

First-Year Council Meeting – April 19, 2010

Members Present: April, Lyn R., Maria, Deirdre, Kristin W., Donna, Jo, Lyn C., Linda W., Inez, Dave, Paul, Pierre, Chris, Jon, Linda C.

Members Absent: Ken, Melissa, Adam, & Katrina

1. Discussion of Cornerstone Subcommittee's Proposal for 3-hour Cornerstone Course
 - a. Discussion continued from April 5, 2010, meeting surrounding the possibility of offering a cornerstone course for first-year students. See notes below.
 - April talked about relationship with LACC & LAC-RSC, who are both supportive of this class.
 - Lyn introduced the idea & reason behind it & overviewed proposal.
 - Could be experimentally offered – 3 times – before going through curriculum.
 - Could be offered to go into current LAC, not wait for new LAC (Maria).
 - Donna: Likes that assessment built into the course from the start; portfolios; faculty development built into it; small sections
 - Peer mentor Q – a student. Generally paid or get credit for it.
 - Fall only course during phase in period only? What about those who come in the Spring? Could they substitute another course? Spring offering would be transfer student focus. Jo - only 50 persons in the Spring who are new freshmen. There would be advantages in offering it again in the Spring, to tweak it, experimentally.
 - First-year, first-time students – how does this work for the LAC? Could set up something as an alternative or have one for the transfer students.
 - Who is going to teach it? What course aren't they going to teach? Who is paying for it? We would need to hire new faculty to teach the classes that aren't going to be taught. Removing an existing LAC course (e.g., capstone) would help.
 - Would we like to have this course, even if it's not part of the LAC (Jon)? We believe a cornerstone course is important, even on a voluntary basis for students. This would allow us to gather data, show success, bettering the course, etc.
 - Emeriti faculty could be used, as one example.
 - Lyn C. – this is faculty-dependent. We would need to select people who are interested in doing this. How many people would be willing to teach it with some extra incentive? (Chris N.) Do we have a critical mass there on this? Could we survey the faculty to find out? Or could we ask dept. heads to do this? Deirdre – we could have breakout sessions at faculty development day in Fall.
 - Lyn C. – we have to decide whether this is something that is important to do.
 - Deidre – this is not a budget-neutral proposal. We could offer various ways of implementing it. Provide some examples of ways the goals could be met.
 - Lyn R. – there will be budget implications. But there is an investment in recruiting/retaining students.
 - Some departments would love this opportunity to use it as a recruiting tool, who would put their best faculty into it (Deirdre).

- Justifications for proposal – data on those students who we’re not retaining (Linda W.) & make the course more focused on that (e.g., off-campus students; high GPAs; at risk sections).
 - Jon – but retention is not the only outcome. Targeting students who might be successful.
 - What do we mean by extended orientation topics? Jon said we need to articulate these ahead of time – which ones we really want to be covered, in terms of outcomes of course.
 - Needs to be fleshed out as a course proposal (Maria). The topics have to be listed & how they’ll be assessed. We will have a faculty flesh this out into a curricular course proposal.
 - Maria likes the idea of a course – but it needs to be clearer how it will be done.
 - Donna – there could be general descriptions, basic elements that have to be included. These need to be identified.
 - Chris – you can do more with students who have had this experience.
 - Deirdre – point 10 advisory board – could advisory board be established first to set up larger goals & development strategies. Could have a coordinating committee eventually, like current LACC (Maria). The advisory board would take a leadership role from the beginning.
- b. Motion to approve cornerstone course in principle, with establishment of advisory board to flesh out the details

Chris Neuhaus moved to approve the following motion; Lyn Countryman seconded the motion. The motion passed: 12 in favor; 1 abstention (concerned about logistics in requiring it for all students).

Our task was to research first year experience programs, determine what would be best for the University of Northern Iowa, and create a proposal for the First Year Council to approve or deny. In our research, we found evidence that the majority of higher education institutions are offering a seminar of one type or another. Abundant research shows that the first year seminar is attributed with increases in: persistence to sophomore year; student satisfaction; use of campus services; academic abilities; persistence to graduation; grade point average; and motivation (*National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition* and *Policy Center for the First Year of College* surveys).

With the cost of recruiting one student to UNI totaling nearly \$500, it is clear that retaining students is less expensive than recruiting them. Our expectation is, with the creation of a first year cornerstone experience, the University of

Northern Iowa will intentionally guide the first-year experience and assist students to acquire the skills they need to succeed.

We propose UNI offer a 3 credit hour (graded credit) academic inquiry cornerstone course. The course and its related delivery methods would be developed by faculty members, in partnership with student services staff, students, and administration. This course would, by the nature of its assignments and activities, provide a helpful transition to students to college at UNI and will include extended orientation topics in the context of an interdisciplinary critical inquiry topic of the faculty member's choice.

April & Jon will meet with the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Vice-President for Student Affairs to present this proposal and request they appoint an advisory board to flesh out the specifics of this proposal. This board should contain faculty representation from all five colleges, staff members, and at least one student. We recommend the following be appointed to this advisory board initially: Maria Basom (representing CHFA/CNS & a former member of the LACC), Lyn Countryman (representing CNS/COE), Dale Cyphert (representing CBA, because of her work with the Professional Skills initiative there), Deirdre Heistad (representing the Provost's Office), Chris Neuhaus (representing the library), Inex Murtha (representing Academic Learning Center), Alex Oberle (representing SBS), Lyn Redington (representing DOR), and 1-2 students appointed by student government (or perhaps have Adam Haselhuhn and new student body president or vice-president serve).

Once the advisory board has been appointed, then their task would be to develop a curriculum draft proposal by the week before the Fall semester starts, in order for it be discussed at a break-out session on the Faculty Development Day focused on LAC issues on August 19.

2. Preview of Monday, May 10 First-Year Council meeting, focused on first-year student learning outcomes and assessment (concern raised by academic deans about learning outcomes): Donna Vinton

Opening remarks by Donna:

- No assessment measurement measures everything.
- No assessment instrument is perfect.
- Not everything is direct measurement – first-year course would be helpful in this regards.
- Every first year student does not have to be assessed on every learning outcome.
- We don't always need pre & post data.

- Assessment will need to be collaborative – we'll need to work with various offices across campus. There will, though, need to be a contact person for this.
- Assessment is an ongoing process. We need to look at plan & improve it over time.

Donna provided handout based on her brainstorming on learning goals.

- We already have four years of NSSE data that could be used for assessment purposes.
- Go to NSSE data on webpage to see the kind of data we already have.
- Need direct measure ideas for next time (from first-year cornerstone course) – e.g., research projects, tests – could help FY group get consistency in the course

3. Faculty Development group is developing a best reads bibliography.