

Minutes of the Carolina Core (General Education) Committee Meeting

June 22, 2010
12:30-2:00 p.m.
107 Osborne

Members Present:

Pam Bowers (ex-officio), Mary Ann Byrnes, Helen Doerpinghaus (ex-officio), Kris Finnigan (ex-officio), Lacy Ford, Mary Hjelm, Susanne Hicklin, Stuart Hunter, Carolyn Jones, Sheryl Kline, Gene Luna, Joseph Rackers, Rick Stephens, Irma Van Scoy, Virginia Weathers, Jennifer Vendemia (ex-officio)

Members Absent:

Cheryl Addy, Elise Ahyi (ex-officio), Jim Burns, Kimberly Glenn, Phil Moore (ex-officio), Michael Matthews (co-chair), Patrick Nolan (ex-officio), Susan Parlier, Terrie Smith, David Tedeschi

Faculty Content Consultants Present: Doug Meade

Handout materials:

- Agenda
- Carolina Core Distribution Requirements Proposal – June 22 Draft
- Carolina Core Course Approval (revised draft) Form
- Actual Course Enrollments Summer I, II, Fall 2009, Spring 2010 (Source: Course Support Survey) for Speech 140, E140, and 230; Philosophy 102, E102, 211, and E211

Minutes of the June 8 meeting were approved as submitted.

Helen distributed the revised draft of the Carolina Core Distribution Requirements Proposal, including revisions discussed at the June 8 meeting. Some clarification of intentions in the proposal were discussed:

- The integrative course is not part of the general education true core; integrative courses will be major-specific, upper division courses. General education courses are expected to be broad, for all majors, lower division courses
- Overlay courses will have to meet all expectations for both Carolina Core learning outcomes
- The range in the number of hours that would be taken in the core is described in the proposal as 31-43 (with overlay) or 37-43 (without overlay). It seems that the maximum number of courses taken in the 'with overlay' scenario should be less than 43. Helen said she would correct the numbers in the proposal.
- Although the integrative course is not considered general education (as defined by SACS), it will be an institution-level requirement.
- Some programs may view this requirement as an imposition (more hours required). We must make clear to program faculty that a new course is not required; what is required is that the program thread Carolina Core learning outcomes throughout a major course or courses. Many programs – even those currently without capstone courses – probably are already doing this; it will just be a matter of articulating what the program is already doing.
- It will be important that students understand the 'overlay' course opportunities; many students are interested in taking as few hours as possible, for economic reasons. In the faculty senate curriculum committee, there are already many questions about the overlay courses that are currently offered, so clear communication is encouraged about any new courses.
- Arts & Sciences' overlay courses currently offered were set up to give faculty broad authority to make decisions about substitutions for course requirements, within guidelines established by the college.

- Carolina Core overlay courses would be designated as such in advance and would be interdisciplinary; whether or not a course would “count” as an overlay course or Carolina Core course substitution would not be determined by individual faculty members or advisors.
- Carolina Core overlay courses are intended to serve a different purpose than those established by A&S.
- Overlay courses will not necessarily be team-taught.

There seemed to be general agreement with the proposal as written, with the few clarifications noted. Helen said she would ask additional faculty and administrators to review it, as well. Helen will update the document, as noted, and will add a sentence about how much change this represents (from the current requirements since faculty and students may be concerned that many additional hours will be required in the new core). She will work on simplifying language about the overlay concept.

Mary Ann provided a summary of actual enrollment during the past academic year for the speech and philosophy courses that would be affected by the Speech/Values, Ethics and Social Responsibility (VESR) overlay course concept that has been discussed. Since all sections routinely fill in these courses, these figures describe current capacity as roughly 4000 for all four courses. This information indicates that given current courses taught and enrollment we are in a tenable position to be able to offer enough courses to meet the Speech and VESR learning outcome requirements even with growing enrollments.

We were reminded of the importance of communication with regional campuses; they would not have to offer the overlay course(s), but could do so. Problems for students may be prevented if there is effective and early two-way communication between regional campuses and the Columbia campus.

Carolina Core committee – or group designated by the committee – will certify a course based on a common syllabus for all sections (common in regard to Carolina Core learning outcomes to be addressed in all sections of the course).

- It may be useful to hold a Faculty Forum to provide opportunity for airing any concerns about requiring all sections of a course to address common learning outcomes.
- How will we assess the extent to which students are achieving expected learning outcomes?
 - o Although nothing’s been set up yet, it is envisioned that as part of the course certification process a faculty member will identify assignments in the course that will require students to demonstrate the expected learning outcome(s). A committee of three persons for each learning outcome would evaluate samples of student work submitted for these assignments, using rubrics that identify characteristics of various levels of achievement of the expected learning outcome. We will clarify assessment practices as we move forward.

The Speech/VESR overlay course seems likely to be very popular with students; are there other possibilities in the works?

- Each learning outcome committee will develop a rubric that describes the characteristics of student work that would demonstrate various levels of achievement of the learning outcome; faculty of existing courses can review these and consider whether they can incorporate appropriate activities into their courses.
- Creating overlay courses does not mean free-standing courses will change or end. Demand may be reduced, if demand for overlay courses is high.

It was pointed out that offering a Speech/VESR overlay course – or others – would require some special designation if the existing course number is used, to indicate the sections that incorporate the additional Carolina Core learning outcomes.

- Jennifer advised us that if 50% of the content of a course is changed, a new course number is required.

How likely is it that an overlay course will happen? What's the motivation for faculty to participate?

- Seems evident that Speech and Philosophy department heads believe this overlay course can happen.
- Do we need some document from departments assuring us that it will happen, before we move forward with building the Carolina Core, in part, on this concept?
- It seems likely that the information literacy learning outcome can be incorporated into existing courses in many disciplines.
- Is this a decision for college deans? Who needs to make the commitment before we move forward?
- A carrot-not-a-stick approach is recommend to get faculty buy-in. Would the provost perhaps support offering grants to develop overlay courses?

Big issues to be considered:

- Transfer of credit among system campuses, and within the state (CHE transfer agreement)
- Rule about new course number required for 50% change in content of a course

Someone raised the question of whether we should scrap the overlay idea and create one course to include Speech, VESR and Information Literacy

- The practical hurdles to the overlay course concept seem modest in comparison to its virtues.
- Seems that all schools could incorporate information literacy (IL) into existing courses.

To generate activity for additional overlay course ideas, Helen will talk to faculty in Library and Information Sciences about creating an overlay course concept that incorporates IL into an existing course.

Discussion on the Carolina Core Course Approval Form (DRAFT):

- Kris (author of the draft) said it is intended to serve for approval of both existing or new courses
- It was suggested that the Carolina Core (CC) learning outcomes be stated right on the form, so that faculty requesting a CC designation can see exactly what the student learning expectations are.
- Who will submit the form for a multiple section course? How will consistency across sections be assured?
- It would be helpful to tell faculty (on the form) what is expected for each of the designations (learning outcomes and assessment measures)
- The form should limit ability to indicate only one Carolina Core component (don't allow multiple components to be checked), or two if the proposed course is an overlay course
- An example would be helpful
- Form does not address the integrative course; to reduce confusion, it is probably best to separate this process from that one.

Please send any suggestions on the form to Kris Finnigan. Send suggestions for the distribution requirements to Helen Doerpinghaus.

The next Carolina Core meeting will be July 20, at 12:30 in 107 Osborne.

Submitted by Pam Bowers.