Minutes

In attendance: Beena Achhpal, Christine Barrett, Polly Beals, Deborah Carroll, Joe Fields, Elliott Horch (recording), Dave Petroski, Mike Shea, Jim Tait, Klay Kruczek, and Deborah Weiss (Chair).

At the request of the Chair, the meeting was called to order by Polly Beals at 3:35pm.

- **Announcements**
  - None

- **Committee and Ad Hoc reports**
  - Affinity groups update – by Polly Beals. No report.
  - WAC Report – by Deb Carroll. Deb reported that an assessment of the last three to four years of the WAC program has been completed, showing certain strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths she listed were (1) the effectiveness of intervening with faculty to help them teach W courses, (2) the willingness of faculty to work on and improve W courses, and (3) the interest and availability (in many cases) of faculty to teach these courses. She also discussed several weaknesses of the program as it stands, including (1) the lack of a mechanism for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of W courses after course approval, (2) the fact that students sometimes report that little writing is actually being done in some W courses, (3) the lack of a requirement for faculty development. Overall, she reported that the WAC program suffers from the lack of a hierarchical structure that helps students truly develop their writing skills throughout their undergraduate experience. She stated that this contributes to a confusion between "learning to write and writing to learn."

After this summary, the committee discussed with Deb C. several areas of common interest and opportunity between LEP and WAC. Some departments do not have W courses in the major; the committee discussed possible ways that this could be strengthened. WAC is willing to work with departments to help understand where writing goals and objectives can be addressed in undergraduate curricula. The group discussed the interplay between critical thinking, critical writing, and critical reading. Assessment data suggests that critical reading is currently being underemphasized.

Several other ideas that were discussed included (1) how we might develop an “informal” hierarchy where WAC builds on existing writing goals in the LEP program, (2) the need for faculty development and the need for proper recognition of faculty effort when they teach W courses, and (3) perhaps adding load credit in some form to account for the time often spent with students to review their writing
individually with faculty outside of class. All agreed that we want to work toward a “culture of writing” at Southern, but in practical terms the members differed on how that might be achieved. Some felt that a model where W courses could be eliminated and writing simply required in all courses should be considered, however, others felt that W courses are already a good foundation toward promoting writing in practical terms, and that we should build on that.

(At the conclusion of the discussion, Deb C. departs.)

Deb Weiss proposes to reorder the agenda to consider an item of new business, without objection.

- New Business
  - Natural World (NW) 1 & 2 credit for Community College students. This issue has come back, so we must try to decide what we favor. For community college students transferring with an associate’s degree, the two approved TAP science courses will transfer in as fulfilling the LEP requirements. The question is whether students who do not have associates degree but have the same two science courses would be allowed to count these toward the LEP requirement in the same way.

  Polly Beals spoke in favor of accepting both for NW1 & II. She argued that it has worked reasonably well for our native students. We can’t point to a rationale for not doing it. On the practical side, L. Doninger at Gateway CC explained that the ability to offer true lab courses at the community colleges is limited. (TAP requires at least one.) The requirement is that there are courses in two different disciplines. Deb W. explained that she had a discussion with Tom Fleming (Earth Science), and he would like to see that both courses are done before the student transfers. That is, that a transfer student could not go back to the community college after transferring to take one or both courses. A brief discussion followed where members discussed if the idea was workable or too complicated, and how large a population of students this would impact. It was mentioned that 85% of transfers from community colleges do not have an associate’s degree.

Motion by Polly Beals, seconded by Mike Shea:

Students who complete their science TAP requirement at their previous institution will be considered to have completed their NW 1 and 2 requirement when they transfer to SCSU.

Motion Passes, 6-0.

Return to regular order:

- Old Business
  - UWIC questions
    - Problem-based learning - All Tier 2 proposals must demonstrate specific criteria including problem-based learning appropriate to the topic. Jim Tait,
Mike Shea and others have worked on wording to help faculty understand how is PB learning defined. The idea is that this final wording would be in the LEP document, accessible through a hyperlink. The group worked on the final wording, and successfully came to a conclusion. The final version was circulated by email by Jim Tait and is included at the end of this report.

**Motion to accept draft as amended, seconded, and passed unanimously (see appendix A).**

*Due to time constraints, Deb proposes (without objection) that we next look next at:*

- Allowing double major Liberal Studies students to utilize 9 LEP credits towards their 2nd Liberal Studies major. This is especially relevant for Education students. A brief discussion of the Liberal Studies program occurred, where the members familiarized themselves with the current program requirements. It was decided that it would be helpful to bring in e.g. Ilene Crawford, Helen Marks and/or Laura Bower-Phipps to help us better understand the issue before coming to a conclusion.

*Meeting adjourned 4:51pm.*

*Minutes respectfully submitted by E. Horch, 04/07/2014.*

---

- 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.
Appendix A

Problem–based Learning in LEP Tier II Courses

Problem-based learning as a component of Tier II courses is a way to introduce problem-solving skills to LEP students. In PBL, the pedagogy is student-centered and content is introduced in the context of students seeking to solve a complex problem. In PBL, there are no simple, predetermined answers. Students, typically working in small groups, are required to assess their own state of knowledge concerning the problem, determine what additional knowledge is needed to solve the problem, access the additional knowledge, and decide how to use that knowledge to solve the problem. Helping to articulate the “question” may be part of the task. Students often do independent work on the problem between group meetings.

For LEP purposes:

1) Tier II courses are required to incorporate some problem-based learning.
2) Problem based learning requires
   a. That the problem be complex and not have a simple or pat answer.
   b. That the students have to seek “beyond the text book/beyond the lecture” knowledge on their own in order to solve the problem.
   c. That the role of the instructor is to facilitate the problem solving process as opposed to providing "answers".
3) Group work need not be involved.

PBL activities could be short-term (e.g., 1 day in class) or long-term (e.g., semester long). Here are some example PBL activities:

From Environmental Studies – (semester length) Students must choose an environmental issue in the state of CT, become content experts on the issue, and develop a proposal for a solution or partial solution to the problem. Proposals must be realistic and include the specifics of how the solution would be enacted (e.g., how much money is needed, where would the money come from, who would do the work, who are other stakeholders, how would your solution be viewed by them, etc.). The collaborative aspect of this exercise includes individual students critiquing other students’ proposals followed by final presentations of issues proposed solutions to be critiqued by the group as a whole (in the spirit of a thesis defense).

From History – (1 day in class) Students examine pictures of artifacts recovered from Sutton Hoo burial site. They should provide solutions to the following problems: What can you deduce about the type of early medieval society that produced these items? What additional information would you like to have to further understand that society?

From English – (2 weeks) Students are given a Shakespearean play passage as printed in Shakespeare’s First Folio (1623). Such a passage includes of course Elizabethan English
conventions in spelling and punctuation, which differ mightily from the conventions of present-day English; the passage also includes unfamiliar words. Asked to imagine working on a contemporary edition of the play, students recast the passage using present-day conventions of English and provide explanations for their choices, as well as glosses for the meanings of unfamiliar words. They are then required to explain how their choices affect the meaning of the original passage.