

Minutes of the University Core Development Committee, Monday, April 12, 2010.

The committee met in the Presentation Room of Waul House at about 2:35 p.m.

Present were J. Joseph Burns, Patrick Byrne, Michael J. Clarke, Clare Dunsford, Audrey Friedman, Catherine Read, Stephen Schloesser, Margaret Thomas, James M. Weiss, and Arthur Madigan.

There were two main items of business: (1) discussion of learning outcomes assessment for core courses; (2) consideration of syllabi re-submitted by the Office of International Programs (OIP) for Cultural Diversity core credit. The committee decided to begin with the former.

It was noted that the 1991 Final Report of the Core Task Force, accessible on the web, listed characteristics that core courses ought to have and that any one of these characteristics could be assessed. It was then noted that there were various ways in which the core might be assessed. One way would be to study a selection of senior essays to assess the extent to which they showed that the goals of the core had been achieved. A second way would be to evaluate the questions that the UCDC uses in its evaluation of courses proposed for core credit. A third way, which had been employed by a previous core director, was to convene a focus group for discussion with graduating seniors. In such a focus group, students were asked whether this practice should continue and whether the questions asked of them should be formalized to better assess the impact of the core. It was proposed that the committee conduct discussions on the three methods of assessment by fall 2010. The background to this was the university's commitment to respond to NEASC's concerns about the assessment of the core program in time for NEASC's next interim visit.

The discussion that ensued touched on many aspects of assessment but especially on the possibility of adding supplementary questions to student evaluations of core courses to assess how well those courses were implementing the characteristics of core courses set forth in the 1991 Final Report. In part this conversation was a followup to previous email exchanges that discussed possible wordings for such supplementary questions. After reviewing the history of previous discussions of assessment, and considering many questions, cautions, and reservations, the committee agreed that it would be good to make a start on supplementary questions, see how they worked, and acquire some data, even if only from a few courses. A subcommittee accepted the task of drafting questions, and another committee member agreed to assist the subcommittee.

The committee then proceeded to its second item of business: consideration of syllabi re-submitted by the Office of International Programs for Cultural Diversity core credit.

Liberation Theology in the Chilean Context: Faith, Church, and Social Change (Roberto Goizueta) was approved for Cultural Diversity core credit.

EN 314 Creative Writing Workshop: "Writing out of Place" (Suzanne Matson) was approved for Cultural Diversity core credit.

The director of the core curriculum resolved to undertake a conversation with the Office of International Programs about the committee's expectations in the matter of Cultural Diversity core credit.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:15 p.m.

These minutes were edited by Arthur Madigan, S.J. on September 13, 2010.