

MINUTES
Liberal Arts Core Committee
November 17, 2006
SIAC Meeting Room, Maucker Union

Present: Ken Baughman, Jerry Caswell, Cyndi Dunn, Brian Larkin, Siobahn Morgan, Jean Neibauer, Jerry Smith, Lori VanHooreweghe, Donna Vinton

I. Call to Order:

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

II. Meeting with Non-Western Cultures Representatives:

Charles Holcombe and Donna Maier from the Non-Western Cultures committee met with the LAC committee to talk about the category 2B review. Morgan mentioned that the overall result of the report is that of satisfaction of the state of the NWC part of the LAC. The only changes proposed are that of some course descriptions in the current curriculum cycle. Morgan also lauded the interest that the NWC committee has in monitoring the quality of the program and noted that the number of tenure/tenure-track faculty in this part of the LAC is one of the highest. The NWC committee would also like to be consulted on new hires for anyone teaching in the NWC courses.

The assessment mechanism for the category 2B courses was discussed. The NWC committee plans to do student assessments every year. They will do the direct student assessment every other year, with the indirect student assessment in the interim years. Currently they are doing the student self assessments and will collect and analyze them later this year. There was discussion about the degree of immersion of students in other cultures and whether students appreciate the experience. In some cases students do find such experiences noteworthy and are finding relevance of the material to their lives here in Iowa, and in other cases the connection isn't made.

Transfer credit for the NWC courses was discussed. Many community colleges in Iowa offer courses that are NWC applicable courses. If a student does take an approved NWC course at a community college, with or without an AA degree, it will count for category 2B. Morgan will look into the process of how transfer credits are approved.

The popularity of various courses in category 2B was also discussed. Large numbers of students in some of the courses as opposed to others is more likely due to staffing and the number of sections offered. The need for more staff in various areas of 2B is noted. Since departments don't hire faculty specifically for courses in 2B, but for courses within their own department, there may not be a great deal of control on the number of faculty available for the different courses in category 2B.

Since the courses in 2B are offered by faculty from a variety of departments and colleges, there is a template of syllabi and course objectives. Smith asked about the degree of cultural comparisons such as between the NWC and the student's own culture. The NWC faculty tend to do it in varying degrees, generally left up to the discretion of the instructor. Smith suggested that one aspect of the NWC should be general cultural information, such that students would be able to see the cultural differences and possibly become aware of their ethnocentricisms, and to possibly overcome them. The upcoming review of the LAC may cause people to revise the content/intent of courses – can more be done within these courses than is currently done, in particular to understand what a culture really is. A course component or module on cultural anthropology could be added for example. Dunn mentioned that there is a goal of cultural comparisons in the category guidelines; however the degree that this is done is up to the individual instructors and the degree that it is successful (through assessment) would have to be investigated. Larkin talked about his own experience in a NWC course. He would have appreciated more visual content, as well as a greater degree of material about the culture more than was found in a lecture or textbook.

Vinton asked about the preparation that faculty had before they graded the assessment questions used to monitor the courses. There was no specific preparation, but the group was interested in finding ways to do this, and Vinton mentioned her willingness to assist them.

The NWC committee was lauded for their work in managing the courses in Category 2B. There was discussion on how new faculty would be made aware of the goals and guidelines for teaching in the LAC.

III Approval of minutes:

There was only a small typographical error in the November 10 minutes, which was easily corrected. Caswell moved to approve the minutes as amended, Larkin seconded. Motion passed

IV Announcements

- A. Morgan mentioned her meeting with the NISG on Wednesday night. It was a very fruitful discussion, and suggested that she visit the NISG every semester.
- B. The Study Abroad program is providing more information about their courses for summer 2007. Some of the courses are advertised before they have been approved by the LAC committee, such as the "Sacred Spaces" course. Dunn suggested that it might be a good idea to set deadlines for courses proposals, with a timeline of about 1 year between the course proposal and the course offering. Morgan will contact the Registrar's office about the scheduling deadlines, and also look at the Study Abroad timeline.
- C. Neibauer provided information on ACT scores and how they relate to the student's high school experience and how they can be used to predict the performances of

students in college. It might be a good idea to develop a Freshman-year template or templates for incoming students. Some majors may not fit this template, but it could be designed for a general student population. There was general discussion about the preparedness of students coming out of high school. It might be a good idea to require a “College Orientation” course to prepare freshmen for college.

V. Adjournment:

Dunn moved to adjourn (literally); Caswell seconded the motion. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Next Meeting – December 1, 2006

Respectfully submitted,
Siobahn Morgan