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TO: Bloomington Faculty Council

From: Barb Bichelmeyer & Russ Hanson
Co-Chairs
IUB General Education Committee

RE: Progress Report on General Education at Indiana University Bloomington

A campus-wide General Education Curriculum goes into effect in the fall semester of 2011. This curriculum is designed to

deepen students' proficiency in writing, reasoning, and modeling, i.e. to develop college-level proficiencies in the Foundation skills of composition and mathematical modeling;

broaden students' intellectual horizons by exposing them to different modes of understanding and expression, i.e. to extend their breadth of inquiry beyond that of a typical high school curriculum; and

extend students' engagement with the world beyond our borders, through learning about another culture, acquiring college-level competence in a foreign language, or study abroad.

BFC Circular B30-2007 describes the overall structure of a curriculum that will achieve these objectives. It has two primary components, Common Ground requirements, and Shared Goals for degree programs. As the new co-chairs of the General Education Committee we report progress in developing each component below.

Common Ground (Foundations + Breadth of Inquiry + World Languages & Cultures)

Significant progress was made by in 2006-07 by Common Ground Committees (CGC) in evaluating courses proposed for inclusion in the General Education Curriculum. Rubrics were developed for each component of the Common Ground: Foundations (English Composition and Mathematical Modeling), Breadth of Inquiry (Arts & Humanities, Social & Historical Studies, and Natural & Mathematical Sciences), and World Languages & Cultures. The rubrics were then applied to 1,143 courses proposed by the College and Schools. Of this number, 640 were approved for use in the General Education Curriculum, including almost 100 language courses. The approved courses represent a little more than 5% of the IUB course catalog.

A number of issues arose during review of course proposals in Spring 2007. Some CGCs set aside proposals until these issues were resolved; others proceeded under rules developed in committee. During Fall 2007, the full General Education Committee adopted policies to resolve the issues uniformly. For example, all courses in the General Education Curriculum will be offered on regular schedules, under specific titles, and at the 100/200 level. We also plan to review the status of each course on the list every five years, in conjunction with the program review mandated by the BFC.

The new policies provide a consistent framework that is now being used by all Common Ground Committees. The committees are currently meeting to review the list of courses approved in the first round to ensure compliance with the new policies, and to complete action on courses that were put on hold pending resolution of the issues. The CGCs begin a second round of reviews this month, and will complete this work by the end of March.

Shared Goals

Less progress was made during Spring 2007 in refining the rubrics for Shared Goals of Intensive Writing, Information Fluency, Diversity in the U.S., and Enriching Education Experiences. Shortly after we were appointed in Fall 2007 we met with the academic officers of all undergraduate degree granting units at IUB to discuss Shared Goals, and to request preliminary reports on implementation. We are now reviewing these reports to determine what adjustments need to be made to the rubrics, which will then guide the formulation of final plans by each unit. Further refinements will be made after Schools and the College outline their plans for implementation and identify possible sticking points.

As stated in BFC Circular B30-2007, “The Shared Goals are recommended for inclusion in every degree program,” i.e. “Each degree program should be designed in such a way that students are provided with opportunities to experience these additional aspects of an undergraduate education.” That is, each degree program is strongly encouraged to offer opportunities for achieving Shared Goals, but these goals are not required of all students in every degree program. Thus, the realization of Shared Goals is unit-specific, and we rely on each unit to develop, approve and implement appropriate opportunities for students.

(The Shared Goal of learning about Diversity in the United States is an exception to this. BFC Circular B39-1900 stipulates that every degree granting unit must have an appropriate requirement for learning about diversity and cultural, racial, ethnic, class, age, ability, sexual orientation, religious and gender discrimination in the U.S. Thus, achievement of this Goal is required for all students, not just recommended.)

Implementation

The installation and maintenance of the new General Education Curriculum requires an institutional basis of support. Provost Hanson will determine the appropriate administrative location of responsibility for General Education, and is currently providing staff support to oversee the development of record-keeping and an electronic system for submitting course proposals in future rounds. The latter will permit us to monitor the progress of proposals through the various stages of evaluation, and enable us to communicate results to affected parties in a timely manner.

In March, we will provide more details of the General Education Curriculum at a BFC EPC meeting, and in April we will present an update to the BFC of Circular B30-2007 that reflects the General Educational Curriculum as it stands after two rounds of vetting courses for the Common Ground and the formulation of plans for achieving Shared Goals in each of the academic units.

Issues that need attention in the near future, and which may require further guidance from the BFC, include:

- Creating a plan to assess the impact of the General Education Curriculum after five years, as mandated by the BFC;
- Estimating the impact of the General Education Curriculum on degree programs and budgets;
- Adjusting degree programs and bulletins as academic units incorporate new General Education requirements;
- Realigning the Registrar, Enrollment Services, University Division to accommodate the General Education Curriculum in admissions policy, enrollment management, advising, and degree auditing;
- Developing information, promotion and marketing materials to convey the value of the new General Education Curriculum to prospective students, citizens of the State of Indiana and other key stakeholders.