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MINUTES

Monday, April 26, 2004. Members of the Class of 2005 attended our meeting in Gasson 105 at 2:15. Members Present: Richard Cobb-Stevens, Joe Quinn, Ourida Mostefai, Dennis Sardella, Pat Byrne, Cathy Schneider, Cathy Read, John Gallaugh, and Tim Duket. Not present: Paul Gray.

Students present:

Katie Den Uyl (A&S)
Adam Koneman (Lynch/Education)
Rachel Leyland (A&S)
April Rezendes (Nursing)
Briana Kolodziej (A&S)
Grace Simmons (A&S)
Michael Petit (A&S)
Anthony Blaine (A&S)
Carla Breton (A&S)
Edward Lin (CSOM)
Paul Sok-Hyun Yoon (A&S)
Ryan Connors (A&S)

Christopher Krall (A&S)
Jacqueline Arko (A&S)
Mark Switaj (CSOM)
Ann Kryzanek (A&S)
Cristina Parisi (A&S)
Esther Kim (A&S)

Students introduced themselves, speaking in turn about experiences with the Core, both their own and those of students with whom they have discussed the Core. However, student comment was highly individualized. As the comments were often very particular, a summary of the session is necessarily discursive with few dominant themes.

One general observation about the session is that there was a high representation (in the group of 20) of people who had participated in Perspectives. Perspectives received high praise, often ranking as the most valuable Core taken or as a model for what other Core offerings should be. The most frequent comment after this was directed at the History Core, indicating also the fact that most of those present had taken the History Core.

Mark Switaj from CSOM explained how onerous the university Core is to a CSOM student seeking an in-depth study of his CSOM major. April Rezendes noted a similar problem for Nursing students, owing to Nursing Practicums. The Arts and Sciences students generally did not describe the Core as an obstacle to taking desired electives and major courses.

Dean Joe Quinn noted the absence of comment about the Math Core. His experience told him there would be such comment. Students suggested "Finite Math" was too elementary. The study of mathematics in practical settings was advocated - e.g. "Math and Public Policy". There does seem to be a gap between students taking advanced mathematics for various science majors and those in social science and humanities majors who could also make good use of math knowledge, but steer clear of calculus.

The language requirement generated two strands of thought, though related. Both strands note the intermediate level is not sufficient for mastery. One school of student thought is that the requirement is therefore a waste. The other is that the CCR level should be required. Dean Ourida Mostefai agreed that this was a dilemma, but not an argument in favor of giving up on encouraging students to start second (and third and fourth) languages.

The History Core was singled out for its content. Student perception was expressed in three ways: The history core was a repeat of what had been studied in high school; The history core was devoted to recent historiographical approaches (too many "secondary sources") and, in apparent contradiction of this, skewed to the west; the history core courses were large and faculty contact was usually with TAs.

Students urged the creation of a greater variety of science courses. [The comment about the problem of large class size was directed to science courses as well as to history classes]

When asked, ten or more of the students indicated (by raised hands) that some high school courses were more demanding than the Core [first year writing and lit courses] courses they have taken.

Additions and corrections (from Cathy Schneider, June 3, 2004):

- The comment about Core courses not being very challenging was directed to the first year writing

and lit courses.

- Students raised the issue of whether Perspectives I could be available to students other than freshmen. Related to this was a recommendation that the other Perspectives courses be given more publicity.
- The comment about the problem of large class size was directed to science courses as well as to history classes.

Since the April 26 meeting, members of the committee have been polled and a final decision made about NU318: Cobb-Stevens to Burgess: "A strong majority of the core curriculum committee has voted not to accept your proposed course (NU 318 Forensic Science) for science core credit. A couple of the members thought that the examination material seems to lack testing of analytical reasoning of the sort appropriate to a core science course. Everyone agreed, however, that the course is an interesting and well conceived elective. Several colleagues mentioned that the value of the course as an elective would be enhanced if the students had previously taken one of the basic science courses. We thank you for your interest in the core curriculum. Sincerely, Richard Cobb-Stevens"

Monday, March 29, 2004. Present: Richard Cobb-Stevens, Dennis Sardella, John Gallagher, Pat Byrne, Cathy Schneider, Cathy Read and Tim Duket. Not present: Joe Quinn, Ourida Mostefai and Paul Gray.

Calendar of future meetings: Monday, April 26, 2:15 p.m. (undergraduate representatives in the Core).

Prof. Patrick Kilcoyne represented the Theology Core, presenting a general outline of its purpose and explaining the teaching seminars and other preparation for teaching fellows and teaching assistants. Cathy Read provided copies of exams from Ann Burgess's Forensic Science course.

Monday, March 8, 2004. Present: Richard Cobb-Stevens, Dennis Sardella, Pat Byrne, Cathy Read, Cathy Schneider, Ourida Mostefai, Tim Duket. Not present: Paul Gray and John Gallagher.

Calendar of future meetings: Monday, March 29 (Agenda: Theology Department), Monday April 26 (Agenda: Undergraduates and the Core). The O'Neill Library "Information Literacy Task Force" would like to postpone its meeting with the committee until September.

Prof. Patrick Byrne represented the Philosophy Core and presented its three components: Philosophy of the Person, Perspectives and Pulse. Syllabuses for all three were reviewed. General discussion. Highlighted was the description of training provided by Cobb-Stevens for graduate students teaching in the Core. The issue of Pulse enrollments gave some concern - this Core was not widely available to first year students (popular among sophomores). Prof. Schneider noted, however, that the program might be too much for first year students. Spaces in Pulse are held to make at least something available at each of the summer orientations. Ourida Mostefai raised the issue of languages in the case of Core Philosophy. How do we make certain that students are aware of the linguistic dimension lost when we read philosophical (and other) texts in translation?

As scheduled, the committee again took up the question of Professor Ann Wolpert Burgess's Forensic Science I (NU318). Prof. Burgess had provided members Powerpoint Slides from her lectures for review before this meeting. Members requested the opportunity to look at exam questions. Because these are multiple choice, they cannot simply be mailed. Cathy Read agreed to try to bring copies of an exam to the next meeting. Members are asked to express their views on this matter by e-mail to the Core Director Richard Cobb-Stevens.

Monday, February 9, 2004. Present: Richard Cobb-Stevens, John Gallagher, Cathy Read, Cathy Schneider, Ourida Mostefai, Tim Duket. Not present: Paul Gray and Pat Byrne. New members Cathy Schneider and Ourida Mostefai introduced. Future meeting day and time confirmed: Mondays at 2:15.

Calendar of future meetings: Monday, March 8; Monday, March 29; Monday, April 26. A possible fourth meeting in May during study days was discussed.

The committee began by assessing the state of the Core. Core Curriculum has settled down into a routine requiring only a few meetings each year. One outstanding issue is the still awaited Dean's Office reply to the December, 2002 report on Core offerings in the Natural Sciences. Members of the committee were given copies of that report. The spring 2004 agendas proposed were 1. Philosophy Department, 2. Theology department and 3. presentations by undergraduates from core courses. A procedure for selecting these student participants was discussed. We will invite six.. They should be randomly chosen, but with an expectation that these would somehow poll other students to gain a more representative view. As in other years, student presenters should consult with one another beforehand to guarantee a discussion of all aspects of the core from a student perspective.

New business included a proposed course, MU305, as an offering to satisfy the cultural diversity requirement and another, NU318, a proposed course for the natural sciences core. Professor Ann Morrison Spinney's proposed course on Native American Song (MU305) was reviewed and unanimously approved. Professor Ann Wolpert Burgess's Forensic Science I (NU318) was discussed and a decision held over until the March 8 meeting. Cathy Read agreed to consult with Prof. Burgess and report back to the committee on several issues of course content. The director will consult the dean for additional perspective. The relevant passage on natural sciences from the the FINAL REPORT, TASK FORCE ON THE CORE CURRICULUM, June 15, 1991 was read and discussed:

Natural science should be included in the core to enable students: to understand the principles, the body of knowledge, and the investigative strategies that comprise science and its technological applications; to recognize the power of science to investigate and understand the natural world; to develop an awareness of the limitation of scientific conclusions; to see the critical role science and technology play in contemporary society; and to appreciate why scientists find science intellectually satisfying. Two three-credit or four-credit courses in natural science should be required. Courses will focus on topics in a particular science or on topics which cross disciplines. Each core course should illustrate the following basic principles of science: the interdisciplinary nature of answers to scientific questions; the importance of establishing rigorous cause and effect relationships; the inevitability of change in nature and the processes that cause change; the use of carefully designed observations and experiments to probe nature; and application of mathematical descriptions and analyses whenever appropriate. The University Core Development Committee will work with science departments to encourage inclusion of

actual or simulated laboratory and/or field experience in natural science core courses.

The last item discussed was the O'Neill Library Task Force on Information Literacy. A group of librarians (headed by Betty Cohen, Kwasi Sarkodie-Mensah, and Adeane Bregman) is working on ways to develop electronic literacy among undergraduates. Committee members agree that the ability to access and properly use electronic resources is academically essential. The UCDC considered possible collaboration with the Task Force.. What approach would guarantee that all students would become skilled in using the enormous electronic resources now in the library? Ourida Mostefai expressed a view that academic integrity was a logical and appropriate additional Core Committee concern when it came to information technology. Professor Don Hafner's academic integrity self-test was offered as an example of possible solutions. Tim Duket noted that the library group was looking at many options and was beginning the development of an online self-tested course. The idea of "certification" emerged from the discussion. Might there be an expectation that all students would be required to be *certified* in electronic literacy. This certification was then seen to be a discipline-specific matter with departments in the best position to delineate and test the research and other library skills needed in each discipline. The role of the Core Committee should/could be that of a faculty home base for this project. In this way every department would know this to be an expectation of the Core and the university. We will pursue further contact with the Task Force. A fourth meeting of the UCDC in early May at which the Task Force could present its ideas and plans was left an open question.

Questions, comments, or suggestions for this page? Director of the Core

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