

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Hal Baillie

RE: DRAFT GE curricular Proposal and a Freshman Seminar Proposal

DATE: November 13, 2009

I would appreciate the advice of the Faculty Senate on the following two proposals. I believe they are well-formed and clear, and that they are in the best interest of the students and our institutional adherence to the concerns of core and general education.

GE curricular Proposal

We will reduce the minimum credit requirement for graduation from 130 to 120. Of those 120 credits, a minimum of 60 will be set aside for general education.

This change will involve a reduction of 10 credits from the current requirements for the core curriculum. The reduction will be accomplished by eliminating, from the current core, the requirements to take Comm 100, C/IL 102 or 104, the three credits for Phys Ed (PHED) and the current one credit Freshman Seminar (INTD 100).

In addition to the 45-51 credits in the proposed core, there will be 15 credits applied to free electives. These free electives are not part of the core requirements, nor are they open to being required by the major or a major cognate. They are genuinely free electives, open to the development of a second major, a minor, or simply the interest of the students. The point is to ensure a broad, liberal education for each of our graduates.

The 60 credits for general education will be distributed according to the accompanying grid.

The remaining minimum of 60 credits is for the major, any cognate requirements identified by the major, or elective possibilities left over. As major programs adjust to these requirements and to the proposed freshman seminar (cf. below), they may double dip, as is the current practice, by identifying a core course or set of core courses that may count toward the major. This does not include the fifteen free electives.

It is true that many majors come near or exceed these 60 credits. Part of the point of the proposal is to encourage (but not require) departments to think through their major and cognate requirements, and strive for a focused, leaner curriculum. If those departments housing programs already under sixty credits are comfortable with their requirements, nothing need be done.

In short, the major program of study must be structured without intruding on the fifteen free elective credits.

Freshman Seminar Proposal

This is a three credit course, part of the general education section of the credit requirements, and identified by an (FS) letter code. It is a seminar, limited to 18 to 20 students, taught by full-time faculty in the fall semester. The point of this seminar is to welcome students to the academic community of the University, to start them on their way to careful thinking, writing and speaking, and to establish a close relationship with a full-time professor. This will include introducing students to the requirements and opportunities of their college career by teaching a combination of student skills and academic content. Students may take only one freshman seminar for credit.

Since the central concern of the seminar is to welcome students to the academic community of the University, two concerns must be integrated. The students need an introduction to college life at a Jesuit university and they need to be inspired to participate in the intellectual life that is at the heart of this community.

All seminars will include discussion of issues confronted by students as they make the transition from high school to college, and of the rich commitments of Ignatian education at a Catholic, Jesuit institution. Topics should include *cura personalis* and “men and women for others,” as well as introduction to the campus, and presentations on learning styles, study skills, library services, time management, academic dishonesty, and service opportunities (civic engagement). A document will be developed based on the best practices of the current freshman seminar that will identify these concepts and skills, and suggest pedagogies to address them.

The remainder of content of the seminar will be more strictly academic. How an individual seminar will integrate the transitional material and the academic content can be developed by the faculty members teaching each seminar, subject to review and approval of the CCC. The method of achieving this integration (and its difficulty) will vary from discipline to discipline and with the type of content involved.

The academic content may be one of three types. Major departments may develop a freshman course in a seminar format, and this may count toward the general education requirement of a freshman seminar and the introductory course of the major as long as it meets the student learning outcomes of both these types of courses. For example, the criminal justice/sociology department may develop a seminar to fulfill both the general education requirement of a freshman seminar (including the high school to college transition material) and the first course of the requirements of, e.g., the criminal justice major, that is CJ 110. This seminar will of necessity be different from the standard CJ 110 course, but it should meet the appropriate student learning outcomes.

A second alternative would be that a department creates a freshman seminar that meets a core requirement and would be open to both majors and non-majors. For example, the theology department may develop a freshman seminar to cover the core requirement for Theo 121. This

would have to be a substantial revision of the existing Theo 121 because of both the seminar format and the requirements of a freshman seminar (including the time set aside for the high school to college transition material), but it should meet the appropriate student outcomes.

A third alternative would be for a faculty member to offer a freshman seminar on a subject of interest to her or him. It must meet the standards for the general education requirement of a freshman seminar (including the high school to college transition material) and appropriate standards for academic content and rigor, as evaluated by the CCC. This seminar need not meet any core or major requirement, but it would reduce by three credits the free electives available to the student. This would also be a model for offering the current INDT 100 undeclared major freshman seminar, with the added responsibility to follow the current intent of INTD seminars to introduce the student to a wide variety of possible major selections.

For those students who do not take a seminar that doubles as a fulfillment of a core requirement or major requirement, the currently standard course to fulfill that requirement would be available. The currently standard course does not have the curricular or student outcomes responsibilities of the freshman seminar with regard to the transition from high school to college. Any student who takes a freshman seminar to fulfill a core or major requirement may not take for credit the standard course that the seminar replaces. Freshman seminars will be identified by a (FS) letter code.

Seminars may be taught by any faculty member, and each faculty member will have access to assistance in addressing the skills segment of the course. As befitting a seminar, frequent writing assignments and in-class oral presentations would be expected. Freshmen need the experience and training of both writing and speaking in a collegial, academic setting. Any proposed seminar would have to be approved by the Core Curriculum Committee, and the course template (particularly for the first section directed to the transition the student is making) will need to be developed in the very near future. To meet these requirements, a faculty member intending to teach a freshman seminar must commit to covering freshman transitional issues, as detailed in her or his syllabus; include as a special focus of her or his syllabus speaking and writing; have a commitment to the *cura personalis* of the student (in part, a commitment to actively using the seminar format to develop the potentials of the incoming students); and be willing to nurture the faculty-student relationships developed in the seminar over the students' careers here at the University.

Other Curricular Issues:

While there should be a strict division between the 60 credits for general education and those for the major, majors may encourage students to take certain versions of GE courses designed for those who need a more intensive introduction to the subject matter.

Basic speech and computer literacy courses may also be offered as free electives to be taken within the general education program according to individual students' backgrounds and interests.

The loss of the public speaking course (COMM 100) should be partly compensated by the expectations and practices of the seminar environment. But the loss of the public speaking requirement should instigate a discussion of how best to satisfy the broader curricular goals of *eloquentia perfecta* in all its forms.

The loss of the computer literacy course requires a careful analysis of what is needed by students as they progress through their course of study. This is particularly true for KSOM. Skills learned early and not used atrophy before classes needing those skills come up in a curriculum, if they come up at all. One possible alternative:

- Enhance the computer literacy center in CTLE to enable it to offer training sessions or modules that while not for credit may be cited as pre-requisites for courses and that may be revisited at different points in a student's curriculum;

The loss of the physical education courses can be compensated by developing a student wellness program, incorporating elements of the staff wellness program, intramurals, and skills acquisition sessions. Further, while these courses would no longer be part of the core requirements, they could still be offered and taken as part of the student's free electives (up to a maximum of three credits).

A close examination of the implications of this for the SJLA program should be undertaken by the director and SJLA faculty. This point is generally relevant to all programs.