

Minutes of Essential Studies Committee, December 15, 2015 at 2:00 pm

- I. A meeting of the Essential Studies Committee was held on December 15, 2015 in Carnegie, Rm 102. Lori Robison presided.

In attendance at the meeting: Melissa Gjellstad, Erich Jauch, Krista Lynn Minnotte, Elizabeth Bjerke, Sukvarsh Jerath, Jeff Carmichael, Ken Flanagan, Donovan Widmer, April Bradley, Joan Hawthorne, Karyn Plumm, Dave Yearwood, Christina Fargo, Ryan Zerr
Absent: Karen Peterson, Tanis Walch, Jacob Geritz, Darryl Joy, Carla Spokely

- II. There was a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting, which was seconded. The motion was voted upon and carried unanimously.

- III. Core Subcommittee report

Lori asked that the committee hear an update on the Core Subcommittee's work from Joan Hawthorne, the chair of that subcommittee. Joan discussed various aspects to the proposal, which had been distributed previously via email. The essence of the proposal is that the special emphasis designation within ES will no longer be used, to be replaced by a set of three "core" courses – one in each of the Breadth of Knowledge areas of Social Sciences; Humanities and Fine Arts; and Math, Science, and Technology. Joan asked for thoughts and feedback. The following comments were made:

- A question was asked about the intended course size for core courses. The core subgroup considered this, and noted that that decision would likely come as part of the faculty discussions related to the creation of courses in the various core areas.
- There was a concern about how the MST area may be the most difficult one in which to create a core course – based on various students' degree program requirements in this area. A point was made about how a core course in this area might actually be better than some of the current requirements degree programs have for their students.
- Transfer students were discussed. The core proposal offers a suggestion about how to handle transferring into UND based on percentages. It was unclear whether this could be automated or not. As for students transferring out, since core courses will be in disciplinary areas, this should be handled through the current GERTA arrangements.
- A point was made about how the core proposal is intended to help with the issues that are often raised relative to the special emphasis courses, such as transfer course quality and the degree to which the various areas are actually emphasized within a given course.
- There was a concern that this could make UND seem transfer unfriendly. Those working on the core proposal suggested otherwise.
- There was a concern related to the idea that each core course would be intended to address multiple goals. Would this be realistic, and how might it be handled in terms of validation/revalidation? Although validation/revalidation details will need to be worked out, the multiple goal coverage was seen as a strength by the core subcommittee.
- Issues relative to UND's new budget model, MIRA, were raised. Will the potential to lose student credit hours mean this proposal is not likely to find support from departments or colleges? The point was made that SCH totals will remain the same, but may be redistributed among departments. This could have an effect on some colleges. A second point was also raised, in terms of whether the ES Program should get to keep some tuition revenue generated

by core courses. That this could also lead colleges not to support the proposal was discussed, although keeping track of who gets which revenue is a simple matter, and thus should not be a reason not to support the proposal.

- A point was made about how this concept could strengthen interdisciplinarity by creating department-like structures that span current departments.
- The point was made that, first-and-foremost, as this is discussed with others on campus, a clear signal and message about how it's better than the current arrangement needs to be articulated. This is essential as part of the continued development of the proposal. One thought relative to this concerned the idea that these would be ES-focused courses, not disciplinary courses that are made to be ES. Core courses would be opportunities to have focused rigor that's not in a disciplinary context, giving students experience in wrestling with more realistic and messy problems.
- Another point, related to budgetary considerations, was made concerning current large-enrollment courses. How realistic is it to break these up into smaller sections, which would likely be necessary to teach the core courses effectively. Some raised the possibility that perhaps courses won't need to get smaller if, as intended, they're more purposeful about ES goals, rather than being required to attend to disciplinary content.
- A concern was raised about how to avoid creating competition between majors and the concept embodied by this proposal. One idea offered related to professional program's need for accreditation, and how this type of curriculum actually helps them achieve learning related to accreditation expectations.

There was agreement that another ES Committee meeting at which this is discussed should occur before formally discussing the proposal with others. In the meantime, the core subcommittee asks that ES Committee members email their thoughts and concerns to either Joan, Lori, or Ryan.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.