

Notes from Faculty Presentations on the Work of the Core Curriculum Committees
April 27, 2012

Panel discussion: 10 UHD committees' presentation

1. American History (Chris Whitschonske):
 - a. Has contacted several universities to check on what they were doing to satisfy the new Texas Board requirement for the core. It appears that UHD is doing much more than other universities who mostly tweak courses they already have in place
 - b. Received 4 formal letters of intent and 1 informal letter of intent. One was an English course studying history through the use of primary documents.
 - c. Problem: lack of qualified committee members to make recommendations regarding the history core. Given the importance of the core, the chair felt that the historians need to get involved or at least provide feedback.

2. Component Area Option (Bill Waller)
 - a. Focuses on success course that is designed to strengthen freshman success
 - b. This course is justified as it is shown to increase retention and graduation rate. Students will not take courses that are optional; hence the need to require such courses by incorporating them in core.
 - c. Dr. Khator in her talk discussed student success as a top line measure for assessment
 - d. UHD has 39% retention rate and 15% graduation rate
 - e. Such course would have a positive impact on student success
 - f. Issue: need to build academic support
 - g. Committee proposes 3 models, of which students select one
 - i. Academic freshmen seminar which would focus on one theme. Committee has received several letters of intent from philosophy, English (emphasis on reading), FACIS (emphasis on computer literacy), and Urban Ed
 - ii. Pre-professional seminar. Have two courses already in place (CMS and History)
 - iii. One –hour learning support seminar to help pass difficult courses. Such course can be developed to support several disciplines and to help students in a particular area
 - h. LOs = 1) skills, 2) self-regulation and 3) extended orientation skills
 - i. Barriers: Developing enough courses, recruiting faculty, training faculty, monitoring courses and advising students

3. Core Oversight Committee (Pavelich and Waters)
 - a. Questions:

- i. STEM: should have transferable core. Students cannot graduate using the 78 hours because of too many prerequisites. Should have several degree plans to address this problem
- ii. What should be done with remaining 3 hours? No one knows. Who decides? The Provost or the committee?
- iii. What are other schools doing? It appears that most schools use current courses and minimally change them to address core.
- iv. However, in our case, it seems that the process has already been decided.

4. Poli-Sci Committee (Fowler)

- a. Has received one letter of intent from outside of Poli Sci. The letter addressed assessment and content.
- b. Need to create rather than include LOs in present course
- c. Challenges:
 - i. Poli Sci should revise the two courses two years ahead of schedule.
 - ii. Fed and State level processes and concepts covered in two courses
 - iii. The new core needs to accommodate these, so need to devise structure for the two courses or two tracks for content split.
 - iv. The committee didn't know what other universities were doing with their foundational component area.

5. Life and Physical Science (Hoge)

- a. Course requirement (6 hours) + LOs
 - i. Difficult to address this requirement for the science majors since each course requires a lab; hence each course is a four credit hour course.
 - ii. Received one letter of intent, but reported they needed to receive more
 - iii. Current LOs focus on scientific process already so easier to address science courses project base.

6. Language, Philosophy and Culture (Farris)

- a. Received 11 letters of intent
- b. This core used to be covered in the English Dept.
- c. Other universities have philosophy included in the core
- d. Barriers: LOS need to be defined. It is difficult to devise LOs for courses that have not been created yet.
- e. Question: Are LOs the same for sophomores and freshmen courses?
- f. What's the course cap? Difficult to know how to design a course without a sense of class size.

7. Math (Connell)

- a. Have 3 credit hours to address the math requirement
 - b. Have received five letters of intent, but may receive more by June 1 (deadline).
 - c. Questions:
 - i. What happens if several courses address the same LO
 - ii. What would happen if transferring students are not prepared for future degree plans? Would they have to retake some courses?
 - d. Transfer requirements:
 - i. High school LOs for math may increase skills to enter college
 - ii. General course requirement vs math major requirements require different skill sets.
 - iii. Need to prune the math process. Need five out seven important math processes
 - iv. Need to develop courses to address the LOs in math
8. Social and Behavioral Science (Blackburn)
- a. Has received four letters of intent (CS and psychology (revised course), economics and SOS (new courses))
 - b. Challenges:
 - i. Upper vs lower division courses. Fitting empirical and quantitative requirements in three hours is difficult
 - ii. Provide autonomy to faculty and disciplines to focus on content
 - iii. UTSA and Texas Tech are moving faster, but their process is similar to UHDS
9. Creative Arts (Creighton)
- a. Received 13 letters of intent
 - i. 9 preexisting courses (revised)
 - ii. 1 new course (music)
 - iii. new courses (English/Film)
 - b. Need to change the prerequisites for some courses
 - c. Most courses come from traditional creative art areas
 - d. Challenges:
 - i. Same as other committees
 - ii. Difficult to address LO as a committee because LOs are usually course specific)
10. Communication (Ashe)
- a. The committee includes two communication faculty which facilitates the process (note: one is from Communications and the other is from English)
 - b. Received eight letters of intent

- i. Two from English
- ii. Six from communication
- c. Still looking at distributing LOs over the six hours
- d. No discussion of how other institutions are handling these 6 hours
- e. Challenge
 - i. This area now has six hours instead of nine

Faculty Followup Questions after Committee Presentations

Moosally stated

1. To revise the core without consideration of Gen Ed concerns is to revise in a vacuum
2. Assessment happens at the core level, not the course level. Gen Ed is not functioning and it needs to be, both for this process and for SACS.

Campbell responded

1. The main point in assessing is “are the courses addressing student learning?”
2. With regard to accountability:
 - a. Coordinating board has not set criteria yet
 - b. Core competencies will still need to be addressed
 - c. Assessment of the core will happen two years prior to SACS review
 - Assessment serves two functions: improving student success and accountability. For the most part, we don’t know yet what assessment requirements will look like from the CB.

Faculty question (couldn’t see who asked the question)

1. What about transfer students?
2. What are we measuring? Need to address how we measure transfer students and their knowledge base

Response from Campbell:

- Need to address transfer students’ problems at UHD. This is a known problem and we need to deal with it.

Schmertz

1. Has heard a rumor that THECB will hold UHD to different standards of accountability. Is this true and are these special standards written down somewhere?
2. Campbell confirmed that she’d heard the rumor but had no actual written evidence. THECB frequently requires universities to make interpretations specific to their institutions.
3. Whether the rumor is true or not, we need to work on improving our poor retention/graduation rates.

Lyons

1. Faculty is taking charge, especially with regard to posting Committees' minutes
2. This assembly is enabling the faculty to communicate with each other and move forward
3. Coordinating Board emphasizes that the process should be faculty driven, not top-down
4. Question to taskforce:
 - a. Who is in charge of what goes on in the committees? Oversight Committee?
 - b. Faculty are finally beginning to take control of this process from the Provost. Similarly, the Oversight Committee ought to work with, not for, the provost.
 - c. Members of the Oversight Committee agreed that these were key issues.

Morano

1. The call for innovation belies the innovation Natural Sciences has been doing for years
2. They already have programs to increase retention and graduation rate
3. Other departments have developed new classes and have been working on this process for years
4. The first step in addressing the core should therefore be to evaluate the present courses
5. Some courses may not be specifically addressing the state requirements
6. How are science labs viewed in the core?

Response:

- The core does not allow for lab, so present core will remain the same
- Labs are major requirement for science majors
- Science and non-science majors are different
- There is a logical justification for labs for science major (they are needed)

Waller

1. Students test at different levels
2. Math requirement in HS are increased and we have an increase in AP courses
3. If students start more prepared and test out of several courses, should calculus be in the core?
4. Would transferring courses still be allowed?
5. Degree plans should have room to accommodate all courses that students need.

Time ran out and there were no further questions. Attendees were encouraged to write additional questions on notecards.

Notes written by C. Bachman, S. Farris, and J. Schmertz