

LIBERAL STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes

April 15, 2005

Attendees: Blase Scarnati, Karen Pugliesi, Pat Muster, Bruce Fox, Dean Pielstick, David Sherry, Aregai Tecle, Tom Paradis, Marcia Metcalf, Anne Medill, John Doherty, Kapri Saunders, Jack Ferrell and Jeffrey Berglund

Absent: Eileen Mahoney, Gayle Houser, Laura Michael-Blocher and Rebecca Cole

Guests: Paula Garcia, JeanAnn Foley, Terence Blows and Peter Kosso

I. Welcome and Introductions – Blase Scarnati

- Welcome to the Faculty Senate Liberal Studies Review Committee members who are attending our meeting.
- The Liberal Studies Committee retreat will be held next fall. Please check your calendars to see if the third or fourth Friday of September (Noon – 4 PM) works for you.
- Everyone should have received an email alerting them that it is time to vote for a new chair and vice-chair to serve next year. Blase Scarnati is running for chair, and Jeff Berglund is running for vice-chair. Please send an email to Pat Muster by the end of the day on Tuesday, April 19, if you would like to nominate others.
- April 29 is the last meeting for this year. Please try and wrap up any outstanding syllabi reviews, or Subcommittee Chairs contact Blase Scarnati with the status of the course so that if the review rolls over into next year there will be background information on the outstanding course proposals.

II. Approval of minutes

1. April 1, 2005 minutes approved with minor revisions

III. Syllabi report

- No additional syllabi were approved.
- Approvals needed by next week so that they can be submitted as consent items on the final University Curriculum Committee meeting of the semester. The deadline for the Fall 2005 effective date has passed.

IV. Discussion with members of the Faculty Senate Liberal Studies Review Committee

1. Why do we have a liberal studies program? Is the program micromanaged by the Liberal Studies Committee? Should not we trust the departments to manage general education courses within their areas?
 - Liberal studies ensures diversity across disciplines.
 - Promotes guideposts and continuity, especially when students change majors.
 - Helps students become citizens. If they only take major course requirements, it does not make them a well-rounded person.
 - Logistics are daunting if individual departments manage liberal studies.
 - If the program did not have central oversight there would more than likely be problems with articulation for transfer students who may not graduate on time.
 - Just getting the correct number of classes offered each semester would be a nightmare.
2. Is citizenship the main goal of the liberal studies program?
 - Students' need to know different cultures around them (socialized, citizenship, self-wholeness).
 - Is the basis for liberal studies to cultivate a common experience across campus for students, so they connect with each other and the larger world?
 - Future students will need to communicate across disciplines.
3. What current aspects of the program help and which detract? Only three blocks needed? What about the themes?
 - The blocks and skills seem to be most useful, rather than the themes.
 - Students need more reading, writing and arithmetic skills.
 - Skills across the disciplines needed.

- Students need more serious reading in their curriculum.
 - Distraught over quality of students reading abilities.
 - Many students are working many hours so that may be why they are not completing their reading and assignments.
 - Students have elevated self esteem but are lacking in discipline to complete assignments. Program can play a key role early on in learning good study habits, skills, etc.
 - Difficult with no faculty or student buy-in.
 - Faculty felt rushed when the program was revised and felt it was imposed upon them.
4. Didn't know until this year that the goal of the liberal studies program was citizenship. There appears to be a communication problem.
- Lack of discussion.
 - Need to communicate better at Orientation.
 - Need to strengthen faculty knowledge also.
5. Previews: advisors look at liberal studies as just a check list.
- There is new leadership of freshman programs and orientations.
 - This will be a major leap since NAU cannot even decide what they are about.
 - Until we figure out the value of liberal studies then we cannot move forward. Do not wait for the rest of the university; define what a liberal studies education is.
 - What if we asked clusters of disciplines: what would be common ground?
6. Has it been worse since UC 101 has been eliminated? Should there be a new course to replace it?
- Students enter with a vocational type of education in mind. It is hard for them to understand the value of the liberal studies program.
 - UC 101 had an operations breakdown but the idea of the course was a good one.
 - Need faculty buy-in.
 - New programs take time to establish themselves.
 - Instead of reconstructing the course, it was abandoned. Faculty appear burned out with freshmen programs.
 - Faculty may now say that it was tried but the idea failed.
 - AAC&U survey showed that alumni understood the value of a liberal education three to five years out of graduating although they did not understand the value while in school.
 - Maybe a mid-point colloquium would work better.
 - What do faculty want to teach?
 - Need faculty who can teach freshmen with passion.
 - Many faculty did not believe in UC 101, so lacked buy-in.
 - Liberal Studies program is too complex. Need to eliminate many of the current courses. Then could better serve the transfer students. Also need to make the majors smaller.
 - Let departmental chairs decide what courses they want to eliminate. This leads to a core curriculum discussion.
 - Need stricter enforcement of the goals of the program.
 - Should the themes be eliminated, but have stricter enforcement of the skills?
7. Should the Summer Reading program be part of the liberal studies program?
- It as linked with UC 101 and now with FYE.
 - The Committee currently decides which book is read.
 - Aware that there is not a strong link at the moment between summer reading and the liberal studies program, but are working on strengthening the link.
8. Happy with the junior writing requirement?
- Committee starting to assess the value of the junior writing requirement.
 - Yes, students do improve their writing skills when they have completed a junior writing course.

9. Happy with the capstone requirement?
 - End of road activities end up as capstones.
 - Junior Writing and capstone courses are process requirements.
 - The liberal studies curriculum is weak, so junior writing and capstone courses are mandated.

V. AAC&U: Collegiate Learning Assessment – Karen Pugliesi and Blase Scarnati

- AAC&U handout distributed with an additional article attached.
- The research project lays out some possible opportunities with dialogues with other universities.
- Do we want to participate in the CLA project?
- There would be a baseline cohort of students.
- No guarantee that we would be selected to participate.
- Leader of the pilot would most likely be Tom Paradis.
- If selected, would ask Tom Paradis and other faculty groups across campus to become involved (i.e. University Assessment Committee and the Liberal Studies Committee).
- Data would be shared across participating universities.

VI. LSC By-Laws Revision – David Sherry and Blase Scarnati

- Need to revise and update the By-laws and send it to the Faculty Senate for approval.
- Committee may want to revise the members list and also look at some other aspects of the current By-Laws.

VII. Other

Karen Pugliesi:

- Academic Standards Committee has revised the dual majors in liberal studies requirements concerning double dipping. Changes have been approved by the Provost. Change does not affect curriculum, it enforces it.
- Changes in entry-level mathematics courses. The change basically affects business majors who will now be required to take MAT 125 instead of MAT 110. MAT 114 replaces MAT 110. Committee may want to look at the math foundation course requirement.
- New NAU Liberal Studies Policies document. Minor changes due to degree audit and transfer students. Administrators have been perceived as making curriculum decisions, but they are only implementing faculty committee decisions. New policy will be posted to the web site in the near future. The policy has been widely distributed across campus. Maybe the Faculty Senate could keep track of future changes and alert the appropriate committees.

Blase Scarnati

- Suggested that any policy changes under consideration that affect another committee, as a courtesy, should be distributed in advance to that committee. Need to discuss strategies for communication of policy changes.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM