

Minutes of the meeting of the University Core Development Committee, Wednesday, November 2, 2011.

The committee met at about 2:05 p.m. in Gasson 105.

Present were Nasser Behnegar, Patrick Byrne, Clare Dunsford, Judith Gordon [substituting for Darren Kisgen]

James Weiss that much has been published on core curricula in the last 15 years. Citing a review article by Andrew Hacker in the *New York Review of Books*, he urged that Mary Crane and Donald Hafner should engage consultants to help in the review of the core and that the UCDC should agree on a list of books that we should read.

Discussion then turned to the issue of what exactly the UCDC is being expected to do with respect to core assessment. The answer seemed to be that we are not to assess the core directly but rather to review with departments what they are doing to assess their core programs. Patrick Byrne asked how the departments are coming with their E1A forms in this respect. He further pointed out the need to

course proposals that the UCDC receives from departments show little awareness of the general core goals. Sometimes the UCDC responds by taking a stricter view of the core goals, sometimes by taking a looser view. Recalling a discussion with Susan Shell about proposals from Political Science, he suggested that we might ask departments to say to what extent their core courses meet the seven general core goals. Nasser Behnegar reported that he had discussed this matter with Susan Shell, and that she had pointed out that no one from Social Science was a member of the 1991 Core Task Force. Given the diversity of methods in social science, it seems

departments could be doing in their core offerings. Nasser Behnegar asked whether the UCDC could deliberate about, say, the goals of the Social Science core. Hafner thought that this raised a broader question: how to handle the situation in which departments are not covering issues of methodology or methodological debates.

Suzanne Matson asked whether all core courses have to meet all the core goals: does mathematics, for example, have to teach writing? Donald Hafner thought that what mathematics has to do is to instill clarity of thought. James Weiss indicated that he preferred “expression” to “writing” in the statement of the core goal. Hafner replied by noting that the UCDC has the power to suggest changes in the formulation of the core goals.

At this point J. Joseph Burns passed out worksheets with the department assessment plans. He took as a positive example the plan for the assessment of the Writing core requirement. The goals of the Writing requirement require interpretation. Assessment of Writing requires both student responses, which are relatively easy to collect, and samples of student work — examinations, essays, papers, etc. — which a department then evaluates in terms of the Writing core goals.

Returning to matters of schedule, Donald Hafner pointed out that the university has to present NEASC with a fifth year report in January 2013. To compose this report, the president will need to have assessment plans, including core assessment plans, from the departments by June 2012. The departments have not yet been told about this. He did not think it was workable to insist that the departments actually have carried out assessment of their cores by June 2012, but he thought it was reasonable to ask for their assessment plans by that date. He thought that some departments might already have plans for collecting and reviewing samples of core work. He was not sure how much additional work departments would have to do to come up with their plans.

Suzanne Matson asked whether the time for reporting on assessment plans had been moved up from October 2012 to June 2012. Donald Hafner allowed that it had, and cited Father Leahy’s need to complete the report to NEASC by January 2013.

J. Joseph Burns passed out copies of the assessment plans for the Natural Science departments. He saw an opportunity at what he called the front end, i.e., the point at which the UCDC has to decide whether to approve courses for core credit.

Returning to an issue raised early in the meeting, Patrick Byrne asked whether the UCDC’s E1A form, submitted last June, was acceptable, or whether the administration was now looking for something different from the UCDC. The June E1A form envisioned a division of labor between the UCDC and the departments. The recent faculty forum had left some unclarity about whether the UCDC was now expected to do something more than what was envisioned in the E1A form. Donald Hafner replied that Provost Garza’s remarks at the faculty forum pertained to the discussions on the core to be led by the Institute for the Liberal Arts rather than to the work of the UCDC. He also said that it would be good to send the UCDC’s cover



Respectfully submitted by

Arthur Madigan, S.J.