The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Directors of Undergraduate Studies

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, February 26, 2020

1. Around every five years, CLAS reviews the GE CLAS Core requirements to ensure that they are relevant to current students and faculty. A General Education CLAS Core Review Committee was convened in Fall 2019 and has been meeting every other week since then. For a list of members and the committee’s charge, see <https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/faculty-oversight>.
* Helena Dettmer, Chair of the GE CLAS Core Review Committee, summarized the work done to date, with a robust conversation among the DUS members occurring.
* Any final recommendations from the GE Review Committee will be presented to the GE Curriculum Committee (GECC), to the Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (UEPCC), and to the Faculty Assembly (FA) for further discussion. Open forums will also be held to gather feedback from the CLAS community.

So far, the committee has unanimously recommended the addition of an experiential learning GE CLAS Core requirement for all undergraduates in CLAS. The proposed Experiential Learning requirement is modeled on Tippie RISE, a very flexible requirement allowing many related experiences to count but with the experience associated with a course number to track completion on the degree audit. Options will include courses with strong experiential learning components offered by a department as well as study abroad experiences, research projects, internships, and completion of Honors in the Major, for example. Zero credit hour options will be available for students, adding more flexibility. Currently, almost 80% of UI undergraduates complete at least one of these activities before graduation. The DUS agreed that this GE requirement was reasonable and timely.

The GE Review Committee additionally recommended adding a GE Sustainability requirement while also recommending that the Sustainability learning outcomes be flexible and broad so that all disciplines in CLAS and across UI could offer these courses. Sustainability learning goals will most likely be defined in terms of students learning to recognize the interactions of sometimes invisible systems and how these affect each other while causing immense problems, such as global warming. However, neither the GE Review Committee nor the College wants to add credit hours to the existing GE requirements. Students have met with the GE Review Committee, with GECC, and with UEPCC multiple times. Students and UISG members support a requirement in Sustainability but are understandably hesitant about the addition of semester hours. The committee is faced with finding a different solution.

* All current GE requirements are viewed by the committee as essential, and the committee is not recommending a reduction in current GE requirements.
* The committee is considering asking World Languages to reduce credit hours required for completion of each course in a GE language sequence from 5 s.h. per course to 4. s.h. This might be a way to reduced GE hours; unfortunately, it would only affect 40% of undergraduates since 60% of students complete the GE WL requirement in high school; still this might help those students who had not completed the GE WL.
* The committee has also considered a recommendation that would allow a course with Sustainability GE status to apply for and to be approved for a second GE **requirement.** In other words, a student who completed one GE course could count it for two GE requirements, which is currently not allowed. One course may be used by each student for only one requirement. No final recommendations have been made
* The argument for allowing a student to count one course for two GE requirements is based on the fact that sustainability is nested within all areas of study; its intersectionality is profound and does not exist without this connectedness.
* The argument against this is that it well create large enrollment management and administrative issues.

*Background Information*

GE courses are currently approved for two GE **programs**, **Program Two** for students who entered UI before Summer 2017 but after 2011, and **Program Three,** for students who entered UI after Summer 2017. Regardless, this does not mean that students double count one course for more than one requirement since students are only in one program. These two programs exist so that continuing students are not held to new GE requirements. (Program One is the oldest and is slowly being phased out since there are few remaining students in it.)

All CLAS students may apply a completed GE course multiple times toward the completion of requirements for majors, minors, and certificates. This has allowed lower-level gateway courses that students take for exploratory purposes to count toward a minor or second major, for example, and this encourages students to continue study in this new area of interest. This practice also means that a student does not need to take a second lower-level introductory course since this is covered by a GE course. Students who take Calculus I, for example, to fulfill the GE QFR are not be required to take a second calculus course for the major. This system has worked well.

*Enrollment Management Issues*

Students have never been allowed to apply one completed GE course to a second GE requirement. Allowing one GE course to count for two GE requirements could have a large impact on enrollments.

For example, some, if not all, GE Sustainability courses would seek GE status in two areas to attract more students. If a course had GE status in both Historical Perspectives (HP) and Sustainability, students would naturally gravitate to this course as a choice rather than to a HP course without double status; this, in turn, could decrease enrollments in other HP courses lacking “double status” and could result in a surge in GE proposals to gain “double status” as departments feel the need to compete for credit hours.

* The Committee does not want to place departments or programs in the position of competing with each other to maintain or grow credit hours.

*Unintended Consequences*CLAS could limit and manage enrollments so that seats and credit hours would be evenly distributed among other GE requirements and departments. However, this would make the GE proposal process more burdensome while also adding to the burden of advising since advisors would need to help students choose not just the best GE course for a major, minor, and certificate, but also the best double-counted choice.

This might further create an expectation among students that all GE courses should be double-counted for any and all GE requirements, not just Sustainability, resulting in additional complaints and petitions to the College for exceptions to GE requirements.

* The committee has not decided how to resolve this issue but is committed to recommending the addition of a requirement related to Sustainability.
* Suggestions to the committee are welcomed.

*Other GE Changes Suggested*The Review Committee has also recommended that some smaller revisions to the GE requirements be made, with the Diversity and Inclusion requirement moved into the GE section related to communication and literacy. Rhetoric, Interpretation of Literature, and World Languages are also in this section. These courses are generally taken as soon as possible by students entering UI. DI courses can be the most effective if taken within the first year or the first three semesters, if at all feasible given the complexity of some student schedules.

1. The group reviewed the handout from UEPCC about strategies for creating a culture of teaching excellence. The handout will be attached at the DUS website (CLAS>Faculty>DUS).
2. Shaun Vecera next discussed his course “Learning about Learning” and related research in the cognitive sciences that helps students to “learn how to learn.” Please see the attached Power Point on the DUS webpages and contact Shaun Vecera for more information. The course also may be found on the MyUI schedule; it is offered online as an off-cycle course. Consider recommending it for students who report that they are “studying hard and a lot” yet are still struggling to learn. In many cases, students are not using study methods that enhance cognition. This course can help them to achieve their learning goals.
3. Cornelia Lang summarized how the DUS in Physics and Astronomy is helping to support faculty and students in the department while creating infrastructure that will provide continuity during times of transition. Since the DEO and the DUS change frequently, enhancing such stability can help save the departments time and effort. Please contact Cornelia Lang for more information.