

**COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES AND ADVISING**  
Minutes of the Meeting for March 14, 2006

The committee met on Tuesday, March 14, 2006, at 11:05 a.m. in Room 210 Strong Hall. The following were present: Bradley, Carothers, Clark, Clowes, Crandall, Crosby, D' Anieri, Durham, Gordy, Knight, Ledom, McCleary, McNeley, Shaw, Thompson, Vitevitch, and Walton.

**MINUTES** The minutes for February 28, 2006 were approved.

**CHAIR'S REPORT** Professor Clowes stated that she is looking forward to the committee's feedback regarding the three proposals for the reduction of general education hours. Additionally, she announced that the CUSA meeting scheduled for March 28, 2006, will be cut short by 15 minutes.

**DEAN'S REPORT** Professor D'Anieri announced that the new Dean, Joseph Steinmetz, has arrived. He also reported that he has briefed the Dean on the issues CUSA is currently reviewing and the primary role of the committee.

Professor Crandall stated that from their department meeting with Dean Steinmetz, the new Dean appears favorable to the reduction of the general education requirements.

**CLA&S STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES REPORT** Dr. McNeley reported that the College is gearing up to start the advising period - immediately after spring break. She announced that 900 students (over 90 hours & undeclared) were reminded that they need to declare and 863 responded, leaving 37 students having holds placed. Dr. McNeley is hopeful that the College will have the same success as it prepares for the 3200 students who must declare at 60 hours.

**SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS**

A. ACADEMIC STANDARDS: No report.

B. ADVISING: No report.

C. CURRICULAR CHANGES/DEGREE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Curricular Changes

FULL COMMITTEE ACTION

Approval was granted for:

BIOL 427, BIOL 694, HIST 114, HIST 115, HIST 116 and LA&S 101

2. Degree Requirement Changes

nothing presented

**OLD BUSINESS**

A) **Revised Proposal of the Academic Misconduct Policy**

FULL COMMITTEE ACTION

Proposal was tabled

REASON:

The committee requested further revisions.

**GET FROM KIM M.**

**B) Proposal to Reduce the General Education hours:**

FULL COMMITTEE ACTION

Proposal was tabled

REASON:

The committee recommended further review.

Reduction of General Education Credit Hours for the BA (currently at 72-75 hours)

February 28, 2006

I. Summary of discussion so far:

- A. On October 25, 2005, CUSA members came to a general consensus that requiring CLAS students to declare a major in the semester following the 60<sup>th</sup> hour would help more students to finish their undergraduate education within four years. At the same time there was strong feeling that implementing this requirement must be accompanied by a proposal for reducing the number of General Education credit hours, which currently total somewhere between 72 and 75 hours.
- B. In addition to the discussion about reduction of GE credit hours, CUSA has been charged with responding to the 2005 General Education Task Force Review, and particularly CUSA is to “consider desirability and feasibility of implementing a [sic] writing, communications, and numeracy across the curriculum program.”

II. As of February 14, 2006, two solutions to reduce GE credit hours for the BA had been proposed:

**Proposal A:** reduce only content/ principal course requirements in each of the three major areas (humanities, social sciences, sciences) from 9 hours (3 courses) to 6 hours (2 courses).

**Proposal B:** blend skill and content courses so that content/ principal courses also satisfy the second course of the skill-course requirements. With one 3-hour course one can satisfy 6 hours of requirements (3 in an area of skill development and 3 in a content area).

Interested departments can “buy into” the freshman-sophomore skill-teaching program, for example, in the following way:

- interested faculty/ TAs in each interested department gain “certification” in one of the three skills (writing, communication, math) by attending a workshop run perhaps through CTE or in the skill department (English, Communications, Philosophy, Mathematics) and becoming thoroughly familiar with the methods, required work, and outcomes of the skill courses.
- to start with, each participating department may alter one existing freshman-sophomore content/ principal course, redescribing it as a skill-and-content course, which implies much more active writing, rewriting, oral communication, or calculation and reasoning exercises on the part of the student, i.e. at least as much as is the norm for second skill-courses in ENGL, PHIL, COMS, and MATH. Large lecture courses would require students to participate a smaller weekly discussion section of no more than 20 students in which students meet and work closely with an instructor or TA on developing the relevant skill(s).
- assessment: departments must quantify strong improvement of the skill in question between the start and the end of the course (through collection of early and late papers). A CLAS-wide committee, probably in CUSA, could be established to assess skill-development courses college-wide.

Benefits to departments and faculty:

- chance for all departments to participate actively in training students in skills needed for particular specializations.
- the opportunity to teach smaller classes or sections.
- more intensive training of smaller groups of students, which implies a much more satisfying instructional experience.

Benefits to students:

- more natural association of content-learning with deepening basic skills.
- continued development of skills in the context of content in which the student is interested, possibly as a major or minor area, thus making for a fuller education experience.
- more exposure of freshmen and sophomores to smaller departments and programs and a potentially greater spread of majors across all 51 departments.

Costs of implementing solution #2:

- arrange for training TAs to teach the relevant skill for larger courses
- more TAs to run smaller skill-development sections within larger courses

III. **Proposal C** (February 18, 2006): Below is a proposal for a substantial reduction in general education requirements, to 12 courses.

I take a less idealistic view of curriculum. We can talk about having courses that meet our goals of skill-building, and writing across the curriculum, and demonstration of the methods and questions of the various disciplines. Ultimately, all the courses are in the hands of the individual departments and individual instructors, and CUSA and the Dean's office cannot police the courses. All we can do is to assume/hope that it is in the interest of all departments and all faculty to teach their disciplines as they deem appropriate, and to develop the students' skills.

The current general education requirements emphasize breadth. Under this system students spend a lot of time in very elementary courses taught in large lectures. I feel that total learning can only improve by replacing some of this with courses that students choose, and that both students and instructors find more interesting, even if, as a package, they do not give an overview of nine different disciplinary areas.

So in this spirit, I propose the following:

Proposal for General Education requirements for the BA/BGS/BS degrees in CLAS:

- 1 semester (3 cr) English composition
- 1 semester (3 cr) Mathematics (college algebra or higher)
- 2 semesters (10 cr) Foreign language
- 1 semester (3 cr) Computer programming
- 1 semester (3 cr) Western civilization
- 2 semesters (7 cr) Natural science, including one laboratory course
- 2 semesters (6 cr) Social Science (unrestricted)
- 2 semesters (6 cr) Humanities (unrestricted)

Total number of courses: 12

Total credit hours: 41

IV. Notes on other universities' experiences with Writing Across the Curriculum:

A. U. Wisconsin-Madison of implementing writing across the curriculum (from Edith Clowes's conversation January 24, 2006, with Brad Hughes, who instated the WAC program in Madison):

History of U. Wisconsin WAC: all writing requirements were abolished in 1969, no more first-year composition. Faculty were frustrated by bad writing. After long history of attempts to rectify the situation and in-fighting among departments who wanted to teach writing courses, in 1994 the UW faculty senate voted for the establishment of a program in writing across the curriculum. The program was in place by 1996.

Resistance to WAC was overcome through:

- extra TA funding for participating departments
- small summer grants to encourage faculty to redesign existing courses
- instituting smaller class size
- expanding each writing course by one credit to accommodate requirements of writing development and of delivering the content of the course
- funding of undergraduate writing fellows, who help meet with and train students to perfect their writing skills (Brad noted that UW alumni have been happy to contribute to this program); each professor has a writing fellow. (This idea was taken from Brown University where an undergraduate writing fellows program was started in the mid-1980s. The UW program currently funds 55 such fellows.)
- Teaching awards for writing within each discipline

Structure of WAC program. Program has two components:

- **component A** is the first writing and communication course which can be satisfied in a number of different participating departments. Satisfies writing, critical thinking, and public speaking requirements, as well as information-seeking skills and strategies. Assignments in writing and speaking total “25-30 pages of clear, revised prose, including at least one researched essay and several prepared oral presentations, including one researched speech”;
- **component B** is the second writing and oral communication skills course, with at least 20 pp. of writing, at least two revised projects, and at least 10 minutes of oral presentation. Courses can be in any discipline.

**B.** Notes on Campus Writing Program at U. Missouri (<http://cwp.missouri.edu/cwpinfo/writingrequirements.htm>)

Mizzou requires a basic English intensive writing course, followed by two other intensive writing courses in any department, one of which must be an upper-division course in the student’s major area.

Approval of intensive writing courses:

“The Campus Writing Board reviews and approves courses as writing-intensive. Departments, not the Campus Writing Board, determine which Writing Intensive courses may count as ‘upper-division courses in the major.’”

**NEW BUSINESS** Nothing reported.

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 P.M.**