Liberal Education Program Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 12, 2014

3:25– 4:45pm – Math Conference Room – Engleman Hall

Meeting Agenda

Members present: Deb Weiss (Chair), Scott Graves, Klay Kruczek, Polly Beals, Wes O’Brien, David Petroski, Mike Shea, Nicole Henderson, Joe Fields, Chris Barrett, Elliott Horch (recording)

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 3:33pm.

- Announcements
  - Polly Peals announced that Robert Forbus will join the Committee as the representative from the School of Business. Deb Weiss stated that he will not be able to attend until next fall because of teaching conflicts. She has sent an email to Dean Durnin to request names of potential interested candidates who might fill the position this semester. Members also discussed the possibility of deputizing an ex officio member for the remainder of this semester, but no formal decision was taken.
  - Dave Petroski gave a brief report on a meeting that he and others had with Dean Breese regarding scheduling issues for Tech Fluency (TF) courses. (Similar meetings for Critical Thinking and the Tier 2 areas are to follow.) There is a concern that there are not going to be enough seats for TF courses next year. On the one hand there is a need for more sections to be offered, but on the other there are neither enough technology-capable classrooms (computer labs) nor enough full-time faculty to teach the courses. A number of sections are currently listed as “staff” with no instructor assigned at present for the fall. The Committee discussed the conflict between the need to teach these courses and the lack of resources to achieve the goals and spirit of the LEP. Concern was expressed by several on the committee that in practical terms TF courses wind up teaching things the students already know or can easily master, not the true intent of TF, which is to understand the ramifications and usefulness of the technology at a deeper level. It was reported that most Tier 2 course proposals do not list TF as an embedded competency.

- Committee and Ad Hoc reports
  - Affinity groups – update, Polly Beals (No Report.)
  - WAC Report – Deb Carroll and Karen Burke (via email) – Deb C., Karen, Liz Kalbfleisch, and Marie McDaniel met with Dean Breese on Friday to review current WAC assessment data and thoughts about writing at SCSU. The Dean
is preparing a student success taskforce report. Deb C. circulated a document last week to Polly Beals, Mike Shea, Liz Kalbfleisch, Bob McEachern, Liz Keenan, and all members of the WAC committee. A document exists that includes the results of WAC assessment as well as a general consensus of all of the document contributors on the status of writing at SCSU and ideas for growth and improvement. Deb W. recommends that Committee members read the WAC report, made available via email, and send any questions or comments to Deb C.

Move to consider New Business out of regular order, without objection.

- New Business
  - **Restriction of Tier 3 courses to junior or senior status.** The Registrar’s Office has reported that Banner cannot easily identify if a student has taken 7 of the 9 Tier 2 courses, a requirement for registration in Tier 3. So, up until now, we have relied on the advising process to make sure that students fulfill this requirement prior to signing up for their Tier 3 courses. Nonetheless, there have been at least some cases where e.g. freshmen have signed up for a Tier 3 course. Dean Breese has asked if it would be possible to restrict Tier 3 courses to students with junior and senior status. The Committee discussed the issue thoroughly, including points such as (1) the number of students affected, (2) the possible disadvantage of this approach for undeclared majors, who could reach Tier 3 before the junior year, (3) possibility of supporting this move for a limited period of time (1 semester), until more information regarding the limitations of Banner can be established, (4) instead of junior status, the number of Tier 2 courses taken (regardless if they fulfill a Tier 2 requirement) could be counted in Banner, and if 7 or more, the student could be allowed to register for Tier 3, (5) it was not clear to the members of the Committee why Banner cannot be programmed in the way that is truly needed – the best guess it that it is an IT resource issue, not a programming impossibility.

  Following the discussion, a consensus emerged that if it is possible, we would prefer that (4) is used for the upcoming registration for Fall 2014: that is, to allow only students who have taken 7 total Tier 2 courses, regardless of how they fit into a student’s program, to register for a Tier 3 course. Failing that, Dean Breese’s suggestion of junior/senior status could be used as a “Plan B.”

At this point the Chair asked for a sense of the Committee, all were IN FAVOR of continuing to address the UWIC questions that were begun in the previous meeting (rather than begin our discussion of Tier 1 assessment).

- Questions from UWIC – UWIC is asking for LEPC guidance on the following (see background):¹
  - **Written Communication** – WC is a required Competency area (Box E) for Tier 2 course proposals. Proposers are asked to insert an
explanation of how students will continue developing the chosen competencies, including methods of evaluation. How should the WC Key Elements be utilized for this requirement? Should CD have same requirement?

- **Problem-based learning** - All Tier 2 proposals must demonstrate specific criteria including problem-based learning appropriate to the topic. How is PB learning defined?

The Committee spent time discussing primarily the first issue, *i.e.* on written communication. What does it mean to reinforce WC? Some courses have only writing on essay questions on exams. Is this sufficient? The members expressed a range of views, but the central themes were (1) that there is a difference between writing to demonstrate knowledge of content in a course and writing to reinforce competencies learned in WC courses (with the former not as clearly meeting the standard of reinforcing writing to several), (2) that not all key elements of Written Communication (as shown below) need to be reinforced, and (3) that revision does not necessarily mean a revision graded by an instructor.

*Motion to adjourn, seconded, all in favor.*

*Meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.*

These minutes respectfully submitted by E. Horch, 02/16/2014.

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1. UWIC has asked proposers of Tier 2 courses that only offer essay exams (and no other writing assignments) to include other writing assignments, feeling that offering only essay exams is not sufficient to meet this requirement. Per LEPC, what is the intention for WC?

Problem-based (PB) learning is not defined in the LEP document. UWIC reviewed a proposal that stated that MC and T/F exams would be used to show PB learning. Other items that seemed like problem-based learning were included as well, so the proposer was asked to remove the MC and T/F questions. The reaction to this was negative. Per LEPC, what is the definition of problem-based learning?

2. Key Elements (from page 25)

   1) **Argument Comprehension** - Summarizing, analyzing, and challenging sophisticated texts by evaluating evidence and the validity of an author’s claims.
   2) **Argument Construction** - Making a coherent written argument that gives background information, presents a reasonable claim, and uses a range of evidence to support the claim.
   3) **Academic Honesty** - Avoiding plagiarism by properly using primary and secondary sources, including paraphrase, summary, and accurate citations (in an appropriate citation style).
   4) **Audience Awareness** - Using the conventions of multiple genres to communicate effectively with particular audiences.
   5) **Correctness** - Demonstrating control over standard English language usage (grammar, spelling, tone, style, semantics, and syntax) and revising for accuracy, clarity and depth.

3. All courses in Tier 2: (from page 10)
• continue to develop and reinforce the competencies introduced in Tier 1,
• have appropriate enrollment caps consistent with pedagogical needs, resource availability, and safety concerns and/or regulations,
• have enough scope to provide an adequate foundation to the particular Area of Knowledge and Experience,
• address a number of key topics in depth,
• make an effort to integrate knowledge from a variety of perspectives,
• provide insight to issues of the 21st century and/or important issues in students’ lives,
• include problem-based learning appropriate to the topic, and
• provide an introduction to the analytical tools of the discipline(s) offering the course.