

To: BRIDGE Committee
From: Tom Foster, Chair, CAS Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee
Re: Review of Phase II design proposals
Date: March 2, 2007

The CAS Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee reviewed each of the Phase II design proposal relative to the CAS perspective. As the college which delivers and coordinates the majority of the General Education curriculum, we took this charge very seriously. Before the individual reviews, there were a few common issues we address.

Common Issues

- The CAS Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee is committee to General Education reform through the BRIDGE process and will enact whichever design proposal is selected and implemented by the faculty of SIUE.
- Each proposal eliminates the computer skills courses (CMIS108/CS108) from the general education curriculum. We acknowledge that these courses deliver valuable content to our students, but under SIUE's current general education program, the skills of these courses are being taught in a variety of other courses. Furthermore, some of our students will need both the skills and the content before they can succeed at SIUE. Therefore, SIUE will need a computer skills proficiency test and/or new computer skills admission criteria. SIUE will also need to develop AD computer skills courses and coordinate with our partner community colleges to ensure students who need these courses have access to them.
- Quantitative Literacy is emphasized in each proposal and we note that the Department of Mathematics and Statistics has prepared a careful accounting of cost and impacts of adding such a course and has embraced the opportunity.
- A re-invigorated General Education Committee of the Curriculum Council is required for all proposals to succeed. The General Education Committee will also need to development assessment plans for the general education curriculum.

Core

- The reduced number of General Education courses is a strength of this proposal. Given the numerous external pressures on programs to add major courses, having fewer General Education courses makes this proposal appetizing. The use of the balance courses to compensate for perceived weakness in the liberal arts preparation of our students is a nice addition.
- The integrated core courses require the creation of faculty committees. There will be two faculty members teaching the core course and several faculty members teaching the linked-skills courses. The faculty teaching the skills course are required to alter their curriculum to align with that of the core course. This format is very problematic
 - The skills courses have content of their own. The core proposal does not recognize or acknowledge this fact.
 - Since the core course drives the content, the faculty in the skills course will be reduced to second-class instructors. As such, few if any tenured faculty will teach the skills courses further escalating this divide.

- Forces expertise in NSM, SS, or FAH on the skills instructors without regard to their actual expertise in their chosen discipline.
- There will be major logistical challenges
- It is unclear to us how textbook rental will be able to accommodate the core courses and inevitable changes in staffing.
- It is unclear to us where the University will put the large core courses.
- It is unclear to us how proficiency testing and transfer course will impact this model.
- The phrase “Written Expression” to describe Eng101 and 102 is an antiquated term. Modern scholars refer to these courses as “Composition.”

Distribution (SIUE Education)

- The strengths of the Distribution model are that it uses the existing SIUE structures to deliver general education courses and is very compatible with IAI to help transfer students. A major difference with the current SIUE general education program is that Breadth courses are allowed to come from the major, which is important for students who change majors and to reduced the overall number of general education courses.
- The Distribution model has the best BS/BA distinction of the three models.
- The Distribution model requires Spc105, instead of the currently required and very popular Spc103. The Department of Speech Communication has expressed concern that this will be both a paradigm shift for many faculty and this change will also require purchasing more equipment to videotape the state-required three presentations in Spc105.
- The Distribution model buries ethics into the requirements of the undergraduate major instead of elevating ethics into general education.
- Previous reviews of SIUE’s general education have found that our distribution model lack unifying themes and does not encourage student intentionality. This model is no different.
- On the surface the distribution model barely reduces the overall size of general education requirements. Clever advising is required to minimize the size of the general education program by selecting courses that double-count requirements.

Learning Communities

- The central unifying theme and student intentionality is very evident in this model. The use of Gateway courses into major to create a student cohort is a strength of this proposal and regardless of which proposal is adopted, we think every major would be well-served to adopt this.
- The required linkages between Type A courses and Type B course have logistical problems. For example, type A courses require a tight linkage between two courses and it is unclear to us if it is possible to fail half-a-course.
- In terms of scheduling and identifying the required linkages will be a logistical challenge, complicated to explain to students, and difficult to confirm at graduation checkout.
- The BA option does not require either speech communications or a laboratory experience. These omissions weaken the value of the SIUE BA.