

MINUTES
Liberal Arts Core Committee
March 10, 2006
Old Gold Room, Maucker Union

Present: Baughman, Brown, Davidson, Heston, Morgan, Murphy, Neibauer, Smith,
VanHooreweghe, Vinton

Guest: Jeffrey Copeland

I. Call to Order:

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes:

Murphy moved and Morgan seconded the approval of the minutes for March 3, 2006.

Brown made a suggested change to the minutes that the Committee was in agreement with. Morgan moved and Davidson seconded the approval of the minutes for March 3, 2006, as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Announcements:

A. Consultative Session With the Category 2B (Non-Western Cultures) Review Team, 3/24

Smith informed the Committee that there would be a meeting with the Category 2B review team on March 24. Any questions about their draft report can be addressed at that time.

IV. New Business:

A. Proposal Regarding Writing-Enhanced Sections of LAC Courses. Discussion with Dr. Jeffrey Copeland, Head, English Department
Copeland thanked the Committee for all its help, support, and guidance.

Copeland gave some background on a study involving a little over 900 students on campus that looked at the various ways in which they achieved their writing requirement; the study also looked at students who were at 25 or above on their ACT English scores, whether they were exempted or required to take the class. From this study it was determined that those who were at 25 or above on the ACT test who were exempted, ended up still writing better in their essays than those who had taken writing class who were below 25 and had completed the class. So they were already above what the normal student would achieve in that class. However, it was also discovered that those who were technically sent to the class and were at 25 and above who were still put into the class to see what would

happen, had a dramatic improvement in their writing. He said that the additional writing instruction turned writers who were Cadillacs into Rolls Royces. He added that research showed that it really doesn't matter where that writing instruction takes place; the additional writing instruction itself is the magic wand. He said the writing-enhanced pilot courses have been Introduction to Literature and they would encourage and hope that other disciplines and other courses would take root.

Copeland mentioned that such courses help the university because students get their corporate instruction and then so many students in so many courses of study have no electives they can take. By offering the writing-enhanced courses the writing requirement will be met, which will open up three hours in major or minor program, in the Liberal Arts Core or electives.

Copeland asked the Committee for its continued support of the writing-enhanced pilot for another year and asked the Committee for its comments or suggestions.

Baughman added that the writing-enhanced courses use reading as a resource for writing and writing as a tool for reading. He noted the importance of giving attention to reading skills along with writing skills and having the chance to develop the relationship between the two.

When asked about a quality control, Copeland responded that the courses are closely linked with student outcomes assessment and as a result would bring all the instructors together, because they will all have certain activities they want the students to do and these activities will be included in the SOA package. He said there is also a list of standards.

There was a question regarding getting faculty prepared to teach writing-enhanced courses. Copeland said the University Writing Committee would be proper way for people to stay connected. He also mentioned the writing center as a good resource. He said he hopes these are looked at as University-wide opportunities in order to get a broad representation. The Carver Institute was also mentioned as a resource for helping prepare faculty up front. Whether or not students are ready was also briefly discussed.

Smith stressed the importance of students having a solid foundation in the mechanics of writing and not just in creativity and self-expression. Copeland commented that with students at 25 and above, these students are already ahead of everyone else in terms of mechanics; these courses help to fine tune their skills. He added that if you teach mechanics in isolation the skills don't stick.

Regarding the number of sections, Copeland said there is a very good mechanism in place for placing students in the fall semester and that it is much more difficult in the spring. He said this would be a fall proposition for the immediate future; he would envision about six sections in the fall. He said it would also depend on how many other departments and instructors get involved, but they would start slowly and get it right. The backlog issue related to College Reading and Writing courses was also discussed.

Neibauer said that it would be essential for the English Department to do what it can to make students aware of the writing-enhanced courses before they come to campus so they have time for consideration.

Murphy made a motion to extend the pilot program for writing-enhanced sections of LAC courses for the 2006-2007 academic year. Davidson seconded the motion; Motion passed unanimously.

V. Old Business:

A. UNI's Budget Situation and the Liberal Arts Core

Smith informed the Committee that he sent a letter Interim Provost Lubker expressing the need for a meeting of heads of the faculty groups and also the need to communicate the budget situation to the faculty group as a whole. Smith will keep the Committee informed.

B. LACC Leadership and Administration

A discussion took place regarding the necessity of the Liberal Arts Coordinator position and the various responsibilities involved. Smith said he would draft of the job description and bring it to the Committee for discussion.

VI. Other Business:

No other business

VII. Adjournment:

Murphy moved to adjourn. Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

The next meeting will be March 24, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. in the Old Gold Room in Maucker Union.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Nedrow,
Secretary Pro Tem