



LIBERAL ARTS COUNCIL

3 December 2013

Minutes

Present: Bentz, Trelogan, Fong, Smith

Absent: Aske, Baird, Boyce, Senbet, Spahr, Varner, Weber

Guests: Dana Kohler, Stacy Sharp, Angela Vaughn

Call to Order at 3:36 p.m.

Announcements

The results are in from the state-level review of the most recent round of gtPathways resubmissions. ANT 130 and BIO 105 were both approved, but CHEM 281 was deferred. It was recommended by the review committee that we strengthen our own on-campus review committee for science courses, as this might help with courses such as CHEM 281. It might be helpful for faculty from that committee to go to Denver to get a better sense of what's needed for a successful state-level review.

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of Nov. 19

There were two corrections to the minutes. Both Weber and Spahr were present.

Regular Reports

Chair's Report (Trelogan): None

GE Council Report (Bentz): Bentz reported that in conversation with Ian Macgillivray and various other members of the GE Council it has emerged that the quality of students transferring to other state institutions from UNC is not up to the level expected of students transferring from a 4-year institution. Macgillivray told Bentz that representatives of several other institutions have become convinced that UNC's general education program doesn't adequately prepare its students for higher-level academic work. He suggested that one reason may be our lack of participation in sending people to Denver to review gtPathways nominations. Macgillivray would be willing to visit UNC to talk about this concern. Bentz suggested that if he did, we might be able to get more specific information about just where UNC is falling short.

Smith asked whether the problem is primarily with student writing and also asked what the sense is as to how many students are inadequately prepared? Council will wait to take action until Bentz gets more information, but would like her to invite Ian to attend one of our meetings to talk to us further about this himself.

Bentz added that she served on one of the review committees herself—a committee that was looking at two courses in mathematics that wound up being deferred. What she found instructive was that those courses were deferred because the course materials (texts, etc.) weren't judged by the committee to be up to the task of teaching the students adequately.

AVP Report (Smith): The bundles of syllabi collected for the Core courses that were taught in Spring 2014 have been sent to the chairs of the various Core Curriculum Committees. It would be good for the committees to review these using a uniform rubric containing such questions as “does the syllabus clearly articulate learning outcomes?” Smith will produce a general rubric that can be tailored for each area. The chairs of the Core Curriculum Committees who were present agreed that it would be useful for all the members of the Core Curriculum Committees to have access to the syllabi, not just the chairs.

Core Curriculum Committee Reports: None.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Discussion Item

Changes to the *Catalog* description of the Core proposed by the Registrar’s Office (Continued from the meeting of 11/19):

Sharp was not yet ready to pass on to the Council any written language having to do with the transfer of quarter hours. However, she did share her draft of language detailing the “Exceptions to the Requirements of the Liberal Arts Core.”

Kohler reported that she has had experiences with out-of-state students who don’t meet all six LAC areas and has argued that requiring them to do that is unjust. Perhaps, she suggested, we should come up with an extensive list of required courses in order to facilitate acceptance of courses being transferred in by out-of-state students. Perhaps we could arrange things so that they wouldn’t have to meet all the requirements of Areas 1-6 in detail, would only have to have had coursework sufficient to ensure that they have a solid liberal arts education. Fong suggested we could make liberal use of the phrase “or the equivalent” in a description of what we’re looking for in order to keep from having to create a really long list. Vaughan said that while it will come down to securing the approval of individual areas, broadly describing the areas in such a way as to accommodate out-of-state transfer students would make sense.

Bentz volunteered to ask what other institutions are doing at the next GE Council meeting.

In any case, it was agreed that more research is needed to avoid making rules for the rare exceptions. Smith suggests crafting a definition of liberal arts education so we can work from that to determine UNC’s policy, and Trelogan observed that we already have something along those lines if we combine the Core’s mission statement as it appears in the *Catalog* with the general titles of the areas that comprise all our basic core courses: composition, mathematics, arts and humanities, history, social and behavioral sciences, and physical and life sciences.

The Council needs to approve whatever language emerges by the end of February. The Council will meet on January 21st and will try then to wrap up discussion of this subject in time for the Registrar’s meeting on the 22nd.

Sharp asked for thoughts as to whether the Council wants to require three semester hour courses or the equivalent in every case, or whether courses taken at schools on the quarter system that are equivalent to courses worth only 2.67 semester hours are acceptable. The members of the Council who were present were in agreement that rounding to the nearest semester hour makes sense when what we’re talking about is the requirement of 31 hours in Areas 1-6 and 40 hours overall, but not on a course by course basis. In other words,

individual 2.67 quarter hour courses should certainly be counted as the equivalent of 3 semester hour courses when it's a question of whether or not a student has satisfied a particular course requirement, but students will still have satisfy the requirements of 31 (or 30.67) semester hours in Areas 1-6 and 40 (or 39.67) semester hours overall. Bentz observed that it really isn't desirable to build anything that specific into the *Catalog* description of the Core. Sharp will look into whether this can be built into the system in the backend so that such details don't need to go into the *Catalog*.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned (Trelogan/Fong) at 4:38 p.m.