

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

March 16, 2010  
12:30-2:00 p.m.  
204 Thomas Cooper Library

### **Members Present:**

Cheryl Addy, Pam Bowers (ex-officio), Mary Ann Byrnes, Helen Doerpinghaus (ex-officio), Kris Finnigan (ex-officio), Mary Hjelm, Stuart Hunter, Carolyn Jones, Sheryl Kline, Michael Matthews (co-chair), David Miller (co-chair), Joseph Rackers, Rick Stephens, David Tedeschi, Jennifer Vendemia (ex-officio), Irma Van Scoy, Karen Brown (for Virginia Weathers)

### **Members Absent:**

Elise Ahyi (ex-officio), Jim Burns, Kimberly Glenn, Susanne Hicklin, Gene Luna, Phil Moore (ex-officio), Patrick Nolan (ex-officio), Susan Parlier, Terrie Smith

**Faculty Content Consultants Present:** Erik Doxtader, Lacy Ford, Andrew Graciano, Jerry Hackett, Sam Hastings, Ken Kelly, Doug Meade, Marja Warehime

### **Faculty Content Consultants Absent:**

Claudia Benitez-Nelson

Minutes of the February 9 meeting were approved.

Helen announced that a University Forum will be held, as planned, this semester to provide an update to faculty and staff on the work of the committee, and for the committee to receive comments. The University Forum is set for March 30 at 11:00-12:30 in the Russell House Theater. Although the committee will not have drafted a proposal for distribution requirements by the time of the Forum, it will provide a useful opportunity to share ideas and receive comment.

### Overview of Process of Proposing Distribution Requirements

As documented on the general education website at <http://www.sc.edu/generaleducation/>, the general education revision process has been underway for several years. The committee, with input from the general faculty, has articulated what we want students to learn (learning outcomes). Comments have indicated that there may be some misunderstanding about the role of the Carolina Core. It is one of three somewhat distinct requirements for degree completion: the Carolina Core comprises the learning outcomes for all students at the university; additional college or school requirements for all students within a college or school; and major requirements for all students within a specific academic program. With variations across colleges and majors, students have some choices among classes that meet college or school requirements, and sometimes usually have fewer choices among courses that meet major requirements. Some programs have elective hours (students can choose courses) within the total required hours; however, many are not "true" electives - students must choose courses within certain parameters specified by program faculty.

Helen discussed the climate of higher education nationally. As has been the case for the last decade, the pressure for reform of higher education continues to build. The media is full of stories with complaints about the cost of attending colleges and universities, questions about the quality of student learning, and dissatisfaction with the lack of accountability. The federal government is focusing more attention on the functioning of higher education. Our institutional, regional accrediting agency, SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), is responsible for assuring the quality of higher education institutions to the federal government. SACS is often perceived by colleges and universities as being too harsh but, along with other regional accrediting agencies, is criticized by the government and higher education critics as

being too soft on institutions. SACS, the federal government, and many other constituents are paying attention to what we (higher education and USC) do. Although there is real difficulty associated with making significant change to the number of hours required for general education, we have opportunity for creativity. We must consider what we can do to improve student learning with new pedagogies, coordinating/integrating experiences – in the classroom and beyond.

David T. suggested outcomes-based grading, to allow for multiple learning outcomes to be met in one class. “Credit” could be given through a system to quantify different course components. An assessment based formula could quantify student learning.

David M. commented on the significance of the change we are beginning - from a focus on “what students must take” to “what students must learn,” mentioning that there are economic and political constraints to making this transition. He described the work of the committee as “laying the foundation” for this major shift in thinking. Not only are we moving to a curriculum based on learning outcomes, but accrediting agencies – institutional and discipline-specific – are also shifting from basing accreditation on inputs (what courses we offer) to learning outcomes (what students know and are able to do). David suggested that it would be useful for faculty to engage in conversations imagining possible reconfiguration of courses to achieve learning outcomes in fewer hours (in degree programs as well as in general education).

### Reports of Working Groups

#### Group III

The group Helen chaired provided a handout (attached) describing the work of their group on the learning outcomes related to historical thinking, social science, and foreign language. In summary, the group recommended 3 credit hours for meeting the historical thinking outcome and 3 hours for the social science outcome. They generally agreed that foreign language mastery equivalent to exit from FL 122 courses would be ideal; however, further research indicated that this level of mastery would likely require about 70% of students to take an additional FL course. Helen will send the data on which this analysis is based to the full committee, and the work group welcomes electronic comments. The group will reconvene to reconsider their recommendations.

For the learning outcome focused on values, ethics and social responsibility, the group agreed that less than 3 hours is needed. They will reconvene to make further recommendations on how to accomplish this.

#### Group I

Joe reported on the learning outcome related to aesthetics and interpretation for the working group chaired by David M. Joe reported that the group spoke with faculty in related departments and reviewed course syllabi. Current general education requirements specify that students must take 3 hours in visual or performing arts. The new learning outcome adds literature to that list of choices; so, if limited to 3 hours students would choose just one – fine arts or literature. The committee recommended 6 hours for meeting this learning outcome; although they did not formally specify in the recommendation how the hours should break out, the clear concern was that students should learn about both literature and fine arts (including performance).

Erik reported on the communications learning outcome for this working group. He reported that best practices indicate that development of effective written and oral communication skills requires “dedicated attention” to both, and that “exposure” is not the same or considered adequate. He also pointed out that good communication skills are often noted as priorities by important constituent groups (such as employers, scientific community). Many degree programs already require a speech class, in addition to the two freshman composition courses; exceptions are engineering, nursing, education, and pharmacy. Erik reported committee discussion about the possibility of creating special sections of speech courses, to integrate discipline-specific

content. The committee recommended 9 credit hours to meet the written and oral communications learning outcome.

Comments regarding this recommendation:

- Lacy said that students in history majors have many opportunities to write and present their work orally, and receive faculty feedback to incorporate into future assignments.
- It was suggested that to effectively integrate oral and written communication learning outcomes into a course in another discipline requires considerable attention to 'process' – preparation, development, feedback and revision – of an oral presentation or a paper. The content specialization of the instructor makes a difference.
- Does it rise to the level of necessity to require this focused level of attention?
- Irma reminded the group that the Carolina Core is to be foundational – surely many degree programs focus on further development of these skills in discipline-specific courses.
- Stuart commented on the similarity of planning for effective communication – whether written or oral; could these be combined?
- David said that these are two separate instruction areas – it would be rare to find instructors with the expertise and skills for both.

#### Group II

Mike reported that members of his working group had met with faculty and reviewed 11 syllabi in MATH, CSCE, PHIL, and STAT and 30 syllabi in science courses.. The working group has not met as a whole, but based on the work of the sub-committees, the group's preliminary recommendation is 11 hours for the scientific literacy outcome – 2 courses with labs and one without a lab; and 9 credit hours for the analytical reasoning and problem solving outcome. A recommendation for the information literacy outcome was not specified.

#### Summary observations:

- Including all working groups, recommendations now include 43-45 hours plus foreign language, to meet all learning outcomes.
- Doug stated that the total credit hours recommended may not translate into disjoint, separate courses.
- Cheryl suggested the need for a 'transferable' core, plus more intentional integration of core learning outcomes within the major.

Helen thanked the working groups for their efforts.

The group agreed that we won't be ready to bring a proposal to Faculty Senate this Spring, but will need to continue working on distribution requirements this summer.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m. The next meeting is Tuesday, April 13 at 12:30-2:00 p.m., location to be determined.