

Liberal Arts Core Committee
9 November 2007; 8:30 a.m.
SIAC Meeting Room, Maucker Union

Present: Maria Basom, Ken Baughman, Adam Bentley, Jerry Caswell, Nadene Davidson, Jean Neibauer, Ron O'Meara, Lori Van Hooreweghe, Donna Vinton

Guest: Harry Brod (Philosophy and Religion)

Call to Order: Baughman called the meeting to order at about 8:30 a.m.

I. Approval of Minutes: Several small corrections were noted; Caswell moved, Bentley seconded, approval of the minutes as corrected for the 2 November 2007 meeting. **Motion passed without dissent or abstention.**

II. Announcements

A. Baughman summarized Siobahn Morgan's report that she has received a pre-publication copy of Study Abroad's forthcoming *Northern* Iowan ad for Summer 2008 that will feature several LAC courses:

820:140 Environment, Technology, and Society—in China and in Transylvania
Communication Disorders and Society *and* Socio-Economic Reality of Central America
—both in Nicaragua
Being National—in Poland
Arts and Humanities in Russia

All of these except the last will satisfy LAC 6 Capstone Experience; the last will satisfy LAC 2B Non-Western Culture. There was clear consensus that "to really do our job," Committee members need University support to observe and review on site LAC courses offered abroad.

B. Baughman summarized Morgan's report that the Faculty Senate, at its 12 November meeting, will act on existing permanent courses that the LAC Committee has approved for LAC 6 Capstone Experience credit (previously, these courses had been approved for LAC 6 credit on a 3-year pilot basis). Those courses that previously could be taken for graduate credit, designated with a "g," have had the "g" removed in the current curricular process, to comply with LAC policy that LAC courses may not be taken for graduate credit.

At its 26 November meeting, the Faculty Senate will act on proposals for new permanent LAC courses including several new Capstone Experience courses as well as Mathematical Reasoning for Teaching I (I.C) and Inquiry into Earth Science (IV.B).

III. Old Business

A. Proposal: that new course, "Back in the Valley: Martin Luther King Jr and the 21st Century," satisfy LAC 6 Capstone—Davidson moved (Basom seconded) that this course be approved to satisfy LAC 6.

It was noted that this course has been offered three times on a pilot basis for LAC 6 Capstone Experience credit.

Motion passed without dissent or abstention.

B. Proposal that new course, “Money, Sex & Power: Theories of Race, Class & Gender,” satisfy LAC 6 Capstone: Professor Harry Brod was present to discuss this course with the LAC Committee.

Brod noted that this course is distinctive in that it considers together the categories of race, class, and gender, which often are explored separately. By focusing on the interrelationships among race, class, and gender and taking into account wealth, power, and sexuality, the course is necessarily interdisciplinary and offers students opportunity to reflect in a systematic and comprehensive way on their own lives in society as they near completion of their degrees. While the course has been team-taught several times with Professor Karen Mitchell, Communication Studies, with an emphasis on “Performance and Social Change,” the current proposal differs from the team-taught course in that it will not have a performance component, and instead will feature discussion and papers on a wide variety of readings, ranging from the experiential to the theoretical and political. Student questions about the readings and issues explored in the course will be used to help frame and guide the discussions.

Suggestions from Committee members included developing a supplementary reading list, devising ways for students with diverse majors to collaborate in projects or presentations, and perhaps connecting students’ papers in some way to their majors, thus permitting them to reflect on ways in which their various disciplines could engage this course’s special focus.

The Committee commended Brod for devising a catchy course title for a most important topic, and thanked him for discussing the course with the Committee.

Basom moved (O’Meara seconded) that this course be approved to satisfy LAC 6.

Noting that the proposal indicated a limit of 35, Committee members expressed support for this and other Capstone Experience courses being limited to 25, if possible, in order to enable discussion and as much student participation and collaboration as possible. Committee members also expressed hope that Capstone courses such as this one might include, wherever possible, an experiential component, for example, projects and presentations such as the group performance projects featured in this course when it was team-taught.

The motion passed without dissent or abstention.

C. Discussion of the “Status Report” from the LAC Review Design Team

Baughman reported that he met with the Senate of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts regarding the “Status Report” at the request of its Chair. He assured the CHFA Senate that this document was a draft that the LAC Committee was just beginning to discuss and that the LACC shared the CHFA Senate’s desire for systematic and comprehensive faculty input as well as its desire for any revisions of the LAC being based on attention to identifying learning goals and outcomes. The CHFA Senate discussion concluded with its approval of this motion: “Since the LAC belongs to the entire faculty, the CHFA Senate recommends that if changes are ever proposed, the LACC develop a process which begins with input from the faculty across campus.”

Wide-ranging discussion followed. It included consideration of the number of hours required in the proposed revision and the relatively high number of hours in majors, the current LAC, and the current Professional Education Sequence. Bentley suggested that a smaller LAC program could make UNI appear more competitive with colleges and universities that have somewhat fewer General Education or Liberal Arts requirements than UNI. Davidson expressed interest in discussing the area of health literacy. Basom noted the possibility of core competencies and skills, including fluency in a language other than English being considered as degree requirements rather than as a component of the LAC. Vinton suggested collecting and presenting to faculty the data currently being gathered on student performance on several nationally-administered tests of basic academic skills. Information such as this and also information on nationally-distributed reports on the Liberal Arts and perhaps model Liberal Arts programs could be quite useful in providing larger context for faculty discussions about revising our LAC. Several commented on the potential benefits of a more systematic approach to providing students writing instruction and practice both at their level of proficiency and across the curriculum with more resources devoted to student writing centers and faculty workshops on writing pedagogy.

There was clear consensus that the LACC will continue to discuss the “Status Report,” that it will make it available—with explanation of the process—to all university faculty, and it will seek discussion and input from all university faculty. Suggestions for the explanation to accompany the LACC’s distribution of the “Status Report” to university faculty included the following (with thanks here to Lori VanHooreweghe’s summary sent to Committee members after the meeting!).

- a. The “Status Report” could be posted on a webpage accessible to all university faculty, and then an e-mail memo of explanation could be sent to all faculty with a link to this webpage. This webpage could also include—or provide links to—information useful for review of our LAC Program (for example, data on UNI student performance on tests of basic skills, documents discussing the Liberal Arts within BA programs, model Liberal Arts programs, student outcomes in LAC programs).
- b. Make clear that the “Status Report” is a proposal only recently presented to the LAC Committee for its review and discussion; because it was distributed to some faculty before the Committee has had time to discuss it fully, the Committee is making it accessible to all faculty with explanation of the process through which this “Report” was prepared and by which it will be considered by the LACC and university faculty.
- c. The “Status Report” takes into account suggestions made in the several faculty forums held this past Spring Semester, including the proposal for a first-year “cornerstone course”; perhaps include comment on the genesis and development of other features of the proposal.
- d. Consider including brief statement of concerns and challenges with respect to the current LAC Program, and then comment on the possible benefits of proposed changes.
- e. Confirm that, before the LACC acts on proposals for change in the LAC, it will again seek the advice and suggestions of university faculty and students during the Spring 2008 Semester.

IV. Adjournment: VanHooreweghe moved, Basom seconded, to adjourn. Motion passed by unanimous consent; the meeting adjourned at about 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ken Baughman

Next Meeting: 8:00 a.m. Friday, 16 November, SIAC Meeting Room, Maucker Union