

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

Present: Maria Basom, Ken Baughman, Nadene Davidson, Cyndi Dunn, Jerry Caswell, Brian Larkin, Jean Neibauer, Jerry Smith, Lori Van Hooreweghe, Donna Vinton

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

I. Approval of Minutes: Several small corrections were noted; Smith moved (Davidson seconded) approval of the minutes as corrected for the 9 March 2007 meeting. Motion passed without dissent.

II. Announcements

A. The Category 4 Review Team will consist of 7 faculty (2 from Biology, 1 from each of the following departments: Chemistry; Earth Science; Physics; Geography; Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology). The initial meeting of the group will be scheduled soon.

B. The Category 3 Review is continuing: a draft report from the 3B sub-committee is expected in mid-April; the 3A sub-committee is now chaired by Steve Taft, Theatre, and is at a somewhat earlier stage of its review.

C. The Category 2A Review is forthcoming, pending resolution of difficulty in reporting data.

D. Siobahn Morgan reports that she has reviewed the LAC website for accuracy (in particular, course numbers and descriptions) and made corrections where needed.

E. The Fall 2007 Schedule of Classes is at the printer. The page listing the LAC Program requirements lacks a statement that 780:120, Latin American Culture and Civilization, now satisfies IIB, Non-Western Cultures, and a listing of 800:064, Elementary Probability and Statistics for Bioinformatics as satisfying IC.

Some 7 (9 sections) of the experimental Capstone courses will be offered in the Fall as will 6 other Capstone courses including 820:140, Environment, Technology, and Society (19 sections). Thus, at least 33 sections are scheduled for Capstone credit; if they average 30 students, there will be close to 1,000 places available. This "supply" should be compared with the number of students who have not yet satisfied nor enrolled in a Capstone course as of this Spring Semester.

F. The Registrar's Office is reviewing transfer transcripts of new community college transfer students for Fall 2006 without AA degrees (some 368 students) to determine how many transfer courses for these students satisfy LAC requirements. A report is forthcoming. Committee members expressed interest in information about what specific transfer courses are being applied to particular LAC requirements.

Note that community college courses taken by students whose first college enrollment was at UNI also are applied to LAC requirements in the same way as for students whose first enrollment at UNI is with community college transfer credit. How frequently this occurs and with what community college courses is not readily accessible information.

G. The LAC Design Team (review of the LAC Program) will meet today at 2 prior to second meeting of the University Task Force (review of undergraduate curriculum). Discussion followed.

Smith suggested that the Task Force, on the basis of its first meeting, seems to have particular interest in the design and length of the Liberal Arts Core. Yet there will also be attention to length of majors, and there may not be pressure to reduce the length of the LAC. Neibauer mentioned the BA degree requirement of 15 hours of electives (beyond LAC and first major) as a potential source of decreasing required hours. It would be helpful to know the number of students affected by this requirement. Basom proposed that student programs benefit from electives, and Dunn spoke to a BA degree focused on a broad liberal arts foundation rather than on career preparation or specialization. At the same time, Neibauer observed, attention to Liberal Arts outcomes can reveal important vocational applications.

There was discussion of designing a “lean” yet “broad” BA degree coordinated with graduate programs that conceivably could replace the current “long” majors. VanHooreweghe noted that the logistics of financial aid differ for undergraduates and graduates, and Davidson cautioned that teacher licensure earned by a Master of Arts in Teaching degree might make it more difficult for such degree holders to find positions with budget-strapped school districts.

Several suggested that more strongly encouraging or requiring study abroad would strengthen our BA program, as would requiring or more strongly encouraging internship experiences. Larkin noted that participation in student organizations can provide valuable and wide-ranging experiences that relate to virtually every major. He suggested that all BA degrees could include at least one of these three kinds of experiences: study abroad, internship, student organizations.

III. New Business

Proposal to extend writing-enhanced sections of LAC courses: forthcoming from the Department of English is a request for a one-year extension of this pilot program (program extended to a second department during this academic year; anticipate using again the successful plan developed last year for encouraging new students to consider such sections during the summer orientation and registration sessions)

IV. Other Business

A. Advisory statement for Core Competencies: Neibauer proposed that a statement be added to listings of LAC requirements advising students that they should [plan to] complete LAC 1, Core Competencies, within their first year (30 hours). There was consensus that this apply specifically to LAC 1A, B, and C (writing and reading, speaking and listening, and quantitative techniques and understanding), and that such a statement be placed with LAC 1 wherever the LAC Program is listed (for example, Schedule of Classes, New Student Handbook, advising planning sheets, LAC website, degree audits, possibly on-line Plans of Study).

Larkin moved (Smith seconded) **to approve the adding of a statement to LAC 1 that students should [plan to] complete LAC 1A, 1B, and 1C during their first year (30 hours).** Motion passed without dissent.

B. ACT scores correlated with grades in LAC courses: Neibauer reported on a program available from ACT that would provide summary data regarding correlations between students' ACT scores and the grades that earn in selected LAC courses (perhaps LAC 1A, B, and C as well as Humanities courses and some science courses). This could be useful in advising students regarding when to take certain courses and perhaps also devising ways to help prepare those students who would benefit from such aid for certain courses.

C. NISG Student Survey on Teaching: Dunn noted the Northern Iowa Student Government is conducting a survey of students' views on the teaching they experience in their classes and commended the survey for focusing on what classroom techniques and strategies students find to be effective for their learning. Anyone may view the survey through a link on the MyUNInverse page. She expressed hope that the results of the survey would be available to faculty including the LAC Committee.

V. Old Business

Management of Capstone: the Committee began discussion of the draft on Capstone Management prepared by Siobahn Morgan: suggestions included the possibility of clarifying and consolidating the procedures for approving different types of courses for Capstone Experience: existing catalog courses; proposed new catalog courses; experimental courses (that could subsequently be proposed as new catalog courses). Clarifying and consolidating the draft guidelines for proposing and approving new courses could make these procedures more streamlined and concise. Further, we should clarify and confirm the procedure for approval of experimental Capstone courses that the LAC Committee has already approved (supposedly, now to be proposed as new catalog courses).

Vinton noted that some students might earn credit for a course that is subsequently approved for Capstone Experience credit; there was consensus that such credit would not satisfy the Capstone requirement. And there is consensus that a course transferred to UNI as equivalent to—or even with the course number of—a Capstone course would not satisfy the requirement. (In both cases, there is consensus that Capstone can be satisfied only by taking a Capstone course at UNI with other students who are enrolled in this course to satisfy this specific requirement.)

There is interest in discussing provisions for a Coordinating Committee for this category and provisions for periodic review of the category. And there is interest in reviewing the section in the draft on course staffing (including approval of course instructors).

VI. Adjournment: Davidson moved, Basom seconded, to adjourn. Motion passed without dissent, and the meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Next Meeting: 8:30 a.m. Friday, 30 March, SIAC Meeting Room, Maucker Union

Respectfully submitted,
Ken Baughman