

College of Letters, Arts and Science
Office of the Dean

Austin Bluffs Parkway
P.O. Box 7150
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80933-7150

CURRICULUM AND REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

For the December 18, 1990, Meeting

Cragmor Hall 113 - 8:00 A.M.

See the attached summary and recommendations.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Curriculum and Requirements Committee

FROM: Donald R. Foster
Assistant to the Dean

SUBJECT: Summary of 19 December 1990 meeting

DATE: 7 January

CORE HUMANITIES

19 faculty currently involved. Results of retreat held in the Fall of 1990:

- (1) unanimous endorsement of multidisciplinary humanities courses; commitment to a strong writing component and to student analysis;
- (2) new courses to be developed to replace or compliment the existing four core courses; hope to move from one course per semester to two per semester (one taught during the day and one taught during the night); instead of 300 students in one class, there would be 150 students each in the two classes; possible topic of a new course could be the nature of American civilization - could be chronological, thematic, dealing with gender and ethnicity, etc.; a retreat will be held in 1991 from 3-7 June in which new courses will be proposed. One course to be offered for the Fall of 1991, but the C&R Committee will receive proposal for additional courses in the Spring of 1992 and will have dual course offerings in place by the Fall of 1992.

A review of the program has revealed the following strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths:

- (1) The multidisciplinary approach allows students to see material presented from different perspectives and shows overlap as well as friction between disciplines.
- (2) Students are exposed to material they never would have taken in another class.

Weaknesses:

- (1) Too much material; students overwhelmed by six disciplines; material needs to be reduced; perhaps the disciplines can be reduced from six to three or four.
- (2) Too many students in the lecture hall: requires faculty to be better "performers". Possible solution = parallel seminars for faculty who teach so that gaps may be filled (faculty have committed to leave time aside and regularly discuss the material).

FORTY-FIVE HOUR LIMIT IN THE MAJOR

Committee recommends its abolition. Since breadth is supposed to be insured by area requirements, why limit the major to 45 hours maximum?

CORE HUMANITIES

Professor Joan Ray made a presentation to the Committee. She was joined by Professors Pellow, Peters-Campbell, Smith, Sassower, and Sackett .

19 faculty are currently involved in the program. Most of those faculty participated in a retreat held in the Fall of 1990 with the following results:

- (1) unanimous endorsement of multidisciplinary humanities courses; commitment to a strong writing component and to the expectation of analysis by students;
- (2) new courses need to be developed to replace or compliment the existing four core courses; hope to move from one course per semester to two per semester (one taught during the day and one taught during the night); instead of 300 students in one class, there would be 150 students each in the two classes; possible topic of a new course could be the nature of American civilization - could be chronological, thematic, dealing with gender and ethnicity, etc.;
- (4) a retreat will be held June 3-7, 1991, in which new courses will be proposed. One course will be offered for the Fall of 1991, but the C&R Committee will receive proposals for additional courses in the Spring of 1992; dual course offerings are expected to be in place by the Fall of 1992.

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Weaknesses:

(1) Too much material; students are overwhelmed by six disciplines; material needs to be reduced; perhaps the disciplines can be reduced from six to three or four.

(2) Too many students in the lecture hall requires faculty to be better "performers". Possible solution = parallel seminars for faculty who teach so that gaps may be filled; (faculty have committed to leave time aside and regularly discuss the material so that the music instructor, for instance, can ask the history instructor how he would handle a particular subject.

(3) Many transfer students simply do not have adequate composition skills to meet the expectations of this upper division course.

(4) There is probably a dimension of rigor that is "unfair" in this team taught course because individual instructors want to "look good" among their peers.

Core humanities is upper division for two reasons:

(1) It is a capstone course, one that pulls things together, and not an introductory course.

(2) Writing skills of underclassmen were so poor that the decision was made to require them to complete composition courses before they could enroll in core humanities.

There has been discussion of the use of creative papers which will in some respects provide an alternative for those students whose analytical skills are weak.

Different questions are utilized in each recitation section. However, before making paper assignments, instructors of various recitation sections must agree on the main points. All instructors provide students with a selection. Not assigning the same questions to all students reduces the likelihood of duplicate papers due to student "cooperation".

Questions raised in discussion:

(1) Why not develop multidisciplinary courses beyond the Humanities?

(2) Why not include other disciplines outside the Humanities in the development of new courses?

(3) Why not take into account the optic response instead of just the verbal response to readings, pictures, etc.?

(4) Why not have core courses in the natural and social sciences? Could be "history of disciplines" courses.

(5) Why not replace area requirements with core courses?

Recommendations on the Core Humanities

On the whole, the Committee was quite favorably impressed by the presentation which it received and is predisposed to trust that the 1991 summer retreat will result in an even better program, so its recommendations deal less with Core Humanities and more with asking the other disciplines, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, to give serious consideration to developing core courses.

1. The Social Science faculty and the Natural Science faculty should seek to develop their own core courses; a possible beginning point is with a course that focus on the history of the natural sciences and another which focuses on the history of the social sciences.
2. As the Humanities faculty develop new courses, they should initiate discussions with Social Science and Natural Science faculty to explore opportunities for the creation of multi-disciplinary courses that would link two or all three of the areas.
3. Faculty should consider replacing area requirements with core courses, or combining the two in some fashion.
4. In making the Core Humanities upper division, the Humanities faculty need to examine very carefully whether students have the necessary substantive background to perform satisfactorily in what is referred to as a "capstone course". With this in mind, why not consider offering some of the Core at lower division and some at upper division?