

## **Curriculum Committee Minutes February 13, 2009**

**Present:** DeMarais, Elliott, Grunberg, Hooper, Kotsis, Lamb, Livingston (Chair), McCuiston, Richards, Richman, Sandler, Tomhave, Walls, Warren, Wix.

**Call to Order:** Chair Livingston called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM PST.

**Approval of the Minutes of January 30, 2009:** It was **M/S/P** to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 30 as written.

### **Reports from Working Groups:**

**Working Group 2:** Warren reported that the group had received a course proposal for review.

### **Discussion of Questions for the Core Review:**

Members of the committee were asked to submit questions for the review of the core, both specific core categories and the core as a whole. Those questions were then collated by Livingston and DeMarais and sent to committee members. That document is appended.

Chair Livingston opened the discussion by asking if there was anything particularly controversial or questions that needed to be modified.

#### *First Year Seminars*

The discussion began with a consideration of the first year seminars and the questions pertaining to them.

Kotsis suggested adding a question asking whether the Scholarly and Creative Inquiry (SCIS) core accomplishes what it should.

Members of the committee also asked about the disposition of the academic honesty requirement in first year seminars and what had happened when the change in core rubrics to incorporate consideration of academic honesty was brought to the full faculty in December. Those who had attended the meeting stated that consideration of the change in rubrics had been delayed until the Academic Standards committee finishes its consideration of other issues associated with academic honesty.

Sandler then turned to the questions about Writing and Rhetoric (WR) seminars. She wanted to know whether question 3: *Has there been a "strain" communicated among the faculty teaching the writing and rhetoric courses as to balancing the components of the courses?* meant that faculty feel strain in meeting both the writing and rhetoric components of the course. She also wondered what question 5 meant. #5 *Is there a need to develop a uniform assessment of the students understanding of the objectives in each Seminar in Writing and Rhetoric?*

McCuiston said that he was trying to incorporate questions from faculty about having a uniform test of writing.

Livingston asked whether we were trying to test students' knowledge of the objectives of the course or whether this was an outcome assessment.

McCuiston responded that this was an outcome assessment.

Sandler then returned to discussion of #3. What was the "strain"

Warren and DeMarais both noted that the strain was in designing a course to meet all aspects of the rubric: to cover writing and rhetoric and to develop a theme within the course.

Hooper said that he was teaching a Writing and Rhetoric course for the first time and was trying to understand how the teaching or writing was different in WR courses from SCIS courses.

Sandler noted that WR courses focus on argumentation.

Hooper stated that WR courses are difficult to teach properly and that those who do it well are working hard to do so.

Kotsis pointed out that there was a second "strain" for WR courses, the strain felt by the English department in shouldering most of the burden for teaching those courses. Most faculty feel they do not have the skills necessary.

#### *Core Discussions for the University Community*

DeMarais then informed the members of the committee of the dates that had been set for discussions of the core open to all members of the faculty. They are:

March 4: First year seminars

March 23: Approaches

March 25: Connections

#### *Foreign Language Requirement*

The discussion turned to the Foreign Language requirement. Hooper asked if one year of a foreign language is adequate? If we ask students to complete two years of language would that affect admission and enrollment in the University? When the foreign language requirement was added as a graduation requirement it was expected to be painless for the students because the Office of Admissions had reported that most students came to Puget Sound with three years of language in high school. Students with that background would be expected to pass out of the requirement by exam. Instead, many students are enrolling in 100-level language classes even with a substantial background. Hooper suggested that all students be required to take the exam and those who failed the exam could take 100-level classes as remedial classes much the way students who take Math 111 must take Math 120 or 160 to meet the math core requirement.

Students taking 100-level language classes have swamped the system, particularly in Spanish.

Livingston noted that having so many students with language experience in an introductory class must make it difficult for true beginners to get what they need.

Wix said that she had taken Spanish as a true beginner and had found herself amongst students who were in the class for an easy A.

DeMarais summarized the discussion to two questions:

- 1) Should there be a foreign language requirement?
- 2) If we have a language requirement, how can students be placed appropriately in classes?

Hooper found that the old Oral Communication core that allowed students to meet it with a 200-level language class worked pretty well.

Kotsis reminded the committee of the graduate survey in which our students were lower than peer institutions in two areas: foreign language and aesthetic appreciation.

Livingston then turned to the core that considers aesthetic appreciation: Fine Arts. Were there questions about that area of the core?

Kotsis pointed out the difference in number of courses offered in the Humanistic Core compared with the much smaller number of courses that fill the Fine Arts requirement. What makes a particular course fit one core or the other? Could some Humanistic Core courses be moved to Fine Arts?

As the hour moved to a close, Sandler suggested that the wording of some questions could be improved.

DeMarais directed members of the committee to the various reports in the Institutional Research section of Cascade for more information on topics related to evaluation of the core, senior surveys, etc.

Livingston called for revisions to the questions to be submitted by Wednesday, February 18, 2009

Kotsis moved for adjournment at 8:49 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Rose Lamb