

Curric Affairs Committee 13 January 2014 **MINUTES** 10 am – noon, CCR

Present: Rainer Newberry; Cindy Hardy; Margaret Short; Dennis Moser; Todd Radenbaugh (audio); Alex Fitts; Libby Eddy; Caty Oehring, Holly Sherouse, Casey Byrne, Linda Hapsmith

The meeting consisted of a discussion of various aspects of the proposed General Education Requirements, as set forth by GERC. Our objective was to create a document summarizing the committee's reactions to the proposal. After 98 minutes of discussion, the Chairperson was delegated to write up the various thoughts and send them out for revisions. The statement below is the final version sent to GERC.

A Statement to the General Education Revitalization Committee, a sub-committee of the Faculty Senate's Curricular Affairs Committee, from the Curricular Affairs Committee

The original impetus behind modifying UAF's core requirements was to make the core as a whole easier to assess for UAF's accreditation efforts as well as to modernize courses as needed. We very much appreciate the time and effort you have put into developing a proposed new GER. We agree entirely with your efforts to offer more options to the 'perspectives on human conditions' section of the current core. However, we believe that the system you propose will be more complicated—not easier—to assess and contains inherent flaws that need more than minor modifications. We unanimously feel that the proposed GER needs considerable modification before it should be brought to the Faculty Senate. We sincerely regret taking this stand, but feel that doing so is in the best interests of our students and faculty. We give three major recommendations below.

1. We do not like the proposed attribute system. (One member's comment: 'makes my head swim'.) We feel it is complicated, cumbersome, difficult to implement, and will require numerous faculty committees to approve and oversee courses. We urge you to find a simpler and less faculty-intensive means to accomplish your goals. One possibility is (e.g., G&G dept. comments) a defined short list of courses that meet the social science, humanities, and arts requirements and also possess characteristics (e.g., diversity) considered desirable.

2. As you know, the proposed GER for social science, humanities, and arts courses will require significant modification of the BOR General Education regulations before they can be implemented. We would be happy to forward proposals for such changes to the Faculty Senate but wish to first see some evidence that such changes are necessary. In particular:

(a) do the social science faculty as a group (or at a minimum, the heads of social science departments) feel it is in our students' best interests to allow them to satisfy the social science requirement by taking any two social science courses, at any levels, in any fields? Do they feel that the current restriction to 'broad overview' and to 'two different fields' does our students a disservice?

(b) do the humanities faculty as a group (or at a minimum, the heads of humanities departments) feel that easing the BOR requirements for 'introductory level' humanities courses is necessary or desirable?

(c) do the Arts Faculty (heads of departments) feel that requiring 'theory and practice' (e.g., eliminating art or music or theater or film appreciation or history courses) is a necessary change? Is it the intention of the GERC proposal to do this? If not, the GERC proposal needs clarification and modification.

3. We feel that the single greatest deficiency that afflicts our baccalaureate students concerns their written communication abilities. The proposed GER does nothing to address such needs (e.g., additional or different courses to satisfy the "two written communication courses" requirement). Further, the proposed 'C' attribute dilutes and weakens the current 'W' requirement by allowing a variety of non-writing activities to substitute for writing. We feel that writing skills need to be more, not less, emphasized. We urge you to consult with ALL UAF faculty that teach W and that teach O courses for suggestions about modifying the current 'O' and 'W' requirements.