

Liberal Studies Committee Minutes

4 April, 2013

3:30 p.m.

Stabley 101

Present: Y. Asamoah, L. Evering, M. Hildebrandt, M. Knoch, D. Pistole, F. Slack, J. Smith, R. Sweeny, M. Swinker
Excused: M. Florez, E. Hwang

I. For action – Approval of Minutes of 28 March 2013 Meeting – Evering/Smith:
Passed: Unanimous

II. Program Revision

Honors College

12-118 Honors College fast tract – removal of HRNC 499 Honors Synthesis

Motion to approve: Asamoah/Sweeny – Passed: Unanimous

III. Course Revisions/Proposals

Library

12-7 LIBR 151 Introduction to Information Literacy – LS Elective – Information Literacy

Returned – the committee has a question about why the proposers want this to be a LS Elective course. In addition, we need to know why they are only offering a 1cr course when all other courses in the LS Electives are 3 or 4 cr.

HSS & FA subcommittee proposals

Anthropology

12-113 ANTH 274 Cultural Area Studies: Latin America - LS Elective – Global Citizenship & Global and Multicultural Awareness

Motion to provisionally approve: Swinker/Knoch – Passed: Unanimous

English

12-103 ENGL 122 Introduction to English Studies – knowledge area

Motion to provisionally approve: Evering/Smith – Passed: Unanimous

Geography

12-82d GEOG 230 Cultural Geography – LS Elective – Global Citizenship

Motion to provisionally approve: Hildebrandt/Swinker – Passed: Unanimous

IV. Discussion – Writing across the curriculum

Bryna Siegel Finer presented an overview of ideas for our revision of writing across the curriculum and the committee began discussing possibilities for the implementation of the W criteria for next year (2013-2014).

As the Liberal Studies Committee (in consultation with the director of Writing Across the Curriculum) revises the requirements for Writing-Intensive course proposals, two main objectives should be considered.

1. Proposals for WI courses must be more specific about the writing-related outcomes, and these proposals must also provide examples of how those writing-related outcomes will be met and assessed
 - **Recommendation: A new template and proposal format should be designed that asks for more specific information regarding rhetorical aspects of writing along with examples of assignments and descriptions of assessment.**
 - *Rationale: This objective represents a shift in pedagogy from the quantitative measures in the current outdated model (which require the proposal to detail number of assignments, words, and pages) to a qualitative proposal (which requires the proposal to detail types of assignments and rhetorical features of those assignments, which include audiences, purposes, genres, as well as the processes of writing, including drafting, review [peer or faculty], and revision). Proposals should also describe how writing will be assessed in the course and must include examples of that assessment (e.g. a rubric, an assignment sheet, a description of the review and feedback process) along with a quantitative description of how the assessment of writing figures in to the overall course grade.*
2. Teaching a writing-intensive course must be made more attractive to faculty, which includes making it more efficient to obtain W status as well as train more faculty to teach type II W courses¹. Our current model (which is common in WAC programs across the country²) requires a 2.5-day writing-workshop that certifies faculty as W-instructors for the remainder of their time at IUP. There are two other models used in universities with WAC programs. One model requires extensive semester-long training with a cohort of faculty who want to teach more writing in conjunction with specialists in composition and writing pedagogy³. Another model does not *require* training, but instead the WAC director offers workshops and seminars throughout the year for faculty to attend on a voluntary basis; office-hours and appointments with the WAC director or other specialists in writing pedagogy are available⁴. In these cases,

¹ This spring, there are 101 professors teaching W courses. Only 32 of them are Type I (mostly in the English and other humanities courses). That means that 2/3 of the professors teaching W intensive courses may or may not have proficiency in teaching writing in their discipline.

² Some schools that require training in teaching of writing: Long Island University, University of St Thomas, University of Missouri, Florida Atlantic University, University of Wisconsin-Superior

³ Some schools that require semester-long commitment to faculty development: University of Wisconsin-Superior, University of Minnesota

⁴ Some schools that do not require training in teaching writing: San Francisco State, Texas A&M, George Mason University, Fresno State University, North Shore Community College, James Madison University

faculty are invited to submit syllabi to WAC director for feedback prior to semester's start (anonymously, if they wish).

- **Recommendation: IUP should offer a model that provides many opportunities for faculty to train in the teaching of writing on their own schedule to the extent of expertise they wish. These opportunities would include a full-day workshop in May, attendance at the July LSE workshop, coursework in a graduate program specific to teaching writing, 1-hr workshops throughout the academic year, individual meetings with the WAC director, participation in the WAC teaching circle, etc. Faculty will be expected to renew their certification every five years, again on their own schedule by participating in any of these opportunities.**
 - *Rationale: The current workshop undermines the time and work necessary to learn to teach writing in one's discipline. It assumes that in 2.5 days, someone can learn to teach writing and that those lessons never need to adapt or change; yet, faculty complain that 2.5 days is too long a commitment⁵. Composition pedagogy changes as students skills and needs in writing change; therefore, a one-time workshop is not the most effective model for supporting faculty in teaching writing. Additionally, requiring the workshop creates resistance among faculty, many of whom do have training in teaching writing in their disciplines and are active writers themselves in those disciplines. Instead, we need an ongoing program of workshops, seminars, and smaller activities that lead to faculty buy-in. Hopefully, faculty will attend one short workshop, learn a lot, and want to attend other workshops.*
- **Recommendation: Incentives should be offered to faculty who agree to teach writing-intensive courses, such as smaller class sizes⁶, stipends for attending faculty development, books and materials, etc.**
 - *Rationale: Faculty need to feel that it is worth the extra time and effort (particularly in grading student papers) to add writing assignments and attention to writing process to their courses⁷. Additionally, participating in these programs should be considered a valuable part of faculty development and should be recognized by tenure and promotion committees as such.*

⁵ In data from a spring 2013 survey of IUP faculty, when asked why he/she does not want to attend the workshop, one faculty member exclaimed, "If I take on one more chore, even a minor one, my head will explode." Several others said it's just too long. Another said, "I don't feel it's necessary to validate my knowledge of writing in my field." There is a clear culture of distrust around the current process.

⁶ In the same survey, in an open-ended response question asking faculty to say anything they wanted about teaching writing at IUP, one faculty member wrote, "There is already disincentive enough to agree to teach a W-course given the ever-increasing class size issues." Regardless of our compliance with NCTE recommendations of capping W courses at 25 students, many faculty members bemoaned class size and lack of incentive to add to their workload as reasons for not teaching writing in their courses, not wanting to teach W-courses, and/or not seeking a W-faculty designation.

⁷ A survey response to the open-ended question said, "I'd like to see those who teach writing intensive courses should be compensated to some degree in work load; I enjoy the content of my course but I KNOW I spend more time grading than other colleagues. I feel some stay away from these courses due to the increased workload of grading writing, as I never seem to have any "competition" to teach this course. Student evals can often be more harsh if they struggle as writers; they perceive the course to be more difficult and more work (and it is)."

Motion to Adjourn: Slack/Sweeny. Approved Unanimous – the meeting adjourned at 5:30.