

September 21, 2006

Dear Senate Colleague:

You will soon have to determine whether to “receive” the Core Curriculum Task Force II’s report on its work regarding proposed changes in the core curriculum. At the last Senate meeting the chair noted that the decision would be whether or not to “accept” the Task Force report. The term “receive” was first broached at the last Agenda Committee meeting. The intent of this change in words is not clear. However, whatever the agenda committee means by the change in terms, it is important that you be aware of the charge that the Senate imposed on Task Force II in the process of “accepting” the report from Task Force I.

This charge evolved after the Academic Policies Council determined that it could not approve or endorse the report of the first task force. After considerable debate APC determined that it could “accept” the report only conditionally, provided that a statements of assumption and philosophy used by Task Force I be attached. APC then forwarded the report to the Senate with a statement of its reservations. Discussion of these reservations resulted in the attached charge to Task Force II.

The charge clearly sets out what the Senate, at the time of its adoption, believed would be required of the final report from Task Force II. Several of these are worth emphasis. The charge clearly requires that Task Force II consider the resource implications of their proposals. Thus, despite the statement by the provost and chairman at the last Senate meeting, putting off discussion of resource implications is inconsistent with the Senate’s charge.

A second charge of concern to the authors of the amendment was that the department chairs in the distribution areas (natural science, social sciences, and humanities) and the foundation courses of the existing core curriculum be asked to generate a report subsequent to a meeting of these chairs. The chair of Task Force II interpreted this charge to collect individual reports from each department chair concerned and wrote a memo that appears disparaging of this part of the charge. After an exchange of memos between the authors of the charge and Senate chairperson Marilyn Buck, Dr. Buck indicated that “the group meeting of the chairs will occur as was the intent of the motion which was passed” (memo to Marilyn Flowers, copied to Juli Eflin). These meetings have not occurred, nor is there a joint report from the distribution area chairs addressing the issues in that part of the Senate’s charge.

A third charge, under the rubric of providing a clear rationale for the proposed core, is to consider the trade offs for students as parts of the current core are deemphasized to meet the proposed goals of the new core.

Although this letter addresses only three, all of the items in the Senates’ charge to Task Force II are important in determining the acceptability of Task Force II’s report. Should the Senate decide only to receive the report, I think it is still important that the degree to which the charge has been met be discussed.

Very truly yours,

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Past Chair, Academics Policy Council
Department of Economics

Attachment

Attachment from University Senate Minutes 2/26/04

A Task Force shall be formed with the following charge:

- Consider the following three proposals.
 1. No change to the current Core Curricula.
 2. Improvements to the existing Core.
 3. Major changes to the current Core Curricula.
- If change is recommended, the committee will:
 1. Provide a clear rationale:
 - What are the concerns with our current Core Curriculum?
 - What is the strategy to address these concerns?
 - What are the resource implications?
 - What are the tradeoffs in terms of value to our students?
 2. Define operational goals to guide any restructuring.
- This Task Force report must be approved by UEC, APC, and the Senate before any actual restructuring of the Core is undertaken.
- Composition of the Task Force

The Task Force should be composed of representatives from the following groups:

- a) Faculty from each college roughly proportionate to the number of departments in each college. Members will be chosen by the dean of the members' respective college. This group shall have no fewer than 10 members.
 - b) Two department chairs and one dean chosen by the Provost.
 - c) One faculty member from UEC chosen by the body.
 - d) One student chosen by SGA and one student chosen by SCLC.
 - e) One representative of student affairs chosen by the Vice President for Student Affairs.
 - f) One representative of UCC chosen by UCC.
- The Task Force is directed to collect a written report from the department chairs in the distribution areas and foundation areas identifying:
 - 1) Strengths and weaknesses of the current core courses in their areas.
 - 2) Suggestions for improvement.