

MINUTES
Liberal Arts Core Committee
October 26, 2007
Student Involvement and Activities Center Meeting Room,
Plaza level, Maucker Union

Present: Maria Basom, Ken Baughman, Adam Bentley, Nadene Davidson, Donna Hoffman, Siobahn Morgan, Jean Neibauer, Donna Vinton

Guest: Jerry Smith (Management)

I. Call to Order:

Morgan called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M.

II. Approval of October 19, 2007 Minutes

Baughman moved and Davidson seconded the approval of minutes for the October 19, 2007 meeting. A few corrections were noted in the minutes, and the minutes were approved.

III. Announcements

- A. Morgan mentioned that the Faculty Senate has docketed for inclusion into the Capstone category the currently existing courses (those already in the UNI Catalog) which had previously been approved for Capstone by the LACC. The only caveat is that the Senate would like to consider the courses individually, not as a group. This will be at the November 12 Faculty Senate meeting.
- B. The UCC has approved the CSBS package, and have only the interdisciplinary courses left. They will not be meeting again until November 7.

IV. New Business

Smith was on hand to talk about the Status Report on the work of the LAC Design Team. There was the suggestion that the Purposes and Goal (P&G) document previously discussed by the LACC could be forwarded to the Faculty Senate for action. Hoffman stated that the P&G document seems to go hand-in-hand with the Status Report and both documents should be considered together. Also, there should be more input on the P&G document from the entire University community. Smith mentioned that the P&G document could be put out first as an over arching philosophy or design of the LAC – not something that would detail the specific ways in which the P&Gs are to be met. Another motivation to work on such documents is to demonstrate to the accreditation group (HLC) that we are actively working to improve our curricula.

Baughman pointed out that the material in the P&G and Status Report should be presented to the faculty before any actions are taken by the LACC or the Senate.

LACC members could discuss the material with the various college senates, for example. Basom followed up on this by suggesting that the documents or parts of them, be e-mailed to all faculty for their input and to raise their awareness about what is going on with the LAC. There was general support for the idea that input from the faculty should come before any actions by the LACC on the documents.

There was some discussion about the need for the inclusion of something as specific as “Understanding of Contemporary Issues” to be included in the P&G document. Such points are often included in other P&G documents at other institutions, as are often rather specific items. Another item pointed out was the lack of the requirement for foreign language competency as part of the “Skills” in the P&G document. Currently foreign language skills are required for graduation, and often these are met with high school courses. There was discussion on how much the Non-Western Cultures courses address these issues, but in general they tend not to include communication or language components. It might be best to have the foreign language/communication skills as part of an overall university or graduation requirement. This might be a good item to include in the discussions for the Provost’s Curriculum Taskforce.

Next was discussion about the Status Report. Hoffman mentioned some concerns about the document, such as the already mentioned procedural issues about getting faculty input into the process. The exclusion of the Literature, Philosophy and Religion section was also viewed negatively. There were some logistical or practical issues that were also mentioned. There was some question about having the broad topic courses in the Social Sciences from a practical standpoint. In particular who would be teaching these broad topic courses? For example the “American Experience” course would most likely be staffed by faculty from only a few departments, which would put a severe strain on those departments. Also the control of the course will be out of the hands of the individual instructors since these courses would be designed to be uniform or consistent across all sections. There would have to be significant shifts in resources to provide sufficient instructors for these courses. Another option would be to take the proposed broad courses and change them to category subdivisions, and place the current courses within those groups.

Smith mentioned that the implementation of the proposed courses would take some time and be a gradual process. The courses could be created and placed within the current LAC, and then staffing for these courses and other courses in those categories could be adjusted gradually. Faculty should be able to teach the broad topic courses effectively with support from others in their college. There was some discussion about the freedom of the faculty to teach the content they want to teach and not being micro-managed by a committee overseeing the courses. Baughman noted the importance of getting faculty buy-in to the concepts early in the LAC revision process, and their support would be important to ensure the success of any program. Some of the material in the report could be used by category coordinating committees to form a basis for managing courses, having consistency across the sections.

Baughman asked about the impact on the community college transfer student, in particular those that aren't coming into UNI with an AA degree. UNI students who go home during the summer and pick up a few courses from their local community college would also be impacted. Morgan speculated that the community college courses will still transfer, as many do now, since they have similar intent to what is required in the LAC. Bentley noted that students like to have options when they select courses, but does appreciate the idea of the broad topic courses. He encouraged the idea of having the broad courses made as an option initially, and the LAC would be gradually changed. He did also note the logistical problems in terms of funding and staffing that will arise with this plan.

Smith noted that the broad topic courses could be currently taught by instructors in the various categories, so that there isn't really a lack of resources there – they would just be reassigned to the broad topic courses and fewer of the “old” LAC course sections would be offered. There are also concerns for courses in the LAC that also serve as major requirements – those will still have to be taught, in addition to the broad topic courses.

Davidson noted that the Personal Wellness course was not included in the plan, and she stressed that there is a need for a course in health literacy. Bentley mentioned that he has found from conversation with many students that health should be a component of a student's education; however it need not be in the form of Personal Wellness. Bentley suggested that health concepts could be incorporated into the proposed “cornerstone” course. Hoffman noted that Personal Wellness is unpopular with students partially due to the lack of choice in terms of the lecture component and seems to also suffer from a lack of resources within HPELS.

There was further discussion about the broad topic courses and how faculty might view these negatively as courses that are forced upon them, as opposed to the current subject specific courses in the LAC. Smith noted that the Humanities sequence is an example of broad topic courses that are taken by all students (at least 2 out of the 3 courses) and that faculty support for these courses helps maintain their quality. It is also possible to have assessments of student learning done in the broad topic courses fairly easily as opposed to the current courses which have different outcomes and goals.

Further discussion of the documents will continue at the next LAC meeting.

V. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the session was made by Hoffman, and seconded by Davidson.
Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

Next Meeting – 8:00 AM, November 2, 2007 – in the SIAC meeting room.

Respectfully submitted,
Siobahn Morgan

LAC website: <http://www.uni.edu/vpaa/lac/index.shtml>