Academic Affairs Committee—March 31, 2020

Present: Steve Saunders, Erin Sheets, Dale Kocevski, Loren McClcnachan, Katie Donahue, Thomas LaJoie, Genesis Cazales, Lukas Alexander, Sam Scott, Lindsey Nelson, Barbara Moore, Russ Johnson, Jim Sloat

(This meeting was conducted by videoconference.)

I. Minutes from the March 10 meeting were approved.

II. Proposed changes to the Chemistry major.
Kevin Rice (Chair) and Kareena McKinney (Associate Chair) attended the first part of the meeting to answer questions about the Chemistry department’s proposal to revise its major requirements. The principal purpose of these revisions is to rearrange and expand their offerings in environmental and computational chemistry. To go along with the change in requirements, the department will cease offering CH331/332 (Analytical Chemistry), CH217 (Environmental Chemistry), and CH342L (lab for the second semester of Physical Chemistry), and introduce three new laboratory new courses (CH442, CH263, and CH452). These new courses will be hands-on open-ended courses based on problem-solving. Under the new system, these lab courses will be de-coupled from accompanying “lecture” courses.

The committee had questions about CH452 (Problems in Chemical Analysis), which is proposed to have two full afternoons of laboratory (T/R). The committee worried that such a schedule might result in difficult schedule conflicts for students. Kevin and Kareena explained the CH452 was expected to attract a small number (4-6) of students, all of whom would likely be Chemistry majors. If necessary, the department would be willing to allow a “time conflict” for a student (such as a double major) who needed to enroll in a different class on either Tuesday or Thursday afternoon.

The committee then approved both the course proposal for CH452 and the overall proposal to modify the requirements for a Chemistry major.

III. Eight course proposals were approved.

CH 452 (Problems in Chemical Analysis)
EC 364 (Gender in the Macroeconomy)
SO 2xx (Criminology) Exp, S
SO 2xx (Sociology of Immigration) Exp, S, I
SP 128 (Conversation, Composition, and Culture) revision
SP 3xx (Race, Rights, and Land in the Americas)
TD 1xx (Performance, Politics, and Practice) A, I
WP 1xx (First Year Writing: Performing Spaces/ Writing the City) A, W1
An additional proposal for the following course was also considered.

SO 3xx (Current Topics in Sociology)

This proposal was approved in principle, but not with the nonstandard (Thursday afternoon, 150 minutes, on alternating weeks) schedule proposed. The Sociology department will be given the option of having standard 75 minutes meetings once each week, or 150 minutes on alternating weeks but meeting on Friday afternoons.

IV. The college has already lifted its blanket ban on accepting transfer credits from on-line courses – for the Spring semester of 2020. Considering that in-person classes may be also be unavailable or rare during the summer, the AAC has been asked to consider whether we should lift the blanket ban for the summer as well. Even without such a ban, each individual (on-line) course would still require the standard approval from the relevant academic department at Colby, just as in-person courses do. The committee recommended that the college should lift its blanket ban on accepting transfer credits from on-line courses - for the summer of 2020.