

Response to the concerns of Dr. Keil

Dr. Keil focuses on whether or not UCC-Task Force II met the charge given by Senate in February of 2004.

To begin, the general charge to both UCC-Task Force I and Task Force II came from Provost Pitts. She said we were to develop an innovative core that would be good for our students. She emphasized many times that we were to be blind to resources. If we were not, we would limit our ability to find creative and innovative solutions to overcome the problems with UCC-1984 (our current core). As most of you know, we considered many bold options, many of which were not retained, such as all team-taught core classes.

It may appear from Dr. Keil's concerns that APC wrote the longer charge for UCC-Task Force II. The minutes from Senate on January, 22 2004 reflect the following:

The APC met on 12/11/03 to continue their dialogue with the UCC Task Force regarding the draft Statement of Goals for Undergraduate Education at Ball State. The Core Curriculum Committee and others were in attendance. The motion coming from the UEC was:

“To accept in principle and advance this conceptual draft to 2nd Task Force, contingent that it is also allowed further opportunity for clarification and modification.”

In the end, the Council decided not to accept the conceptual draft but to advance it to Senate provided that the statement of assumptions and philosophy used by Task Force I be attached to it. The motion was amended as follows:

“To advance this conceptual draft and attachment (APC attachment #2, 12/11/03) [Assumptions and Philosophical Principles] to 2nd Task Force, contingent that it is also allowed further opportunity for clarification and modification.”

The longer, multiple-part charge for UCC-Task Force II came from the Senate floor. Dr. Keil is concerned with three parts of this charge.

Dr. Keil's first concern is that the Task Force states the resource implications of UCC-21. UCC-Task Force II admits that it is likely that there will be costs in every college and in most programs. We admit that it will be a challenge to us as a faculty to develop new and more efficient and effective ways of doing what UCC-21 would require. The "W" requirement, for example, if implemented as we have described it, will require for success smaller, more interactive settings than may now exist in a number of potential Tier 2 or other university courses. The wholesale re-focusing of UCC-approved courses around both content and learning objectives with their domain/discipline-specific epistemologies will require serious faculty attention, and that comes at a cost. As a profession, we are often un-mindful of the fact that we are currently fully employed and that, therefore, there are opportunity costs associated with doing something additional or new. Some of the opportunity costs will be short term; some will not. In particular, we recognize the following:

- a. Resources will be needed for faculty development. Developing new or revised courses will take faculty time.
- b. The College of Fine Arts has indicated its resource concern, but there will likely be resource issues for all colleges.

- c. There will likely be some instructional costs as we shift from all introductory courses as we have now to courses in all four undergraduate years. For some disciplines, the change will not be significant, but others will feel the change acutely in both Tier 2 and Tier 3.
- d. We should note, however, that President Gora has requested funding for fifty new faculty, especially to enhance experiential and immersive learning—which is the focus of Tier 3.

I'm sure that some will want to know what the resource implications are for their own departments. This is something Task Force II cannot determine because UCC-21 is a framework yet to be populated with courses. At some level, resource implications will depend on what courses departments send to the UCC-Subcommittee and this is something Task Force II cannot foresee. Finally, President Gora said in a Senate meeting that if the faculty approve UCC-21, it is the administration's job to find the resources.

Dr. Keil's second concern is with the input from department Chairs. The original Senate charge to UCC-Task Force II included the following:

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.

As Chair of UCC-Task Force II, I interpreted this as requiring individual reports from Chairs. Marilyn Buck was Chair of Senate at that time and the two of us wrote a memo to Chairs asking for reports. After the memo was sent to Chairs, the authors of the Charge to Task Force II contacted us to inform us that individual reports had not been their intent. The authors intended that Chairs for the Foundation Courses and Chairs for the Distribution Areas were to meet, discuss and jointly produce a report.

When a group of Chairs were asked about the possibility of meeting to write a report, they clearly and directly said they did not have time to do so. They saw the request as a duplication of the Second Cycle Assessment completed by the UCC-Subcommittee in 2002. Further, such a task would have required Chairs to openly and in writing criticize each other's courses.

Chairs have had a considerable impact on the development of UCC-21. Task Force members have met with departments, curriculum committees, divisions, College Chairs, Division Chairs, and with Chairs individually. UCC-21 is a better proposed core curriculum because of this consultation.

Dr. Keil's third concern is the kind of rationale the Task Force provided for UCC-21. His focus is the question: "What are the tradeoffs in terms of value to our students." Dr. Keil is dissatisfied with the following chart the Task Force provided:

| | Current UCC | UCC-21 |
|--|--------------------|---------------|
| Required credit hours | 41 | 39 |
| Foundation required | Yes | Yes |
| Hours in the foundation | 15 | 15 |
| Exposure to diversity issues required | No | Yes |
| Course that includes environmental awareness is required | No | Yes |
| Course that includes International Awareness is required | Yes | Yes |

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| Required upper-division writing | No | Yes |
| Immersive/experiential learning required | No | Yes |
| Learning objectives oriented | No | Yes |
| Themed course possible | No | Yes |
| Any department can submit courses for inclusion | No | Yes |

Dr. Keil's dissatisfaction rests on the fact that this chart highlights the advantages for UCC-21 while deemphasizing UCC-1984 (our current core). He is right in that this chart highlights that UCC-21 rectifies what many see as problematic with UCC-1984. Nonetheless, I am hard pressed to see advantages in the old core for students. I do see advantages for departments, in that reforming our core curriculum will take the time and energy of many faculty. For some departments, offering courses for UCC-21 will not be difficult; for others, it will be much more demanding. Our concern, however, should be with what is good for students, and if reforming the core is in their best interest, it is something we must do.

The above chart, however, is not the only rationale for UCC-21. In addition to the six distinguishing features outlined in Part B of UCC-21, UCC-21 is supported by national literature on general education. The literature reviews, reports from departments and other Task Force documentation found in the archives of the UCC webpage provide further insight.

Finally, Senate voted in November of 2004 that the option of not changing the current core was unacceptable and in December of 2004 Senate voted to accept the work of UCC-Task Force I, which is now Part A of UCC-21.

Dr. Keil's concerns do not address all the parts of the charge given to UCC-Task Force II. The report the Task Force submitted to Senate on September 28, 2006 does address each part of the charge. The Task Force firmly believes that it has met each and every part. In meeting our charge, we have kept our students' wellbeing uppermost in our minds.

Juli Eflin
Chair, UCC-Task Force II