Annual Report
Committee on Educational Policy
Academic Year 2014-2015

Membership: Alberto Bianchi (Chair), Provost Linda Eisenmann, Talitha Espiritu, President Dennis Hanno, Chris Kalberg (Spring), Donna Kerner (Fall), John Kricher (Fall), Kathy Morgan (Spring), Associate Provost Gail Sahar (Non-voting Member), Janice Sklensky, Amaya Illuri ’16 (Student Representative, Spring), Susan Colson ’96 (Recording Secretary, Fall) and Assistant Provost James Mancall (Recording Secretary, Spring).

I. Summary of the activities of the Educational Policy Committee, AY 2014-2015

The Educational Policy Committee met approximately once per week and held twenty-one meetings during the academic year 2014-2015.

Over the course of the year, the committee carried out the regular business of discussing and approving new course proposals as well as new Connections proposals and changes to existing Connections, discussing and granting Beyond the West designations, etc. The details can be found in the weekly minutes of the committee meetings (available on onCourse). The Student Initiated Connections subcommittee reviewed and approved 60 proposals.

In addition to overseeing the requirements of the Wheaton curriculum and various subcommittees associated with the curriculum, the committee:

• Discussed and proposed a change in faculty legislation in order to regulate credit overlap for students with multiple majors. The change of legislation was presented to and approved by the faculty. (November 9, March 17)

• Discussed a memo presented by Professor Michael Drout regarding the potential for an interdepartmental minor or major in Linguistics as well as the possibility of replacing ENG 060 and 101 with a two-semester sequence of Anglo-Saxon and Beowulf. (Sept. 18)

• Discussed the “Report on Global Education for Wheaton in the 21st Century” prepared by the Global Advisory Subcommittee and the Global Advisory Subcommittee end of year report presented by Professor Donna Kerner. (September 25)

• Discussed the possibility of providing professional development courses for high school teachers. (September 25)

• Reviewed and selected course proposals for the summer session of 2015. (October 16)

• Discussed and approved two revisions to the Math major. (October 9, November 6)
• Discussed and approved a proposal to change the name of the minor in Community Health to Public Health. (December 4)

• Discussed with Professor Robert Morris an updated version of Wheaton’s affiliation agreement with the New England College of Optometry. (February 24)

• Reviewed the report on QA prepared by the Curriculum Evaluation subcommittee and discussed possible ways to implement the subcommittee’s recommendations. (March 24, 31)

• Discussed and denied a student’s request to receive academic credit for an internship completed while studying abroad. (April 14) The committee reaffirmed the criteria for awarding credit for internships and clarified that, if the internship is not connected to a seminar, the decision to integrate an internship and an independent study rests solely with individual departments. (May 7)

Over the course of the year, the committee discussed several major initiatives, some of which had been launched the previous academic year. After lengthy discussions and after seeking input and guidance from the faculty, the committee:

• Established a pilot summer academic program for high school students beginning in the summer of 2015. The committee reviewed several proposals from faculty members and approved 3 courses. (Sept. 4,11,18; Oct. 9, 16, 30; Nov. 6)

• Reviewed the first report from the Online Learning Subcommittee prepared by Professor Josh Stenger (Fall 2014) and proposed a change to the existing practice of not offering online courses at Wheaton. The new guidelines establish the criteria for approval of online summer courses taught by Wheaton faculty. (Oct. 23, 30; Nov. 6)

• Reviewed the second report from the Online Learning Subcommittee prepared by Professor Alberto Bianchi (Spring 2015) and proposed an amendment to the existing policy on electronic courses. The revised policy establishes academic criteria and the approval process for online course credit transfer. (March 31; April 7, 14)

The discussion about online courses credit transfer triggered a wider discussion on Wheaton’s general policy on credit transfer and its potential impact on Wheaton’s ability to attract transfer students. In order to get a full picture of the situation, the committee invited Vice President and Dean of Admissions Grant Gosselin, Registrar Pat Santilli, and Associate Dean of Studies Alex Trayford. In addition to online courses transfer credit, some of the issues discussed were the current process for evaluating transfer credit, the impact of curricular requirements (Connections in particular) on transfer students and the semester hour equivalence of Wheaton credits, which typically results in the award of fractional credit. (March 17)

As a follow-up to that discussion, the committee reviewed Wheaton’s current practice of not awarding credit for courses counted as requirements for secondary school graduation or taken
in a high school setting. While such practices are more or less in line with those of other colleges, a growing number of our peer institutions award credits for such courses. Thus, the committee

• proposed a revision to the existing practice in order to allow students to petition Ed Pol and seek recognition for academic credit for college courses taken during high school. The revision will be reflected in the Academic Planning Guide after further consultations with the Office of the Registrar and Academic Advising. (April 21, 28, May 7)

A major curricular issue that was discussed at length was that of Connections.

• Professor Chris Kalberg, Chair of the Ad Hoc Connections Subcommittee, proposed revisions to the Student-Initiated Connections Proposal and to the Connections Declaration forms. The goal of the proposed revisions is to ask students to reflect on their Connection and on how their experience of that Connection reflects the learning outcomes published on Wheaton’s Connections webpage. The committee agreed that further discussion is needed in order to determine the process for evaluating the collected data. (February 24, March 17)

• Connections were also discussed in relation to experiential learning. The committee reviewed two proposals for faculty-initiated Connections that proposed to explore the inclusion of a structured internship as the third element of an existing Connection. While the current definition of Connections in Faculty Legislation prevented the committee from approving such proposals, the committee acknowledged the value of integrating experiential learning in Wheaton’s Connections. The committee brought the issue to the May 4th faculty meeting for a preliminary discussion with the faculty. (February 17, March 17)

The committee discussed the role of the Associate Provost as a non-voting member of the Educational Policy Committee. While this may appear to some as an increase of administrators in the committee, the consensus among the members of Ed Pol was that the Associate Provost is a very valuable presence and an asset to the committee. (September 18)

The committee also reviewed the responsibilities of the Educational Policy Committee and the subcommittees of Ed Pol and found several areas that need to be updated on the website of the Office of the Provost. (April 14) The Ad Hoc subcommittee on Online Learning and the Ad Hoc subcommittee on Credit-Bearing Internship were disbanded. (May 7)

Lastly, the committee reviewed the experimental courses (098, 198, 298 and 398) offered at Wheaton over the last decade and noticed a generalized tendency to repeat experimental courses without seeking approval, as mandated by Faculty Legislation. (October 16) The committee therefore

• strongly recommends that faculty members and departments seek approval for experimental courses that have already been offered in the past.
• established a new practice by which, at the time when departments and programs submit the course schedule for the following year, the Registrar will refer the requesting department or faculty member to Ed Pol and the committee will hear a petition for an exception. (April 28)

After a prolonged period of time without student representation (see Annual Report 2013-2014), the committee welcomed a new student representative during the second half of the spring semester and hopes that the student member will continue attending the meetings next year.

The Educational Policy Committee wishes to thank Associate Provost Gail Sahar for her work and dedication throughout the year and Assistant Provost Jim Mancall for his efforts as recording secretary as well as for his contribution to the discussions.

II. Commitments for AY 2015-2016

• Evaluate the outcomes of the first iteration of the summer academic program for high school students.

• Further discuss and implement the revisions to the Student Initiated Connections Proposal and to the Connections Declaration forms presented by Professor Chris Kalberg on behalf of the Ad-Hoc Connections Subcommittee.

• Further discuss with the Ad-Hoc Connections Subcommittee and the faculty the implications, difficulties and advantages of integrating experiential learning into the Connections curriculum.

• Further discuss the report on QA prepared by the Curriculum Evaluation subcommittee and implement the recommendations suggested in the report.

• Collect data for a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the pre-matriculation students’ petitions seeking recognition for academic credit for college courses taken during high school.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee on Educational Policy,
Alberto Bianchi, Chair