

Curricular Affairs Committee

Year End Report for 2014-15

Submitted by Brian Cook, Chair

April 30, 2015

Summary:

The Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC) primarily focused its attention on the proposals from the General Education Revitalization Committee (GERC) to revise UAF's Core Curriculum. One part of GERC's proposal has been passed by the Senate: the capstone requirement, due to take effect in Fall 2016. We have drafted motions for changing the O/W requirement and for removing the PHC required courses in favor of lists of courses to fulfill the humanities, arts, and social science GERs. We have discussed all of the remaining proposals, but have not yet drafted motions. Revitalizing UAF's Core is a decade-long process that is nearly complete and needs to be a strong priority in the Senate next year. The committee strongly encourages Senate leadership to make time for the full Senate to consider and pass all the remaining proposals during 2015-16. Please see also the year-end report from GERC for additional information about changes to the Core Curriculum.

The committee also approved a number of new minor programs as well as revisions to the course catalog. It is likely that many similar revisions will come during 2015-16 as the registrar's office transitions to a new software program intended to identify discrepancies or inconsistencies within the course catalog.

Items Completed, Passed by Senate (please see Senate minutes for more details):

1. Capstone Requirement – Passed by Senate, November 3, 2014
2. Deletion of Bachelor of Arts and Sciences – Passed by Senate, November 3, 2014
3. New Minor in Forest Management – Passed by Senate, December 1, 2014
4. New Minor in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages – Passed by Senate, February 2, 2015
5. New Master's Degree in Security and Disaster Management – Passed by Senate, February 2, 2015
6. New Minor in Aerospace Engineering – Passed by Senate, March 2, 2015
7. Clarify DF Grading Policy – Passed by Senate, April 6, 2015
8. Update Senate Policy on Academic Credit Hour – Passed by Senate, April 6, 2015

Items Completed, Senate vote not required:

1. Motion to amend academic policy regarding transfer of credits as it pertains to national exams. The underlined statement was added to the catalog. (for details, see minutes from CAC meetings on December 10, 2014 and January 12, 2015. The motion was approved by the Administrative Committee on January 21, 2015 and did not need to go before the full Senate for consideration.)

CREDIT FOR NATIONAL EXAMS

There are several ways to earn college credit by receiving a passing score on a national exam. For any of the following exam options, grades are not computed in the UAF GPA. Credit received for exams is not considered UAF residence credit and is not considered to be part of the semester course load for classification as a full-time student. Credit is awarded to current or previously

enrolled degree students at UAF. Rules that apply to transfer courses (including the Table of Substitutions) also apply to course credit received through a National Exam.

2. Minor Catalog Changes: (*changes do not impact current procedure; they clarify and record in the catalog what is ALREADY BEING DONE.*)
 - a. Minor Change to page 129 of the 2014-15 Course Catalog:
 - i. Concentrations
A concentration is an area of emphasis including the major core courses within a student's degree program. Some programs at UAF require a concentration, others do not. A student may only earn one degree in a specific discipline once. Using different concentrations within a degree program to count as different degrees is not allowed. Double concentrations [[may be]] ARE permitted [[but must be petitioned through the standard undergraduate petition process]] WITH DEPARTMENT APPROVAL.
 - b. Minor change to page 86:
 - i. General University Requirements
You must earn at least 9 semester [[hours]] CREDITS AT THE 100 LEVEL OR ABOVE for an occupational endorsement.
 - c. Minor change to page 94:
 - i. General University Requirements
You must earn at least 30 semester [[hours]] CREDITS for a certificate and 60 semester [[hours]] CREDITS for an associate degree (including transfer credits) AT THE 100 LEVEL OR ABOVE.
 - d. Minor change to page 94:
 - i. How to Earn a Certificate of Associate Degree
Unless otherwise specified [[by the appropriate academic unit]], a course may be taken more than once toward fulfilling a degree, certificate or major requirements. However, credit hours for such courses count only once toward total credits required for the degree or certificate.
 - e. Minor Change to page 129:
 - i. General University Requirements
For a UAF bachelor's degree, you [[need]] MUST EARN at least 120 semester credits AT THE 100 LEVEL OR ABOVE, including transfer credits.
 - f. Minor change to page 129:
 - i. How to Earn a Bachelor's Degree
Unless otherwise specified [[by the appropriate academic unit]], a course may be used more than once toward fulfilling degree, [[certificate,]] major and minor requirements. Credit hours for these courses count only once toward total credits required for the degree or certificate.
 - g. Minor change to page 248:
 - i. Course Numbers
050-099 – [[Developmental courses]] THESE are preparatory courses that do not apply to OCCUPATIONAL ENDORSEMENT, CERTIFICATE, associate, baccalaureate or graduate degree requirements.

Motions drafted, but pending:

1. Resolution on GER (to be taken up by the Senate on May 4, 2015) - This resolution declares the Senate's intent to convert to the "classification list" or "bucket" system during the 2015-16 school year. The full text reads:

WHEREAS, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Faculty Senate recognizes the need to revise the Core Curriculum; and

WHEREAS, the Senate wishes to widen student choice in the university's general education; and

WHEREAS, the General Education Revitalization Committee has proposed a "classification list" system (lists of approved courses which fulfill arts, humanities, and social science general education requirements) to replace the current Perspectives on the Human Condition (PHC) courses;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that during the 2015-2016 academic year the UAF Faculty Senate will adopt a classification list system that will meet general education requirements in arts, humanities, and social sciences in lieu of the currently-mandated PHC courses, with the new system to take full effect as of the 2016-17 Course Catalog.

2. Motion on O/W change to communications outcomes - This motion is the first expected to be brought forward by CAC to the Administrative Committee in 2015-16, hopefully for discussion in September and for a vote in October. The text of the draft motion is current as of the date of this report:

The Faculty Senate moves to replace the upper division Oral (O) and Written (W) requirement with the requirement that each degree program must satisfy the following Communications Learning Outcomes within the degree program:

UAF undergraduates will demonstrate effective communication when they are able to:

- Explain disciplinary content using a variety of modes of communication.
- Communicate to audiences in the discipline using appropriate disciplinary conventions.
- Translate disciplinary content to audiences outside the discipline, making disciplinary knowledge relevant to broader communities.
- Integrate feedback from others to enhance or revise communication.

Each baccalaureate degree program must submit a Communications Plan that demonstrates how students will achieve each of the learning outcomes as part of the requirements of the major or degree program. Not all courses or requirements need to support every outcome; however, all the outcomes must be met by the completion of the degree.

EFFECTIVE: Fall 2016

RATIONALE: The GERC committee and Curricular Affairs, as part of their work to revise UAF's core requirements, propose replacing the current W/O designators with a requirement that students achieve the Communications Learning Outcomes that are integrated into each baccalaureate degree program and major.

1. **The responsibility for ensuring that students achieve these Communications Learning Outcomes is being moved from the University level (via specific O and W courses) to the department level (via the requirements of the degree programs), and from a specific degree requirement (taking two Ws and one O) to a requirement that is achieved by the student completing the degree requirements associated with their program.**

2. To ensure student achievement of these Communications Learning Outcomes, each department will demonstrate how their program addresses these learning outcomes by developing a Communications Plan that integrates communication into each degree or program, typically via a collection of lower and/or upper level courses and/or non-curricular degree requirements chosen to meet the needs of the particular program. This should be done in such a way that all the outcomes are met somewhere in the courses required for the completion of a degree. The Communications Plan for each degree will describe the collection of courses (both in and possibly out of the department) and other requirements (if any) and how they contribute to meeting these outcomes.
 3. Departments will submit the Communications Plan for each degree program as part of their SLOA plans, and subsequently, submit a short summary report addressing how the plan is working (and revising the plan as necessary). Once a department has submitted a plan, which will include a required path/collection of paths through the degree wherein students will achieve the Communications Learning Outcomes, then all students in that degree will achieve the Communications Learning Outcomes by virtue of satisfying the degree requirements of that program.
 4. Committees will be formed within each school or college (and made up of at least 1 member) to regularly review communications plans submitted by programs.
 5. An additional checkbox will be added to Major/Minor course change forms asking “Does this change affect Communications Outcomes Plans?”, so that departments are aware of the impact of potential changes.
 6. Existing O and W designators will remain in place (if appropriate) for a period of 2 years from Fall 2016 to facilitate students under catalogs with O/W requirements.
 7. Departments should submit as part of their Communications Plans a clarification for how they will handle the transition away from O/W designators for students who fall under a catalog prior to Fall 2016.
 8. A web page (similar to the SLOA) will be established where communications plans are collected and disseminated across the university.
3. Motion on GER buckets (related to 1, above) – The copy of the motion included below does NOT include specific details on the specific regulations which will govern the courses included in the arts, humanities, and social science buckets. UA Regulations are currently under consideration for a revision by a statewide curriculum alignment committee with members from all three MAUs. Several issues remain with this motion beyond which regulations should be used; first, a plan needs to be developed for implementation. Included in this should be a clear process for how and who will approve the courses for each list; GERC has proposed developing a set of learning outcomes for each area to guide the review of proposed syllabuses. Another issue regards students under previous catalogs with specific PHC courses; one option is to use the current table of substitutions for transfer courses to simplify this process.

The Faculty Senate moves to replace the current Perspectives on the Human Condition (PHC) courses in the Core Curriculum with pre-approved lists of courses (“classification lists”) from which students can select to fulfill General Education Requirements in humanities, social sciences, and the arts. Students will need to complete 15 total credits: 3 credits in arts, 3 credits in humanities, 3 credits in social sciences, and 6 credits from an additional course in any one of the three areas OR from a list of interdisciplinary courses.

This change will go towards fulfilling Learning Outcome 1 of the learning outcomes adopted by Faculty Senate in 2011: **Build knowledge of Human Institutions, Socio-Cultural Processes, and the Physical and Natural World** through the study of the natural and social sciences, technologies, mathematics, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts.

EFFECTIVE: Fall 2016

RATIONALE: As part of its work, the General Education Revitalization Committee (GERC) has recommended this change to facilitate students' achievement of learning outcomes previously approved by the Faculty Senate. Providing lists of courses instead of specified courses will increase the opportunity for students to choose topics most interesting to them when they are completing their general education requirements.

Further, the Board of Regents has mandated that UAF, UAA and UAS come up with a plan for aligning their general education requirements. UAF is currently the outlier in its offering very narrow options for completing general education requirements; UAA and UAS currently have pre-approved lists of courses.

Not Yet Fully Considered or Proposed:

1. Lab science and mathematics – GERC has proposed aligning UAF more closely with university regulations, which currently call for at least 10 credits in mathematics and natural science courses, at least 3 credits which must be in math and 4 credits which must be in a natural science course with a lab. Students would choose whether to take an additional natural science course (either with a lab or without) or an additional math course to complete the 10 credits. This has significant impact for transfer students, both from within the UA system and without. Currently, if a student transfers to UAF with one natural science course with a lab and one non-lab natural science course which together may have fulfilled their natural science credits elsewhere, they must take either a lab section or a full course with a lab component to fulfill the natural science requirement.
2. Decorations – GERC has proposed identifying courses which offer students various perspectives. The “decorations” A (Alaska/Arctic), D (Intercultural Competence and Diversity), and E (Civic Engagement) could be appended to any course which meets the rubric for that area (GERC has already developed these rubrics). Students would need to take at least 3 credits in each area, though those courses could also simultaneously fulfill other requirements. CAC has discussed the decorations, but the committee has not begun work on a motion.

Related Issues:

The chair of CAC has worked with Vice Provost Alex Fitts to articulate the need for increased assessment at UAF, especially of core courses. The Senate is expected to begin work on faculty-involved assessment in 2015-16. This issue is not a CAC-specific issue, but CAC has significant interest in assessment, especially given the way the proposed communications plans (to replace O/W requirements) demand assessment and feedback on that assessment (see above).

Below is a summary from a meeting where we laid out the current issues and began to talk about what could be done to solve them.

Notes from Meeting on Assessment (4/3/2015)

Present: Alex Fitts, Brian Cook, Leah Berman, Cecile Lardon, Debu Misra

- Alex says we're not where we need to be with reviewing SLOA, based on accreditation guidelines

- New accreditation guidelines from NWCCU will place more emphasis on SLO as a main way to assess mission fulfillment
- Currently, assessment of the UAF Core is spotty and inconsistent, and some courses are not routinely assessed
- Each program should also be regularly assessed. Alex says that currently all programs now have a plan for assessment, though not all are equal in the depth to which they assess. Also, some departments are behind in submitting their SLOAs.
- Each program's faculty should design their assessment plans and complete the assessment of their own programs. Someone (currently it's Alex's office) is supposed to review both the plans and assessments and offer guidance and ways to improve the means of assessment and to ensure that what is supposed to be assessed is actually being assessed.
 - o Faculty are supposed to be heavily involved in the assessment review process, but that is not currently happening.
- If the current proposal for changes to the O/W system is passed, assessment will be especially important in ensuring that communications learning outcomes are being delivered.
- One idea is to have each college and school designate at least one (and in some cases more than one) faculty member to serve as the college's assessment advisor. This person or group of people would receive training on how to develop assessment plans and would work with programs in their college to improve their SLOA plans. They would also make sure that the plan is actually assessing learning outcomes and make sure that programs are completing their SLOAs on a regular basis.
- These people would also serve on a campus-wide "Assessment Advisory Committee" that would assist with reviewing the Core and assist with other campus-wide assessment and accreditation tasks.
- The Core Review Committee would be tasked with the regular assessment of the Core (or GER) with oversight from the AAC.