

Approved Minutes of the Carolina Core (General Education) Committee Meeting

March 15, 2011

12:30-2:00 p.m.

Thomas Cooper Library

Members Present:

Cheryl Addy, Pam Bowers (ex officio), Mary Ann Byrnes, Kenneth Campbell, Helen Doerpinghaus (Administrative Co-Chair), Kris Finnigan (ex officio), Kimberly Glenn, Carolyn Jones, Sheryl Kline, Mike Matthews (Faculty Co-Chair), Allen Miller, Phil Moore (ex-officio), Joseph Rackers, Rick Stephens, Irma Van Scoy, Teresa Smith, Jerry Wallulis (ex-officio), Virginia Weathers

Members Absent:

Elise Ahyi (ex-officio), Jim Burns, Mary L. Hjelm, Susanne Hicklin (ex officio), Stuart Hunter, Gene Luna, Patrick Nolan (ex-officio), Susan Parlier, Jennifer Vendemia (ex officio)

Faculty Content Consultants Present:

Alexander Beecroft, Erik Doxtader, Don Edwards, Christy Friend, Andrew Graciano, Sam Hastings, Ken Kelly, Tom Lekan, Doug Meade, Rich Showman, Chris Tollefsen

Faculty Content Consultants Absent:

Handout materials:

- Agenda
- February 8, 2011 minutes – draft
- Creation and Revision of Academic Courses, Page 6 from Academic Affairs Policy ACAF 2.03 at <http://www.sc.edu/policies/acaf203.pdf>
- Program Assessment Information Packet – Phil Moore
- Example syllabi, Carolina Core contextual statements for related learning outcomes, and blank rubric, for small group work

Helen facilitated introductions of committee members and faculty content consultants. Rick said that Kenneth Campbell will take his place on the committee this summer.

Mike said he made a courtesy visit to Faculty Senate at their March meeting, and reported to them that this committee was preparing specialty teams and creating the course approval process, and related forms, for Carolina Core courses. He discussed with them that the CC course approval process will have significant overlap with the work of the Faculty Senate's Committee on Curricula and Courses. He will maintain contact with them to assure that we are working in complementary ways and keeping the work as simple as possible.

Helen and Mike met with the specialty teams on February 15 to review the history of the committee and began discussions with the teams on the course approval process.

Kris reported that the course approval form has been handed off to University Technology Services (UTS). She expects that they will have a prototype of the course approval application around April 1, will test it this summer, and that it will be ready for implementation by the Fall semester.

Helen reminded that faculty that apply for Carolina Core designation will first go through their Academic Program Liaison and usual college course approval process, before being submitted to the CC approval process.

Helen explained to new participants that all colleges are represented on the CC committee and the specialty teams represent content area expertise related to the assigned learning outcome.

Jerry asked if science courses with related labs would be considered separately or as one unit – course and lab combination; his faculty group recommends that the two be considered as one unit. Helen said this could be handled administratively and she would work on how to handle that process.

Minutes of the February 8 meeting were approved with one correction.

Phil Moore, Director of Institutional Assessment and Compliance, presented a discussion on assessment titled, Tell It, Teach It, Test It. Phil described assessment as a useful tool to make programs better; he said his office works to help programs improve through assessment, not to create perfect assessments. He explained the process of program assessment as “a group of faculty members discussing a group of students’ work, to determine common strengths and weaknesses, and to prescribe changes to address the weaknesses without screwing up the strengths.” In program assessment, the faculty consider each course as part of a system. Phil explained Tell It as answering the question, through program descriptions and course syllabi, “why do we exist?” He said Teach It answers the question “what did we do (in the curriculum and in courses)?” And, finally, Test It answers the question “how well did we do it?” He said that this model reminds us to be sure that we are testing (assessing) at the program level, the content that we are actually teaching in the courses. Phil illustrated his points using an example from the Carolina Core learning outcomes – scientific literacy. The learning outcome is the “Tell It” – why we exist, what we intend for students to learn. To continue this example, he described a Computer Science course description and syllabus to illustrate one way that we will Teach It – what this course will do to help students achieve the learning outcome. Then, when we Test It (assess students achievement of the CC learning outcome), we have already determined that CC courses are, in fact, providing opportunities for students to obtain the intended knowledge and skills.

Phil said that since general education is also a program, we will examine the work of a group of students to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the CC program of general education. He said that in the past, we have used a standardized test - which matched up fairly well with the curriculum, but not exactly - to assess the extent to which students were achieving general education learning goals. Additionally, the History and English departments conducted assessments to determine the extent to which students were achieving related learning goals. Phil said that the plan to evaluate samples of student work from CC approved courses will be more useful for improvement, since it will provide an authentic assessment – examining the work actually being done by students in the classroom.

Helen distributed three documents – a course syllabus from a current general education course, the Carolina Core contextual statements for related learning outcomes, and a blank rubric. She explained that the levels represented on the rubric provide an opportunity to evaluate ‘foundational level’ achievement of the learning outcome being assessed, as well as ‘integrative level’ achievement. Expectations for level of achievement will vary depending on the level of course from which the sample of student work was obtained. Helen said the committee will not be considering integrative courses immediately, but will focus on “workhorse” courses first, to assure that students have adequate CC-approved courses in which to enroll.

Committee members worked in small groups to consider how the course approval and assessment of learning processes will work. Groups reported the following discussion points and suggestions back to the full committee:

- The title of the course, in addition to the prefix and number, should appear on every syllabus
- Writing a syllabus for CC approval requires thinking for a different audience than usual (for Faculty Senate Committee on Curricula and Courses, and the Carolina Core committee, in addition to students who take the course)
- abbreviations are often used that may not be understood outside the discipline

- more information about content covered in the course will be needed; recommend providing chapter titles in addition to chapter numbers
- it would be helpful if the 'justification' information provided in the course approval form was also included in the syllabus – this will help the reviewer understand how assignments and exams help students develop knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the CC learning outcome, and how these outcomes are assessed
- it would be helpful to have a website that provides information about all courses that are approved for each CC learning outcome, and how they do so (justification)
- departments teaching CC designated courses will have responsibility to communicate with instructors about essential (for CC) components of 'archetypal' syllabus approved for the CC

Helen asked that any additional questions or suggestions for improvement or clarification be sent to her.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

The next Carolina Core meeting will be April 12, at 12:30 in Room 204 of the Thomas Cooper Library.

Submitted by Pam Bowers.