

Curriculum Committee Minutes
April 12, 2004

Members Present: Richard Anderson-Connolly, Bill Barry, Cathy Hale, Sue Hannaford (chair), Kelli Kline, Lynda Livingston, Sarah Norris, Ken Rousslang, Douglas Sackman, Joyce Tomashiro, Brad Tomhave, Carrie Washburn, Melissa Weinman-Jagosh

Visitors Present: Lori Ricigliano

Hannaford called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m.

approval of minutes:

Where the heck are the minutes? Lost! Lost in the ether!

announcements:

Barry reported that he, Greene, Sackman, Kline, and Derryberry met with a member of the accreditation team on behalf of our august committee. She (the accreditor) thought we were “doing a great job,” and noted that we are “the real workhorses” of the institution. High praise from a clearly insightful evaluator.

SCIS subcommittee report:

Weinman-Jagosh brought forth the following;

The CC subcommittee on Scholarly and Creative Inquiry received course proposals from Suzanne Holland, *REL 120 Communities of Resistance and Liberation*, and from Steven Neshyba, *CHEM 103 The Great Flood*. We found both to meet the criteria of SCIS courses and move that both be accepted into the curriculum.

Suzanne Holland, *REL 120 Communities of Resistance and Liberation*
Focuses on communities of persons whose daily experience is marked by injustice: The Deaf Movement, Palestinians and the Intifada, GLBT Movements, Disability Rights Movement, etc.

Steven Neshyba, *CHEM 103 The Great Flood*
Examines the basis for the worldwide presence of early flood myths, traces the development of the Black Sea Flood Hypothesis.

(end insert)

She further noted that REL 120 dealt with liberation narratives, and culminates by having students reflect on our commitments to a just society. CHEM 103 uses a 1998 text, plus articles and “good-

looking reference texts.” Both courses are “pretty substantial in written components and look pretty good.”

Weinman-Jagosh M/S/P acceptance of REL 120 and CHEM 103 for SCIS.

Writing and Rhetoric subcommittee report:

Barry distributed the following for our edification:

Seminar in Writing and Rhetoric Rubric

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In each Seminar in Writing and Rhetoric, students encounter the two central aspects of the humanistic tradition of rhetorical education: argumentation and effective oral and written expression. Students in these seminars develop the intellectual habits and language capabilities to construct persuasive arguments and to write and speak effectively for academic and civic purposes.

GUIDELINES

- I. Through their introduction to argumentation, these seminars address:
 - A. the value of pro/con reasoning and the need to approach a controversy from multiple perspectives;
 - B. issues and questions that organize a particular controversy;
 - C. standard argument forms and other persuasive strategies (for example, traditional and contemporary models of reasoning, narrative); and
 - D. methods of evaluating arguments (including evidence evaluation and identification of logical fallacies).

- II. Through their introduction to effective expression, these seminars address:
 - A. important elements and conventions of standard written English;
 - B. the range of lexical and stylistic resources available to speakers and writers (for example, appropriateness, audience, tone, voice, and other aspects of a message's verbal texture); and
 - C. various oral and written composition strategies, including approaching composition as a process (including purposeful drafting, revising, and editing).

- III. These seminars may be organized around topics, themes, or texts; in each seminar the material must be appropriate and accessible for meaningful work by first-year students.

(end insert)

The question at hand was transfer credit for WR, first broached by Tomhave at our 3/29/04 meeting. Barry reported that faculty in English and Communication Studies (and “others”) believe that WR is sufficiently distinct that it is unlikely that a single transfer course could satisfy its rubrics. Does

the Curriculum Committee wish to offer guidance about what sort(s) of course(s) could satisfy this requirement?

Washburn asked how this issue had arisen. Barry replied that the will of the faculty, as evinced in faculty meetings, is that the WR requirement not be waived. We insist that all students have this experience, even if it is through transfer courses. He also noted that “personal writing” would not suffice; coursework must be centered on argumentation.

To frame our discussion, Barry offered the following enumeration of WRs critical components:

1. writing
2. oral communication
3. argumentation

To receive WR credit, must a student demonstrate that he addressed all three in a single course, or could he “cobble together” content from multiple courses? Should all three elements be required, or might just writing and oral communication be sufficient? Barry’s opinion: must have all three.

the pro:

Hale: If the subcommittee bases its evaluation of WR proposals on the existence of all three elements (as it does), then all three elements are necessary to satisfy the requirement. Transfer students must therefore have had all three.

Anderson-Connolly was also in favor of having every transfer student demonstrate coursework in all three areas. He would be satisfied if a student took a writing course and a speech course, given that the syllabus of one or both included an explicit argumentation component. Thus, taking two courses could be sufficient, but studying only two of the three components would not be.

Sackman said he’s not worried about boring students, since our WR courses are distinctive. They must demonstrate all three components of WR. Aren’t these freshman seminars supposed to be what UPS is all about? Washburn concurred, noting that faculty at the recent Prelude dinner were gratified to learn that transfer students take freshman seminars: “That’s great—they need to learn who we are.”

Weinman-Jagosh noted that a 8-unit core is not impossible, and each unit is important. Why try to obviate it?

the con:

Tom have pleaded for the transfer students. We want to welcome them and honor what they’ve already accomplished. We don’t want to give them more requirements than seems reasonable. We don’t want to unnecessarily hold them back or to bore them with repeated material. We want them to be able to take better advantage of the new core. We also need to ensure that we have enough seats available to service demand. We must balance the academic and the practical in order to make our university attractive.

More Tomhave: If a student had numerous hours of English only or of speech only, then clearly she would not have met the requirement. But perhaps English 101 (a freshman writing course) plus Communication 101 (a presentation course) might satisfy; perhaps such a combination would imply an argumentation component?

We expect 75-80 transfer students this year. Nine of them already have coursework in writing and oral communication. Tomhave noted that his office would need to look at the syllabi for both courses for these students to determine whether or not the argumentation component had been satisfied.

Norris said that when she transferred in, she had a very long session with a transfer advisor. She believes that having all three components is extremely important. However, it is also important for the spirit of the transferring student that she know that the institution will recognize what she has done to get here.

the reasoning:

Hannaford asked if there were an argumentation-based course here. Tomhave said that there was a course in Communications, Argumentation and Debate, but that this course was “going away.” So, no.

Rousslang remembered that some members of a prior Curriculum Committee, presiding over the institution of our previous core, had felt that they “didn’t care if [a transfer student] had had English 101 at Harvard—that wasn’t English 101 at UPS.”

Sackman noted that we do offer SCIS and WR sections for transfer students. Will our decision affect the number of sections we need to offer them? Barry—No; we offer three sections of each seminar each semester for transfers.

Tomashiro wondered if every transfer student takes SCIS. Tomhave: No, since some liberal arts colleges have courses similar to SCIS (just as they may offer writing and presentation courses that, together, are equivalent to WR). For example, they may offer things like Western Civilization or “great books” classes for freshmen. Tomashiro: What percentage of our transfer students come from these types of liberal arts colleges? Tomhave: a “fairly significant” number—say, 25%. Tomashiro: Do many of them take at least one of our freshman seminars? Barry: A lot actually take both.

Livingston wondered if it were possible to have different criteria for community-college transfers and liberal-arts transfers. Tomhave (emphatically): No. That would be discriminatory. Hale also noted that not all liberal-arts colleges are created equal, so individual review would still be necessary.

Hale wondered if a student could petition. Tomhave said that petitions would be made to the Academic Standards Committee, which alone has the authority to waive requirements based on experiences a student has had in other classes. Hale: Would WR petitions burden the ASC? Tomhave: No more than SCTX already does (and SCTX is fading away). Tomashiro asked how likely it would be that an incoming transfer student would know about her right to petition. Tomhave said that it should become clear through her discussions with the transfer evaluator and the admissions office staff. Hale noted that petitions may also be handled at the department level. For example, the psychology department gets petitions for approval of (obviously substantial) psychology courses not taught here.

the wrap-up:

Barry reiterated his position: A student should demonstrate coursework in all three areas. Rousslang asserted that it would be difficult for us to quantify how much of each of the three components a student has had or would need. He reminded us that we need to be reasonable in our expectations.

Barry M/S/P the following “guidance” for the transfer evaluators:

Students wishing to satisfy the Writing and Rhetoric core with transfer credit must demonstrate course work in written communication, oral communication, and argumentation.

(2 nays; 1 abstention)

blatant power grab:

Barry requested that the office of the associate dean (i.e., Barry) be allowed to provisionally approve freshman seminar courses whose proposers wish to teach them in the fall but whose proposals arrive during the summer. Sometimes we make hires during the summer, and the proposals of these late hires need to be accommodated. This authority to provisionally approve these seminars for one time only would only exist during the summer. When the august Curriculum Committee reconvenes in the fall, all such provisional, temporary, one-time-only approvals would be reviewed by the appropriate organ of said body; final and actual approval would then be made only by the one true Curriculum Committee.

Rousslang noted that such a request was not unprecedented.

The committee agreed to grant to the Associate Dean the (summer) authority to provisionally approve freshman seminars (WR and SCIS) for a one-time-only offering the following fall.

Marveling at the Machiavellian maneuverings of our associate dean, we **adjourned at 2:58 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda S. Livingston