

MINUTES
Liberal Arts Core Committee
November 2, 2007
Student Involvement and Activities Center Meeting Room,
Plaza level, Maucker Union

Present: Maria Basom, Ken Baughman, Adam Bentley, Jerry Caswell, Donna Hoffman, Siobahn Morgan, Frank Thompson, Lori VanHooreweghe, Donna Vinton

Guest: Jerry Smith (Management)

I. Call to Order:

Morgan called the meeting to order at 8:10 A.M.

II. Approval of October 26, 2007 Minutes

Thompson moved and Basom seconded the approval of minutes for the October 26, 2007 meeting. A few corrections were noted in the minutes, and the minutes were approved.

III. Announcements

- A. There are a few mistakes in the spring 2008 schedule of classes. One of the new Capstone courses was accidentally excluded. There will be some advertising so that the students are aware of this course. Some other sections of ETS (820:140) were also added after the schedules were printed. There are about 1000 available seats in all of the Capstone sections.
- B. The Category 2A Review is going forward, with discussions taking place in the various departments that contribute to the category. It is hoped that the 2A report will get to the LACC before the end of the semester. The Category 4 review is progressing and the LACC will need to meet with that review team before the end of the semester. November 30 is a possible date for a meeting with the Category 4 review team. The meeting is part of the regular schedule for the review process, with the next step being a written report in the spring, and the final report turned in at the end of spring semester.

IV. New Business

Morgan distributed a copy of a Capstone Course proposal, "Money, Sex and Power: Theories of Race, Class and Gender" from the Philosophy and Religion department to the LACC. The course is currently in the curriculum packet and will be put before the Faculty Senate when the other curriculum packages are considered. The proposal will be considered at the November 9 meeting. Morgan was asked to contact Harry Brod for further information about the course.

V. Old Business

Discussion continued on the “Status Report” from the LAC Design Team. Thompson had some questions about the proposal. The first question is were the problem or problems of the current LAC stated. The second question is if those problem(s) have been identified, how does the current proposal address them. The third question is how have opportunities for faculty input on the proposal been provided, in particular to address the problem(s) in the current LAC. The last question was addressed by pointing out that there were several open forums for input from the University community about the LAC during the spring 2007 semester. The input from these forums was included in the proposal in several areas. The next step is to get even more input on the proposal from the University community. There was concern that there wasn’t enough input from the faculty, in particular the faculty that teach in the LAC. It was stressed that effective proposals are “from the ground up”, and include input from those that would act upon the recommendations of the proposal. Baughman noted that some of these concerns were discussed at the previous meeting, and that the next action would be to send it out to the LAC faculty for input.

Basom suggested that the proposal be sent out to coordinating committees or faculty groups that oversee the LAC in the colleges, such as category review teams. She noted that the proposal from the Design Team could be the starting point for discussion about the LAC. Morgan noted that the LAC has impact across the entire University, and as such input should be solicited from all faculty. Thompson suggested that the current problems in the LAC be included in the proposal and how the proposal addresses those problems. Smith noted that not all actions need to be taken only in response to problems, but that opportunities for improvement should also be taken for the sake of improving the LAC. In previous assessments of students at UNI, critical thinking skills were seen to be very deficient. This is one area where improvement is needed since it is not currently addressed in the LAC.

Thompson asked about the need to pass the proposal quickly through the approval process. Smith mentioned that there isn’t a rush to get it approved, but that there would be deliberate steps involving faculty consultations and opportunities for feedback throughout the process. There are multiple steps in the curriculum approval and revision process which would take quite some time. Thompson again expressed concern that specific problems had not yet been identified with the current LAC, and that the proposal is not designed to meet any specific problems, and improve the LAC. The proposal suggests that the current LAC be altered in significant ways, and that there has not been any justification shown for such a large scale overhaul for the LAC.

Baughman suggested that we have a collective set of questions for the university community to address when viewing the proposal. Basom would like to see the proposal go forward as a “status report”, not as an endorsed document, and that we’d like to get feedback from the faculty. This would help to initiate discussion about the LAC across the campus and give faculty “talking points” to address. Questions such as “what will make it better”, “what questions do you have about it”, “what is missing”, and so forth. The proposal has already been distributed rather widely in various

colleges and it has resulted in quite a bit of discussion in colleges and departments. Baughman suggested we take advantage of the current discussions and use the feedback from these bodies to improve the proposal.

There was discussion that the proposal was developed by a committee that included non-faculty, and the fact that the faculty at UNI control the curriculum. It was noted that the faculty members of the committee were the source for the LAC curriculum that was proposed. While non-faculty members had contributed to the documents, the final decision about the approval of any curricular proposal is ultimately up to the faculty.

Baughman suggested some questions that we would like to send to faculty when reviewing the proposal such as “what in this proposal has the potential for improving the LAC”, “what in the proposal might be problematic”, “what other possibilities are there for strengthening the LAC that are not included in the proposal”, “what suggestions do you have for the procedure (improving the LAC) to be constructive”, and “is the LAC just fine as it is”. Thompson posed the following questions: Could current problems in the LAC be resolved if more resources were given to the teaching of the LAC? Is the current LAC being taught at UNI being undermined by the LAC courses being taught at community colleges? If the proposal were approved, would the proposal be undermined by having the proposed courses offered also at community colleges? Morgan noted that the current articulation agreements with community colleges would allow those courses to transfer in, just as LAC courses transfer in now.

Morgan asked the committee to provide guidance for the next steps dealing with the “status report” document, as well as the “Purposes and Goals” document from the LAC Design Team. Hoffman mentioned that something that should be included in the document are some responses to the question of “why do we need to revise the LAC?” Also where have these broad courses been offered (which other institutions) and how are they being received at those institutions? More background and data concerning these would help to build consensus amongst the faculty concerning the ideas that are proposed. Thompson again stressed the need for more faculty ownership of the LAC and feedback into any proposed changes. The timeline will also have to be changed, with the dates removed and some adjustment to the order of the steps. Baughman mentioned the role of coordinating committees for both current and future LAC categories as a way of maintaining consistency across the category. The committees could also help to strengthen the LAC through regular assessments of the courses in the categories. This would help to maintain ongoing improvement of the LAC.

The likely next step is to make the suggested changes to the “status report”, including adding the questions that have been raised at this meeting, and once it is ready, send it out to the university community. With only four more weeks of classes in the semester, there is not sufficient time to get feedback from the faculty this fall, but ample opportunities for feedback will be provided through various means during the spring semester. Once that feedback has been gathered, the LACC will then determine the next course of action concerning the proposal. It may be best to include the questions that have been raised by the LACC in a cover letter along with further

elaboration on the proposal. Baughman suggested that the current document could be sent out with a cover letter. Since the document has already been distributed, it might be appropriate to send it out to the entire University community at this time with just the addition of a cover letter. The cover letter would provide some background, indicate that this is a working document, and mention that feedback opportunities would be available in the future.

Smith mentioned that he will be adding some suggestions from Basom about cross-culture items to be included in the "Purposes and Goals" document. It is also appropriate to remove the specific dates that are included in the time-line. Some of the steps in the "Next Step" section also will need to be revised since more faculty input will be sought early in the process. A revised proposal should include a statement noting that this is similar to the original document, but has been changed slightly. Basom suggested alternate wording for the terms "grade level" and "freshman" in the appendix, possibly to "class standing" and "first year".

VI. Adjournment

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

Next Meeting – 8:00 AM, November 9, 2007 – in the SIAC meeting room.

Respectfully submitted,
Siobahn Morgan
LAC website: <http://www.uni.edu/vpaa/lac/index.shtml>