are intentionally set below the minimum requirement because of the hands-on nature and need for close supervision in these labs.

Several of our labs are below the minimum but are required. Some are required for our 2 year program and could not be offered every other year without affecting the ability of 2 year students to remain on a 2 year schedule. Some of the ones that are required for our 4 year students need to be taken in order and would unnecessarily extend by another semester or more the time a student spends at MSU if not offered every year.

Some of our sections are combined lab and lecture sections and look under-filled because the sections are set up for lab sizes while all sections have a combined lecture.

Newly offered classes are at a disadvantage since they might not meet minimum their first year but might in future years.

We have worked our schedules out with other departments and colleges so that with the sections offered, students are able to schedule the courses within a semester to take courses in a logical and advised manner. With the dropping of sections this has made it impossible for several students to fit their necessary courses into a schedule for this semester and throws off their program of study, possibly extending the time they will be at MSU also.

While we have justified our courses to remain open at lower enrollment, and most have been approved, other departments have not and this is causing negative repercussions for our students who need particular sections to meet their scheduling needs.

The average number of students in a section over time seems to be a more appropriate way of keeping sections open rather than evaluating every year and causing such havoc with schedules.

It seems that section size should be more a purview of the faculty, perhaps recommended guidelines set by administrators but ultimate decision by the faculty.

The rationale for imposing these section size limits so strictly has not been explained. Perhaps this is the biggest complaint. Rumors are that it is so that teaching faculty can write grants instead of teach classes (actually most faculty might just be putting in a 50 hour week instead of a 60 hour week and not write additional grants). If that is the real rationale then what happens the next year if all the sections are full. Most grants are for multi-
year projects. If a section is too small one year and then of sufficient size the next who will do the teaching and who will do the research?

During our planning session last week transparency was one of the big issues brought up. Here is another example of a lack of transparency- rumors are driving part of the reaction to closing sections and no faculty input was requested.

Thanks- Tom

On Aug 27, 2009, at 12:44 PM, Johnson, Sherry L. wrote:

Good Afternoon,

It’s hard to believe another year has passed and here we go for another round! Please let me know if you have any agenda items you would like the Executive Committee of Academic Council to review when they meet on September 8th, 2009, to place on the Faculty Council and Academic Council meetings in September.

The deadline for submitting materials is Tuesday, September 1st. If you will be providing attachments, please make sure they are paginated.

Thank you!

Sherry

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