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Core Curriculum Task Force Composition (2-3-2010)

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Senate Executive Committee

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Approved by the Senate: 2/15/2010
Not Approved by the Senate:
Approved by the President: 2/23/2010
Not Approved by the President:

Core Curriculum Task Force Composition

Submitted by: Patricia Humphrey

2/3/2010

Motion:

A motion, that the Faculty Senate and Senate Executive Committee request that the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs reconstitute the Core Curriculum Task Force announced on 2/1/2010 to include additional members by College proportionate to the number of courses represented by various colleges in the current Core Curriculum.

Rationale:

This follows the RFI filed by Lorne Wolfe on the composition of the task force. The proposed composition of the Core Curriculum Task Force announced on 2/1/2010 in the memorandum by Dr. Gary Means, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, under-represents Colleges and faculty who teach a substantial portion of the Core Curriculum as well as gives equal weight (by virtue of a one-College, one-member composition as currently proposed) to both University administrators and Units of the University which teach few or no courses in the current Core Curriculum.

Response:

I am pleased to report that the Senate recommends approval of the substitute motion offered by Richard Flynn as an alternative to the motion presented and subsequently withdrawn by Dr. Pat Humphrey at the February 15, 2010, Senate meeting.

MOTION: A motion, that the Faculty Senate and Senate Executive Committee request that the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs reconstitute the Core Curriculum Task Force announced on 2/1/2010 to include two additional tenured non-administrative faculty members to represent the areas of the Core Curriculum from areas B and C so that all five areas of the core will be represented and to include a student member on the committee.

RATIONALE: After a discussion of the RFI filed by Lorne Wolfe on the composition of the Task Force, input from the Task Force chair, Barry Joyner, and a discussion of the original motion, the Senate voted to accept the substitute motion after it became clear that the task force's charge to develop outcomes for each area of the core could benefit from input from representatives of all areas of the core and of the student body while still keeping the Task Force to a manageable size.

Curriculum Core Task Force Composition

Gary Means (Provost) said the Core Curriculum "belongs to the University. It doesn't belong to any one department or one college. Because everyone and every major is impacted significantly by what's in the Core Curriculum, I wasn't specifically looking at membership in terms of making sure each of the present areas in the Core curriculum had representation. What I was looking for was a sense of input from a variety of different sources." He added that the Board of Regents has mandated a "rigorous assessment of system for the Core curriculum." Also, since SACS accreditation is coming up, Means said he "looked at membership on the committee as also being people that had a good assessment capability." Means also mentioned the short time frame from the BOR for an initial response on assessment and the Core Curriculum. Means stressed that he "needed to have a working committee that, in fact, could work" and that "once you get about 12 people the effectiveness, the timely effectiveness of task groups starts diminishing significantly," so he intended to keep the Task Force small.

Barry Joyner (CHHS) reminded the Senate that the charge of the Task Force was to:

- Identify at least one student learning outcome for each area of the Core Areas A-E. Those outcomes must be approved by the University System of Georgia (USG).

- Identify at least one student learning outcome for US perspectives and global perspectives, approved by the USG. •Establish a plan that insures critical thinking skills or developed in Areas A-E. Also must be approved by the USG.
- Establish an assessment plan to assess and evaluate the student learning outcomes and critical thinking.
- Delineate how many hours are built into each area and the courses to be included in those areas.

Joyner said, “it is a pretty ambitious time line that we’ve got to stick to, and that’s one of the reason that we’ve been working, even though there were some concerns about the makeup of the committee.” The Task Force’s goal for this semester, he said, is “to come up with these student learning outcomes and submit them through the approval process” by the Undergraduate Committee and the Faculty Senate. The learning outcomes must approved before the assessment plan, so after the learning outcomes are submitted to the Council on General Education in Fall 2010, the Task Force will start working on the assessment plan for the student learning outcomes and determining the organization of and courses to be included in the Core, which will also have to go through the approval process here at the University and at the University System. The assessment plan will be submitted for USG approval in Spring 2011. Implementation will take place in Fall 2011. The goal of the Task Force is to have much of the work done by Fall 2010, because schedules are usually built for the following fall at the end of the previous fall semester.

The Task Force has been meeting regularly, reviewing student learning outcomes from three sources: the current General Education Outcomes for Georgia Southern; the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that Georgia Southern submitted to SACS, and sample student learning outcomes from the USG . The Task Force plans to put sample student learning outcomes on a SharePoint site this week. “These are starting points for discussion,” Joyner said. “We want input from faculty about the ones we are going to put out there. We also want faculty to submit other student outcomes for consideration.” Subcommittees will also be created to look at student learning outcomes. The Task Force’s goal is to make the April Undergraduate Committee meeting, which means a late March deadline for the Task Force.

Richard Flynn (CLASS) said he finds it “troubling” that there’s not a person who teaches in Area C on the committee. Barry Joyner said there was a committee member from CLASS and that the committee would seek input from others teaching in the Core. Joyner added that the Core belongs to the entire university. Flynn responded that “having people who actually teach in the Core might better be able to assess what goes on in them than somebody who has never taught in that area of the Core.” Gary Means

(Provost) agreed to add two more faculty members, one from COST and one from CLASS, and one student member.

Clara Krug (CLASS) raised concerns about the short turnaround time for the committee, especially for the Faculty Senate and the assessment plan for the various disciplines. She also asked about changes in course requirements. Joyner (CHHS) said the Core does not have to be changed. Krug it is “a frightfully short time frame for what we’re supposed to be doing.”

Gary Means (Provost) commented that the Board of Regents has mandated the short time frame. He added that “one of the things that we have failed to do institutionally over the last five years is a Core Curriculum assessment and outcomes.” He continued that at this point “we are not going into the assessment and we are not saying necessarily that we are going forward with any kind of institutional Core Curriculum revision, but we do have to have our objectives identified, and we’re going to need them for next year’s SACS report, too.”

Brenda Talley (CHHS) said that faculty who teach upperdivision courses outside the Core build on the Core and that the Task Force should “seek output not only from people who teach that, but for people who teach from that. . . . [W]e need the expertise throughout all of the spectrum.”

Mark Welford (COST) asked for the justification for having “a non-tenured track, first-year temporary professor who has no long-term commitment to this University” on the committee. Means said that if he had known her status, he would not have assigned her, but that she “is a very conscientious, bright and capable person and anybody that would suggest that she can’t do a good job, I would certainly question that.” He said he wanted to keep her on the committee. Pat Humphrey (COST) asked about the timing of the Undergraduate Committee meeting in terms of Senate meetings to discuss this issue. Humphrey said she thought this might have to be taken up in the June meeting of the Senate. Bob Cook (CIT), Parliamentarian, said that “The Senate as a body at any time can suspend any rule that is has except those that it has that are written into the Constitution to take up items that may require a timely response.”

Richard Flynn (CLASS) asked for and received confirmation that all of the changes to the curriculum need to be made by Fall 2011. He added, “Since the current Core satisfies the requirements of the Board of Regents, I see no reason to rush into messing with the Core on that kind of timeline and, frankly, I resent having to do it.”

Don Stallings (COST) said the non-tenured faculty member on the committee has “a very strong history of assessment.” Mark Welford (COST) said he was concerned about “her longterm commitment to the University seeing that she’s a temporary.” Stallings

said she “is on a contract that gets renewed yearly, but she’s under a contract that essentially will let her be here for six years and then get renewed again.”

Greg Harwood (CLASS) passed out information from the Library Committee, which was also included in the Librarian’s Report.

Motion Request: Core Curriculum Task Force Composition submitted by Pat Humphrey. Seconded. Samantha Young (SGA) thanked Dr. Means, Dr. Joyner, and the Senate for including a student representative on the Task Force.

Michelle Haberland (CLASS) asked why no faculty members from American History or American Government were on the Task Force “given the prominence of that desired learning outcome.” She added that faculty [know best] how to assess their particular disciplines. Means responded that the “external community is assessing us and they are telling us now that we must have assessment tools, and we must have these very explicitly stated.” He continued that it is important that “we identify how we are going to be assessed and what those criteria are before someone else does it for us.” The Task Force must also follow the guidance of the Board of Regents. Haberland reiterated that specialists in the various fields should be on the Task Force.

Rebecca Kennerly (CLASS) asked if the committee’s membership was fixed or whether the membership could be changed over time. Means said the committee will change and grow over time.

Pat Humphrey (COST) read the motion again: “That the Provost reconstitute the Task Force so that it more accurately reflects the colleges that teach the Core Curriculum and includes at least one student.”

Brenda Talley (CHHS) asked whether the assessment was focused on individual classes or more summative in nature (such as the Regent’s Exam).

Richard Flynn (CLASS) said he was not so concerned about the colleges being represented as in areas of the Core being represented on that committee. Michelle Haberland (CLASS) added “We all want it to be the best Core possible. We want to leave our students ready for their upper division work, and to have them graduate from Georgia Southern fulfilling our mission statement, and creating well-equipped global citizens.” She also stressed the need to “focus on the expertise [of faculty]. . . . It’s an impressive faculty. We should use them.”

Sonya Huber (CLASS) asked if Provost Means was addressing that specific expertise question with the possible appointment of the additional faculty. Means said that he was. He reminded the faculty that the Task Force is involved in a “two-step process.” One is setting up what the outcomes are, which cuts across all areas of the university

and the second, which is the assessment. “Right now,” Means said, “ we’re looking at what those outcomes ought to be like in a more generic kind of way. “

Considerable discussion ensued about how many new members would be added to the committee as a result of the motion passing. Means said he was committed to adding two faculty members and one student representative to the committee. Questions were raised about the phrase “proportionate to the Core” and what that might mean for the re-constitution of the Task Force. Discussion then centered on how many faculty needed to be added. Means urged that the committee remain workable in size. Pat Humphrey (COST) asked for a representative from Math in Area A, in addition to the representative from Writing and Linguistics. Other faculty argued for adding representatives from Area B and Area C of the Core.

Brooks Keel (President) suggested at this point that the Senate might be in agreement as to the addition of members. Richard Flynn (CLASS) offered a substitute motion that proposed adding two faculty members from Area B and C and a student member to the Task Force. The amendment passed.

Michelle Haberland (CLASS) asked if Pat Humphrey approved of the changes to her motion. Humphrey said she did. The motion passed.