

Faculty Workshop
2009 Fall

General Education Revision -- First Session

Next Steps:

- Establish learning goals and objectives (quickly)
- Don't start with goals, objects, mission, vision, etc.; get down to specifics of courses themselves within each division
- Keep goals simple
- Find out what other colleges and universities have as their cores
- What do other colleges and universities with a similar student profile have as their core?
- Establish the overall framework for the core; discuss all models
- Begin by focusing on the freshman year (critical to retention)

How do we form the group?

- Volunteers first
- Then see who is not represented. (Need faculty from each division; representatives from each constituency.)
- Faculty should be primary in all discussions of the nature of the core
- May need more than one committee to work on the core – each committee may take a different aspect of it.

Timeline and markers for each step

- Need a strong chair and a strong co-chair of the core committee in order to quickly establish a timeline for discussion and implementation
- Recommendations should be made at the end of this academic year
- After implementation of the core, administration should be willing to listen to and implement changes supported by feedback.

General Education Revision – Second Session

Hopes, fears, questions—collected on index cards anonymously.

Hopes

Use the LEAP goals

- LEAP goals are more operational than TeaCH goals.

Fears

- We need change because students are alienated from the core.
- Are students or are we alienated from the core?
- Depth or coverage?
- Begin with a specific set of goals related to student learning.
- Try to accomplish engaging students.

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What is the next step?

- What do we as an institution value in a broad sense?
- What we want is to embrace and define our core values?
- Process—trust and transparency committee—we need an inclusive and transparent process and room for all faculty.
- Need a fundamental starting place.
- LEAP goals are a place to start—reservations about it.
- Priority to get at this, the miasma, the low self-esteem we have because the system is broken.
- The general academic decline over the last few years is related to a small group defining essential learning outcomes.
- Have we begun this?
- If we do so, we can map the core courses onto the essential learning outcomes.
- Use curriculum committee to gradually steer us toward the revisions we need in the core curriculum.
- Faculty need to propose models of core curriculum and select from those proposals.
- If we left it up to interested groups among the faculty create a rationale given our values and mission, a model with practical concerns, financial, size of faculty—an implementation plan as well—provide a rationale to convince the rest of us.
- Next step is to call faculty to create self-selected groups to propose.
- Working in divisions or cross disciplinary
- Humanities has perhaps structured the core and maybe that's alienating other divisions from participating in the core? Or embracing it?
- Course titles are not terribly interesting or descriptive—maybe topic driven and arising out of divisional meetings.
- Talking to our students, focus group to be advisory, what did they learn, was there anything, any values they took with them?
- Person to coordinate the core revision—a new leader
- Work this out for the core and see how it flies with the majors and it didn't workout.
- Faculty are invested in their disciplines and don't want to be informed by the core—painful lesson—a second thinking about the undergraduate curriculum to do—plan specialized and general education.
- TeaCH goals are too vague and they come from the student experience at FP—including student life.
- TeaCH goals are perceived as for the core only.

Timeline

- Begins with core values—funded by the grant—3 years.
- Go for 1 or 2 years max
- It takes time to come to common ground

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- Too fast, too slow?
- Assessment of how this core is working is built in from the beginning, part of the process.
- Let's see what others are doing that's working or not, then consider different possibilities and that takes 2 or 3 years.
- Need to know the momentum today will continue.
- Need to know the core is a priority
- Honors Program, 4/4 load—Bell's four institutional priorities.
- We need to be sure this is a commitment—we need a core czar, use portfolios, deliver core outcomes, to assess.
- Need a mechanism to be sure there is a commitment.
- Research, core czar, how are the peer institutions doing it? Bring in reps from three or four of our peers and get a sense of which models might work for us.
- Look across colleges, there's a variety of different choices—some have virtually no core, others have a strict core, five have goals and those goals are coded and indicated which goals that course would satisfy. The trend is to dismantle the core.
- The best schools don't have a core?
- Have we begun with the survey?