

DATE: 04.17.2009

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 with Summer Session I of 2011. BFC Circular B25-2009 describes the overall structure of this curriculum. This circular is the revised version of BFC Circular B30-2007, which is itself a revision of the original BFC Circular for General Education.

The General Education Program has two primary components: a required Common Ground Curriculum and recommended Shared Goals for degree programs. As co-chairs of the General Education Committee, we report on each of these two components below, and conclude that development and implementation of the new curriculum is now occurring in an orderly and timely manner.

Three important actions taken during the 2008-2009 academic year affected the General Education Curriculum, the structure of the General Education Committee and its operations:

- 1) On September 16, 2009 the Bloomington Faculty Council formally approved the structure of General Education requirements for IUB, after we reported that the proposed curriculum posed no insuperable difficulties in implementation. Our conclusion was based on two years' experience in vetting courses for the new curriculum, and was subsequently borne out in the third round of review.
- 2) We modified the composition of the General Education Committee in consultation with the Agenda Committee of the BFC. By design, voting membership of the General Education Committee is proportional to the number of tenure-track appointments in the schools and College. Since the committee was formed in 2006, the relative size of school faculties has changed. In order to restore proportionality, we added 12 members to the General Education Committee in 2008-09, which had the additional advantage of bringing special expertise to bear on areas where it was useful in completing unfinished business from 2007-08.
- 3) By vote of the General Education Committee, a new subcommittee was formed to develop a plan for monitoring the effectiveness of the new curriculum in meeting program goals, learning objectives, and institutional interests regarding the impact of the curriculum on the IUB campus.

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

Further progress was made this year by Common Ground Committees (CGC) in evaluating courses proposed for inclusion in the General Education Curriculum. Rubrics were refined 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 revised rubrics are in BFC Circular B25-2009.

The CGCs used the revised rubrics to evaluate 70 courses newly proposed by the College and schools, as well as several dozen courses deferred from previous rounds. After a meeting on April 10, 2009, the General Education Committee ratified a list of courses recommended by the Common Ground Committees. The list of these courses and a summary of the evaluation process accompanies this memorandum; this list is subject to revision by next year's committee as it considers another round of course proposals. We expect the vetting of courses to be an annual routine.

In total, 1317 courses have been reviewed in three rounds of vetting. Of this number, 719 have been approved for General Education, including almost 200 foreign language courses. The total number of approved courses is about 10% of the IUB course catalog. Of the courses that were not approved, most

were 300- or 400-level courses excluded by a policy enacted by the General Education Committee in December, 2007 and reported to the BFC on April 14, 2008.

The CGCs also identified learning objectives for courses offered in fulfillment of each required element of the new curriculum. BFC Circular B25-2009 incorporates these objectives, and identifies course characteristics that serve them.

Additional policies were formally adopted by the General Education Committee after its meeting on April 10, 2009. These are listed in the first appendix to BFC Circular B25-2009; they deal with exemptions for programs, exceptions for courses, and exceptions for students, as well as accommodations for students with learning disabilities. There is also a policy requiring transfer students to meet IUB General Education requirements.

One of these policies requires further clarification by the BFC of the process for exempting programs from the Common Ground requirements that apply to all baccalaureate degree programs. The original circular dictated that all such requests be submitted to the General Education Committee, but did not specifically authorize that committee to decide such requests. The new policy on program exemptions calls for the concurrent approval of the General Education Committee and the BFC, which created the requirements in the first place.

Shared Goals

As stated in BFC Circular B25-2009, “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.

To insure that academic units are on track in planning to implement the General Education program by Fall 2011, we met with the academic officers of undergraduate degree-granting units at IUB to discuss Shared Goals, and to request progress reports on implementation. Based on these reports we are pleased to note that most units see the Shared Goals component of General Education as an extension of current practices. None anticipate major difficulties in implementation.

Assessment

The BFC charged the General Education Committee with monitoring the new curriculum and evaluating its impact after five years of operation. Toward that end, we consulted this year with various stakeholders, including the Educational Policy Committee of the BFC, and developed a white paper to inform plans for monitoring of the General Education Program. The paper (which is available in the set of documents accompanying this report) articulates the purposes of program monitoring, and recommends three levels of monitoring, including: 1) assessment of student learning, 2) curricular evaluation, and 3) program review.

The white paper also outlines key learning objectives that should be measured through program review, curricular evaluation and student assessment. In addition, the paper offers guiding principles for evaluating the curriculum, which address participant involvement, transparency, the nature of General Education as a developmental experience, acknowledgment of variation among students, challenges with determining causal relationships, and the need for monitoring activities that are authentic, efficient and feasible.

Finally, there is a charge for a new subcommittee to build on the white paper by developing a fuller plan for assessment by the end of 2009, and anticipates final action by the General Education Committee in Spring 2010. The timing is important, since we need to begin collecting baseline information at least a year before the new curriculum goes into effect.

Implementation

The installation and maintenance of the new General Education Curriculum will be the responsibility of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. We have begun transferring records of our activity and reports of decisions made by the General Education Committee to the office of the VPUE. We have benefited greatly from and very much appreciate the services of T. Michael Ford, Nick Hillman, and Lynette Evans, all of whom were loaned to this project, but now is the time to provide continuous support and a permanent home for the new curriculum.

We have formed and convened a working group for administrative planning and implementation of the General Education Program. The group includes representatives from the Office of Communications, Enrollment Services, Admissions, University Division, and the Registrar, as well as academic officers from the College and schools. The purpose of this group is to insure a smooth roll-out of the new curriculum, including a year of background testing in 2010-2011.

Also in formation is a working group of advisers and academic officers who oversee students' academic progress. The purpose of this group is to develop plans for training all advisers on campus, and to explore the most effective ways of communicating vital information to students, whether prospective or matriculating.

Both co-chairs of the General Education Committee are completing their service this spring. *To insure a smooth transition it is imperative that the BFC identify and recruit a replacement co-chair as soon as possible.* Provost Karen Hanson will designate the other co-chair, as stipulated in the BFC Circular.

Issues that need attention in the near future include:

- Estimating the impact of the General Education Program on degree programs and budgets;
- Adjusting degree programs and bulletins as academic units incorporate new General Education requirements;
- Ensuring that the Registrar and Enrollment Services are prepared to accommodate the General Education Program in admissions policy, enrollment management and degree auditing;
- Training and preparation of University Division and academic unit advisors to communicate the details of the General Education Program to students;
- 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.