

MINUTES
Liberal Arts Core Committee
October 6, 2006
SIAC Meeting Room, Maucker Union

Present: Ken Baughman, Jerry Caswell, Cyndi Dunn, Siobahn Morgan, Jean Neibauer, Jerry Smith, Michelle Swanson, Lori VanHooreweghe
Guests: Jerry Ridenhour (Mathematics), Suzanne Riehl (Mathematics), Diane Thiessen (Mathematics), Glenn Nelson (Mathematics), Carol Cooper (HPELS)

I. Call to Order:

Chair Morgan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes:

Dunn provided a correction to the minutes. This correction was put into the minutes. Dunn moved and Smith seconded the approval of the amended minutes for September 29, 2006. Motion passed.

III LAC Course Proposals

Discussion of 800:0XX: *Mathematical Reasoning for Teaching I*

The mathematics representatives presented the reasons for proposing the new course. Currently the elementary education (EE) majors take fewer credit hours in mathematics than are recommended for that major by national standards (12 credits recommended). Currently student usually take the LAC course 800:023 (*Mathematics in Decision Making*) and 800:030 (*Mathematics for Elementary Teachers*). It is not likely that the length of the EE program can be expanded by adding more courses, so it was thought a better solution would be to provide an alternative in the LAC for these majors that would be specifically designed for the program.

They are proposing two courses; the one under discussion would also be for LAC credit, and another one to take the place of 800:030. These two new courses would then replace the current sequence 800:023, and 800:030. These new courses would not be suitable for all students, since they involve a deep understanding of mathematics and numbers in order to effectively communicate these to elementary students.

Neibauer mentioned the complication with students who pick up the EE major after they have already 800:023, or whether there will be enough sections available for all of the EE majors. Staffing for 800:023 can shift to the new courses as the EE majors will take it rather than 800:023 – since all students need a category 1C course, staffing is not likely to be a problem. There may be the need to teach some larger sections of other 1C classes to help in this. Currently some sections of 800:023 are up to 60 students, but larger

sections could also be offered if necessary. For the case of a student who has already taken a 1C course before declaring an EE major, then they would need to take this course since it is a prerequisite for the second course in the sequence. Transfer students would also likely be affected by it as well. There will be communication with the community colleges about these changes to help them accommodate their students.

Smith wondered about the differences in 800:023 and this course – which topics would be covered in 800:023 but not here. Right now 2/3 of 800:023's material is probability and statistics, with the remainder up to the instructor's discretion. Topics have included financial mathematics, annuities, mortgages, etc. These sorts of things would not be in the new course, but the probabilities and statistics material would be included in the new course. There would be more emphasis on rational numbers and the understanding of the meaning of numbers (not to be confused with NUMB3RS).

While there will not be an ACT recommended level for the course, students in the EE major are required to have a minimum GPA to be admitted into the Teacher Education program (2.5). This course will still have to go through the entire curriculum process for approval. Since this scheme will not add any courses to the major, it may not have many hurdles to overcome. This course could also have an impact, positively hopefully, on their scores on the PPST.

Discussion of *Local Issues: Advocacy and Civil Engagement* for Capstone Credit

Carol Cooper discussed her course and also distributed supplementary information about the course requirements (a bit more substantial course outline). The course is about community activism. The students will select a community issue and look at it from all sides. Reports would have to be concerning the major issue that will be tackled in the course, and the students would also be involved in the planning, and implementation of a Community Dialog about the issue. The League of Women Voters would be involved, as well as other groups in the community. There are also several other faculty members that would be involved in this course along with Cooper. Due to the complexity of the course and the involvement of a large number of individuals, certain specifics have yet to be worked out, such as whether there is a text book, or lists of specific readings.

Smith asked whether there were plans to include more assessment mechanisms, such as tests, papers, quizzes. Cooper mentioned that such things would be possible, as well as reflective papers and journals. She also mentioned that there would likely be required readings from either a textbook or from articles that the student would be writing about. Some topics already in the course outline would easily lend themselves to such papers, as was pointed out by Dunn.

Dunn asked about the major project and how the students would obtain information on that. Cooper mentioned that they would use a wide variety of methods, including interviews, traditional research, etc. Participation would also be encouraged, including attending various community forums. Cooper is planning to offer the course through

AEA 267 in the spring '07. The course size would likely not be much greater than 25, ideally the size would be 20 – but a few more could be fit in.

Baughman asked about the portfolio, and the guidelines for the final reflection paper, in particular how much weight there is on various parts of the portfolio, and if there were specific requirements for the final paper. Cooper provided some input on this, that it could be used to see how things progressed compared to what was expected at the onset, along with any final views on the entire experience. She did agree that there may need to be more instructions, or the opportunity for students to get feedback on their final paper. There were some errors in the percentages that are described in the syllabus, and that further details on the student portfolio – specific grade breakdown – are needed. The use of an individual student portfolio was lauded as a good way of assessing group projects, in particular to check that all students are involved in the group project and that there is no “free-loading”.

IV. Discussion of LAC Proposals

Of the four proposals discussed so far, the committee decided to tackle Carol Cooper’s proposal first. The committee discussed the importance of readings for a course and that in the past, we’ve asked for instructors to provide further details on the course materials – basically a revised, beefed-up syllabus listing specific readings and/or texts. The committee decided to ask Cooper for such a beefing-up – to give the committee a list of specific readings. The journal could also be used as a more effective probe of course material, especially if there were specific questions that were required of students each week as part of their journal entries. The committee would suggest substantive questions that would help to measure the students’ learning.

The next proposal discussed as that proposed by David Landis, 230:186g. Based upon our previous discussion and the feedback from the Non-Western Cultures committee, the committee believed the course was more suitable for the Capstone Experience category. Some of the things that would need to be addressed were the lack of assigned readings.

Smith made the motion that the course NOT be approved as part of the Non-Western Cultures category (2B). Caswell seconded. Motion passed.

It was suggested that Morgan contact David Landis about resubmitting the course as a Capstone Experience course, along with revisions in terms of the course readings (providing specific readings assignments) and providing more structure for the assessment of students. The course title should also be changed to reflect the fact that it covers a single country, not an entire region.

V. Announcements:

A. Morgan suggested that everyone take a peak at President Allen’s speech from his installation since there were some strong LAC statements in it.
<http://www.uni.edu/pres/speeches/installation.shtml>

B. Morgan reminded the committee members that the next meeting will feature one course proposal from Kamyar Enshayan, and a visit from Interim Provost Jim Lubker and Susan Koch, Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

C. Morgan distributed a page showing the likely department number listing for the new Capstone Experience courses that have so far been approved. If the new Capstone model is approved, these courses will have to go through the regular curriculum process and that requires departments to put the necessary material together. That would also require some consensus on exactly which department or departments will oversee the course. Department heads and instructors were notified of this issue and asked to address it. Morgan also mentioned her rather clever idea about how the printed schedule of courses could be restructured in the future. Many universities list in a special section all of their LAC courses by category – details on when & where the course is being offered, the instructor, basically all of the things generally listed in the schedule of classes. Such listings are placed in their own special place in the course schedule, before the department-ordered listings for example. The courses would be included in the appropriate department listing as well, but having a special LAC section of the schedule may help students find courses that are spread across many different departments, such as the new Capstone courses, or those in the Fine Arts, or Literature, Philosophy and Religion categories.

D. Morgan reminded the committee to provide her with feedback on the Capstone report that was previously distributed. This could include any typos, things excluded, things that should be excluded, and anything else that will improve the quality of this fine document.

VI. Adjournment:

Smith moved to adjourn; Swanson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Next Meeting – October 13, 2006 (ooooohhh-scary!)

Respectfully submitted,
Siobahn Morgan