

To: BFC Agenda Committee
From: Padraic Kenney, Chair, BFC Educational Policies Committee
Re: UFC Circular U4-2011
21 December 2010

In its meeting of December 9, the IUB Educational Policies Committee discussed UFC circular U4-2011, presented to the UFC on November 30 and subsequently referred to the EPC. In its discussion, the EPC focused on the following issues:

First, members noted that the circular's proposal to use the AAC&U LEAP framework as a yardstick for General Education is a misapplication of the latter. The LEAP program articulates learning outcomes of a liberal education – that is, how a graduate of an American institution of higher learning benefits from a liberal education over the course of her/his college career. General Education requirements, by contrast, focus on the “common ground” of skills and perspectives gained principally in the first two years. The EPC supports the adoption of LEAP by Indiana University, but only as a way of talking about the complete IU graduate. In this, LEAP is more analogous to, and should be considered in tandem with, IU's Mission Statement(s).

Second, members noted that general education programs vary widely in their scope and goals, just as institutions do. IUB's mission as a flagship of the state's education means that its expectations differ from those of other institutions. For example, while IUB's General Education Program emphasizes mathematical modeling as a central skill to be acquired, other seemingly comparable programs emphasize quantitative reasoning or quantitative literacy. Our program encourages two years of language study, while courses about other countries may be sufficient in other programs. Within courses, emphases on skills (such as writing) may vary greatly even among comparable institutions. Students who satisfy one institution's General Education program, therefore, may not have satisfied the expectations of the IUB faculty that are expressed in the General Education Program it created. The EPC therefore argues, with the well-being of students in mind, that transfers must continue to be on a course-by-course basis.

The EPC, finally, recommends that any effort to adopt LEAP standards or to streamline the transfer of credits, will require the gathering of more data. In particular:

- the efforts of campus and university leadership should be focused first on the articulation of our mission, including the stringency of our admission guidelines (as urged by the ICHE).
- with regard to ongoing transfers, data is needed on both the graduation rates and the GPAs of students entering IUB with various kinds of transfer credits. This will allow us to better understand the workings of transfers before we seek to change anything about that system.
- the campus should strive to gather and analyze data about the courses (i.e. syllabi) and general education programs at a wide variety of institutions, with an eye to understanding whether incoming students bringing with them certain transfer credits will be adequately prepared.

In sum, the EPC expects that the administration will continue to work to support the mission of this campus and to make that mission transparent to future students and to the institutions where they first gather college credits.