

COMMON CURRICULUM ANNUAL REPORT (2013-2014)

[submitted to the Academic Affairs Council by Professor John Cramsie, Director of General Education, 17 June 2014]

GEN ED BOARD

John Cramsie; Director of General Education

Patricia Wareh; Division 1 Rep (on leave Fall 2013/Winter 2014)

Claire Bracken; Division 1 Rep (Fall 2013/Winter 2014)

Mehmet Sener; Division 2 Rep

Jennifer Bishop; Division 3 Rep

Kristina Striegnitz; Division 4 Rep

Nathaniel Hawthorne; Student Rep

Brian Cohen; Advising (ex officio)

Mary Mar; Writing Center (ex officio)

Kathy Basirico; Program Administration (ex officio)

2013- 2014 REVIEW

The General Education Board and Director of General Education continue jointly to pursue these projects.

- 1) **SCLB/SET Enrollment.** We monitored the reception and implementation of our recommendations in the SCLB/SET Enrollment Report (submitted to Dean Dave Hayes on 5 June 2012). To date progress has been made with enrollment management and routine planning for SCLB/SET course offerings via the Common Curriculum Science Board. No direct progress has been made with respect to our recommendation that we provide a sufficient short-term infusion of courses and seats to clear the 'backlog' of juniors and seniors and simultaneously ensure that all students can (and will) complete both their SCLB and SET courses by the end of the sophomore year. Overall, it would seem that our report has prompted welcome attention, but we continue to await further progress.
- 2) **Common Curriculum Assessment.** We completed our charge from the AAC in November 2011 to develop and begin to implement an assessment process for the Common Curriculum. The Director of General Education spent six weeks in July and August 2012 researching, developing, and drafting an assessment process. The Gen Ed Board began work in Fall 2012 using this draft process as a starting point. We completed a revised draft at the end of Fall term. We discussed it with members of the AAC and the Director of Assessment in December 2012, completed minor revisions, and presented it for faculty

input via the Common Curriculum website and open meetings with faculty in January and February 2013. The final process was approved in July 2013 and the necessary electronic infrastructure put in place in September 2013 by which the Director of General Education and Program Assistant will compile e-portfolios of a select sample of students from each academic class. Details of the process can be found in our annual Common Curriculum assessment report at <http://www.union.edu/offices/gen-ed/program-administration/assessment/>

Twenty-eight students broadly representing the distribution of majors across the four divisions and the gender profile of the college were selected as the assessment sample in August 2013. Students in the sample were notified in writing and the Director of General Education met with students to discuss the assessment and their role in it. Faculty with students to be assessed were informed in week four, once changes in enrollments had been completed and the electronic webapp came online. Working with ITS, we created an individual assessment report (IAR) filled out by faculty and submitted electronically along with student work and assignments; we sought to avoid a paper mountain and this should do so. Two workshops were held during the Fall term at which the Gen Ed Board responded to questions from faculty.

Our pilot year has proceeded relatively smoothly though the response rate has been predictably sluggish. Our key priorities are working with faculty to help them become accustomed to their responsibilities under the system. We have identified these areas for improvement and the following improvements: 1) streamlining the webform and building in new functionality; 2) revising learning outcomes to better align them with particular departments/disciplines; 3) develop an efficient process of electronic record keeping and portfolio management now that assessments have come in. Finally, the Gen Ed Board and I prepared and delivered the relevant portion of the Middle States mid-term review to the Director of Assessment.

Finally, we will work in 2014-2015 to fully integrate SRS and FYP assessment within the now-established Common Curriculum assessment process. This will enable the Director of General Education and Gen Ed Board to finally and fully respond to the recommendations of the AAC in 2011 that a regular, integrated program of assessment and faculty development be put in place that supports SRS and FYP (in response to the AAC Subcommittee on FYP/SRS that met and reported in 2010). The integration would proceed as follows. Eliminate the paper/hardcopy FYP and SRS assessments in favour of a single integrated webapp IAR built on the current IAR platform. The IAR-FYP and IAR-SRS would substitute the FYP and SRS assessment rubric for learning outcome A in the current IAR. Proficiency categories in the current FYP and SRS rubrics will be replaced by the current IAR proficiency levels, thus creating a consistent set of assessment standards. FYP

and SRS instructors will complete the same summative assessment of learning outcome A as in the current IAR to provide an aggregate assessment across all Common Curriculum courses. FYP and SRS instructors will also complete the same summative assessment of learning outcomes B and C to better integrate FYP and SRS within the broad programmatic goals of the Common Curriculum. SRS assessment currently resides with the DGE and Program Assistant. These changes will be implemented for SRS assessment beginning in Fall 2014. FYP assessment currently resides with the Dean of Studies. The integration proposed above should occur for FYP over two years. Year one should move the assessment process for FYP under the Director of General Education and Program Assistant; faculty development for FYP (workshops) should remain under the Dean of Studies in year one. Year two should move the faculty development for FYP under the Director of General Education and fully integrate it with the broader initiatives for the Common Curriculum outlined above.

- 3) **Sophomore Research Seminar Program Development.** We have begun the second year of regular SRS faculty development workshops; there are normally three such workshops per term devoted to pedagogical training, encouraging new ideas for the program, and assessment of existing practices. I am also working more closely with our research librarians on information literacy strategies for the SRS and we took an experimental approach in my winter term SRS (Elizabeth I in Her Own Words) with this in mind; I may serve as one pedagogical model for other SRSs in future.

The Gen Ed Board agreed to extend an invitation to faculty to propose and teach an 'experimental' SRS in 2014-2015; we had in mind particularly faculty from department, programs, and disciplines for whom the strict 15-18 page term paper requirement makes their research interests a bad fit with the course. We approved three such SRSs and hope they can be springboards to bringing innovative approaches into the program; the Gen Ed board will evaluate the success/failure of this and decide whether to revisit some of the SRS requirements in light of its evaluation.

We inaugurated the SRS project awards in September 2013 with awards to Abigail McNamee for her project "'The Ability of Street Art in Post-Arab Spring Egypt to Reclaim and Comment on the Political Situation'" and Meghan Hill and Claire Kokoska for their joint project 'John Knox: A Radical in Rhetoric'. Students received their awards at the start of the opening Common Curriculum convocation featuring a talk by Professor Andrew Delbanco, Columbia University; we received enthusiastic responses to this initiative from students and faculty as well as the event generally.

Finally, we are evaluating whether to study and proceed with two structural changes to the SRS program. We will examine the desirability and feasibility of moving SRS to the first year and making direct linkages between it and FYP as part of a 'one-two punch' in the first year experience of Union students. The Honours SRS (SCH) is currently taught in the first year and we will look at the feasibility of making that the norm for all Union first-year students in a phased transition. We are also evaluating moving all SRS sections to a single common time slot, perhaps the existing FYP slot or a new joint FYP/SRS time slot.

- 4) **Common Curriculum Website.** The Gen Ed Board has begun work on creating and launching version 2.0 of the Common Curriculum website. We have reviewed current landing pages for program requirements and discussed new ideas for content that prospective students would find compelling and engaging and at the same time provide practical information for current faculty students. We have identified colleagues and students who can provide good content as well as on-campus website and media specialists to work with. We have completed one pilot video for the LCC requirement. Each member of the Gen Ed Board will pursue this initiative in the winter term with hopes that we can create and launch the remaining webpages by the end of 2014-2015. We will also migrate the Common Curriculum website from CMS to Wordpress.

- 5) **Linguistic and Culture Competency (LCC) Requirement Review.** I aimed to establish a routine process by which the Gen Ed Board and Director of General Education annually review and 'take the pulse' of faculty and students with respect to one or two of the CC requirements. Faculty and students received a survey about the LCC requirement at the start of winter term. We wanted to find out if the requirement is meeting its stated goals, whether those goals remain our goals or are consistent given changes in the College's mission and the world at large, or whether the LCC needs to develop new goals and requirements. The Gen Ed Board processed the survey results and decided as a first order of business to examine what our peer schools do with similar requirements. Our review of peer schools will occur during Fall term 2014.

- 6) **Supporting the Humanities.** Partly in response to the Visual Arts external review in Fall 2013 as well as the 2013 report by the Humanities consultant (Kathleen Woodward), the Gen Ed Board will begin an examination of the strength of the humanities requirements in the Common Curriculum. We will work with faculty in the 'creative arts' as well as the 'Our Shared Humanities' team as they respond to their respective reports. Independently, the Gen Ed Board will systematically examine the humanities general education requirements of our peer schools. As with the LCC review, we want to find out if our

Humanities requirements (HUL and HUM) are meeting their stated goals, whether those goals remain our goals or are consistent given changes in the College's mission and the world at large, or whether we need to develop new goals and requirements; we will particularly consider these questions in light of the 'crisis of the humanities' more generally with an awareness of our responsibility to support, defend, and nurture Humanities in the long-term against current fads and fashions that are destructive. Our review of peer schools will occur during Fall term 2014.

- 7) **Common Curriculum Policies/Procedures/Guidelines/Advisory Memoranda.** The Gen Ed Board adopted one policy consistent with discharging its responsibilities for the program under the governance system: a procedure for the periodic review of Common Curriculum designations assigned to courses (October 2013). The full document can be found at: <http://www.union.edu/offices/gen-ed/program-administration/forms-policies/>