

University Core Development Committee

December 10, 1999

Gasson 105, 2:00 p.m.

Minutes

In attendance were Patrick Byrne, Richard Cobb-Stevens, Clare Dunsford, Nancy Fairchild, Robert Gross, John Heineman, George Madaus, Joseph Quinn, Dennis Sardella, and Sandra Waddock. Robert Kern was not present because he is on sabbatical leave.

Academic Vice President John Neuhauser visited the University Core Development Committee at its invitation. Chair Richard Cobb-Stevens summarized the achievements of the Committee and the challenges facing it.

Achievements:

- Credibility with the faculty
- Raising the standards of Core courses by asking departments to reflect on their Core requirements and organize their offerings in a thoughtful fashion
- Establishing the cultural diversity requirement as a viable component of the Core: producing initially 120-130 credible courses
- Curriculum development: Theology Department establishing their four Core courses out of a mass of diverse courses; expanding the Literature Core requirement to include courses from literature departments other than English; Sociology Department's reworking of their Core offerings
- Assessment of the Core: the senior survey, Maggi Kearney's random survey of juniors, focus groups of students interviewed by phone by Richard Cobb-Stevens

Challenges:

- Enforcing the writing requirement in large and/or science courses
- Ambiguity of the cultural diversity requirement: its two foci—race relations vs. internationalization
- Monitoring criteria and quality of core offerings in the departments
- Class size of Core courses
- Two-tier faculty: the increasing use of part-time faculty and graduate students to teach Core courses

After Richard made his report, Jack Neuhauser responded and a general discussion followed.

First Jack reported that some students and faculty have complained that the Core is too Western in its outlook, initiating a complaint with the MCAD and the Association of Black Faculty. He noted that there is a practical problem finding the faculty to teach non-Western Core courses. He suggested that we might add a question on the student course evaluations asking how much a course addresses the issue of cultural diversity.

Jack noted that the Core is most varied in quality in the cultural diversity courses. Overall, he feels the quality of the Core is much higher now than ten years ago, with courses that are more carefully considered and conceptualized.

On the issue of rising class size, data is inconsistent and misleading; the issue bears further research.

On the issue of a two-tier faculty, Jack suggested that budgetary concerns dictate these decisions to a great degree, although he acknowledged the importance of drawing senior faculty into the teaching of the Core. A lengthy discussion ensued about how this might be accomplished, with suggestions of possible rewards such as creating University Professorships for those dedicated to teaching, or creating seminars in liberal education (a mini-Great Books program) for newly tenured faculty (an idea promoted in the UAPC by Jack Neuhauser and Richard Cobb-Stevens). It was acknowledged that as B.C. evolves into a more research-oriented university, the tension between teaching and research will continue to be an issue in recruiting faculty to teach Core courses.

Submitted by Clare Dunsford