Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Faculty Senate, April 26, 2007

The Faculty Senate met on Thursday, April 26, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. in Beatty Center 115 to continue discussion of the proposals on General Education submitted by the Ad-Hoc Committee on General Education. Discussion focused on the motion concerning Goal I.2: “Effective writing and critical reading; oral and visual communication.”

Mark Long (Political Science) made an amendment to strike the words “or speaking-intensive” from the proposal that a required course in literature must be either writing-intensive or speaking-intensive. Mr. Long explained that it looked like other schools tended to have writing-intensive literature courses, that Senate conversations had assumed that a second communication-intensive course would focus on writing, and that we should send a message to students that writing is important. Julia Eichelberger, Chair of the Ad-Hoc Committee, replied that her committee did not consider this a friendly amendment because the motion as written offers more flexibility. Courses in foreign literatures as well as oral interpretation of literature might be more likely to be speaking-intensive than writing-intensive.

Reid Wiseman (At-Large, Biology) said that we have many students go into professional schools for which they have interviews. He believes our courses should not be either/or, but should incorporate both writing and speaking-intensive experiences. He said he was against the amendment for this reason. Hugh Wilder (Philosophy) said he wanted to underscore Mr. Long’s point that if we keep the alternative “or speaking intensive,” students could satisfy the communication-intensive requirement with only one writing-intensive course. He added that earlier, when he made a motion to move the literature course to a different section of the proposal, an argument was made that literature forms a natural pairing with writing. Mr. Wilder urged the Senate to act on this argument and support the amendment. Paul Young (Mathematics) argued that the required literature course didn’t seem to correspond to any of the identifying characteristics under Goal I.2. Ms. Eichelberger replied that the first defining characteristic—“Understand, analyze, and interpret intellectually challenging written texts and oral and visual presentations”—corresponded to the literature course.

The Senate voted to approve Mr. Long’s amendment.

Annalisa Calini (At-Large, Mathematics) made a motion to remand the current motion (the defining characteristics and recommended coursework associated with Goal I.2) back to the Ad-Hoc Committee for further consideration. Ms. Calini’s motion reads as follow:

\textbf{Motion to refer the current motion to the General Education Committee with three mandates.}

I propose to refer the current motion to the General Education Committee with three mandates:
1. Introduce a guaranteed maximum number of general education credits, not significantly above the current 56, with demonstrated reasonable options for any student to stay within this limit.

2. Formulate a concrete proposal on how to deal with the general education requirements for transfer students.

3. Address budget issues related to the Communication Intensive area of the General Education proposal, and design an equitable overall budget and workload plan for the new General Education proposal.

**Rationale for the first mandate:** The current number of required general education credits is already higher than at liberal arts and sciences institutions that we consider our peer or model institutions. Currently, every student at the College of Charleston can satisfy the requirements of general education and a 36-hour major in almost every department, with 30 credits left for electives within their 122 credit hours.

In the worst case scenario of the new General Education proposal, there would only be at most 9 credits left for electives: far too few to meet the needs of a diverse student body. Realistically, many students lacking foreign language skills or aptitudes in a few specific disciplines will require about 68 hours or more to fulfill the new general education mandates. Thus, to go beyond just general education requirements and a minimal major would add financial burdens or unreasonably packed schedules for many students. (Note that, already in the current situation, an average of over 15 credit hours must be completed per semester in order to graduate in four years.)

Introduction of a cap on the maximum number of required general education credits would be in the same spirit as our current 36-hour option in almost every major. Both facilitate an adequate choice of electives and options for minors, needed to accommodate the diverse interests of our students.

**Rationale for the second mandate:** This concern has been raised several times on this floor, and it is not addressed in the proposal. For our large number of transfer students, the issues raised in the rationale for the first mandate are even more severe. This is an important problem and I do not believe that it can be left be worked out by a future committee after a new general education plan is in place.

**Context for the third mandate:** I speak both as a senator and a member of the Budget Committee, where I already voiced my concerns. The set of motions, of which the currently discussed motion is a part, includes a proposal that Communication Intensive Courses be staffed at a different funding level than any other area of general education. (The Freshman Seminar not being a distinct "area" of general education.) The following three conditions are proposed for
Communication Intensive Courses (and uniquely for such courses): 1. Caps of 20 students per section, 2. A guarantee to departments that offer Communication Intensive Courses to not be penalized for the small FTEs; 3. Faculty lines be allocated at the rate of one for a full-time load of 60 students per semester (i.e. three such sections). The last condition appears in the budget section of the proposal.

The issues I would like to be addressed are:

1. Why should Communication Intensive Courses be funded at a different level from other general education courses? Though some Communication Intensive Courses (e.g. writing intensive courses) carry a heavier load for the instructor, others, for example speaking intensive courses or possibly communication intensive courses in the major, might carry a teaching load lighter than average.

2. Several other general education areas would equally benefit from these conditions, for example language courses. Why was no other area identified for this differential treatment?

3. As, regrettably, a finite amount of funds is available, committing half a million dollars to one area of general education would occur at the expense of other areas, or cause further increase in students' tuition. Either way, the proposed allocation is inequitable.

Speaker of the Faculty Bob Mignone ruled Ms. Calini’s motion out of order, stating that the task she wanted the Ad-Hoc Committee to accomplish was impossible because the Committee could not guarantee the requirements of Mandate 1 (to guarantee a maximum number of general education credits not significantly above the current 56) by re-considering only the communication-intensive part of the proposal. The number of hours that the Committee calculated would be necessary for students to meet these new General Education requirements is based on the entire proposal—for instance, extra hours are added in science and potentially in foreign language later in the document.

Darryl Phillips (At-Large, Classics) raised a point of order, stating that it should be acceptable to refer a pending motion back to the committee that brought it forth. Mr. Phillips then challenged Mr. Mignone’s out-of-order ruling. The challenge was seconded and the Senate then began to debate the merits of the challenge.

Scott Peeples (English) spoke in favor of Mr. Mignone’s ruling, arguing that only Mandate 3 of Ms. Calini’s motion deals with the pending motion (the communication-intensive portion of the proposal). The other two mandates, he argued, deal with the entire package. Calvin Blackwell (Economics/Finance) disagreed, arguing that the hours from the other parts of the proposal have not been added yet, thus we should ignore them. Richard Nunan (At-Large, Philosophy) said that, because the proposal involves a lot of effort that was sincerely made, the Senate has the responsibility to try to evaluate the proposal itself in good faith. He reminded Senators that there are a series of amendments
before the Senate that might alter the document quite a bit. What Ms. Calini’s motion asks us to do, he argued, is excuse the Senate from doing our homework on this proposal.

Meg Cormack (Religious Studies) said that Ms. Calini’s motion brings up important issues, but she argued this was not the time to deal with them. She suggested that maybe these mandates could be sent to a new General Education Committee if one is formed. Melissa Hughes (Biology) spoke in favor of the challenge, arguing that, if we were in a normal Senate meeting and a proposal came that had this many questions associated with it, we’d send it back. Larry Krasnoff (guest, Philosophy) argued against the Speaker’s ruling, saying that he believed Ms. Calini’s motion was in order because it says “not significantly above 56,” it does not specifically stipulate 56 hours of general education requirements. Mr. Krasnoff said that it may turn out that this motion binds the committee to withdraw some of its other motions that are pending, but that haven’t been discussed yet.

A vote was taken, and Mr. Phillips’ challenge was successful. Mr. Mignone’s out-of-order ruling was overturned, and the Senate returned to a discussion of Ms. Calini’s motion to refer back to committee.

Ms. Eichelberger said that the Ad-Hoc Committee on General Education was going to be dissolved very soon. She also said that the current committee would not understand what would constitute satisfying the 3 mandates because, in the view of committee members, the current proposal addresses these issues as much as they feel they can address them. There is a budget and a workload plan already, Ms. Eichelberger said, and the committee already feels their plan is equitable.

Calvin Blackwell then pointed out that, in his view, a problem with the current proposal is that it does not specify what is being replaced. He wondered what it would mean if the Senate voted to approve the foreign language requirement but not the communication-intensive requirement, or if we voted to approve the science courses but not the writing-intensive courses. He wondered what the general education curriculum would look like in such a case. Darryl Phillips spoke in favor of the motion to refer back to committee as well, arguing that a majority vote was needed to send this to committee or to approve or disapprove it. This evidence, he argued, shows that Ms. Calini’s motion is a sincere effort to make the proposal better. He added that Ms. Hughes’ point about the number of questions associated with the proposal and the amount of time we’ve spent on it suggests we’re not dealing with a coherent, well-vetted proposal.

Kay Smith, Associate Vice-President for the Academic Experience, said that she would like to formulate a concrete proposal on how to deal with general education for transfer students. But in some cases, she said, these decisions must be delayed until some sort of curriculum is approved. Her office has to know more fully what they’re dealing with before they can specific make decisions.

Richard Nunan argued that Mr. Blackwell’s point about the proposal not specifying what gets replaced is a red herring because this is a simple matter for the Senate to take care
— in the event that certain parts don’t pass, we could make motions to go back to the status quo, he said. Mr. Nunan added that he thought we should be voting on each motion on its merits instead of engaging in “parliamentary shenanigans” to get rid of the whole thing. He referred to a statement made by Mr. Phillips earlier, that there would be further motions to refer back to committee on every motion to be introduced. Mr. Nunan argued that this was an attempt to kill the entire proposal rather than discussing its merits.

Paul Young (Mathematics) said that he supported Ms. Calini’s third mandate because he doesn’t think the proposed budget is equitable. Mr. Young said that he was also concerned about the impact on space—where will we get classrooms to teach all the communication-intensive courses that have caps of 20 students, he asked. He suggested a friendly amendment to Ms. Calini’s motion that she also ask the committee to address “budget and space” issues. Ms. Calini accepted this as friendly amendment.

Doryjane Birrer (English) objected to the idea that this proposal is not well thought out or thoroughly vetted. How could the process have been conducted done more thoroughly, she asked. Ms. Birrer also argued against the view that this part of the proposal significantly increases the number of hours associated with general education. We already require a freshman composition course and a literature-based writing course, as the proposal recommends. The third communication-intensive course may be in any discipline, and the fourth would be in the student’s major. These additional requirements are not as constraining as people seem to be claiming they are, she said.

Erin Buetel (Geology) argued that, while each of these sections is really good and well thought-out and brings something wonderful to general education, the problem is that the pieces don’t necessarily all come together as a cohesive whole. Because we are looking at the proposal piecemeal, she said, we can’t discuss certain important things. Those in favor of Ms. Calini’s motion are not trying to derail the proposal, she added.

At this point, Mr. Mignone interceded to remind Senators that someone could move to suspend the rules and consider the entire package as a whole, if he or she wished.

Larry Krasnoff then said that, after having argued that Ms. Calini’s motion was in order, he was going to speak against it. He argued that Ms. Calini’s three different mandates don’t go together. He agreed with Ms. Eichelberger that the Ad-Hoc Committee presumably thinks the budget is already equitable. The way to accomplish this mandate, he said, is to defeat the writing-intensive motion. In addition, he argued that the issue of transfer students has come up in every motion—the Senate has been discussing this issue all along. As for the first mandate, Mr. Krasnoff said he thought it was reasonable to ask for a maximum number of hours across the board. The people who want that mandate in particular should come back with a motion to that effect, he argued. But he urged Senators to vote against Ms. Calini’s motion because it lumps too much together.

Deanna Caveny (At-Large, Mathematics) spoke in favor of the motion to refer back to committee because she thinks mandates 1 and 3 are very important. Scott Peeples (English) spoke against the motion. First, he said that thinking of the proposal as
requiring a stable number of required hours was misguided. Under the proposal, students would have to go out of their way not to double-dip for credit hours. The plan does not call for \( x \) number of hours, but calls for a different number of hours for different students. Second, Mr. Peeples said that if we send this proposal back, a different committee will consider it. We’ll basically be saying, “we don’t like it, bring us something new,” and we’ll probably say that again when we see a proposal from a new committee. This seems like irresponsible behavior on the part of the Senate.

Reid Wiseman then said he didn’t understand why we should equivocate about 4, 8, or 12 extra hours as if it were a punitive, regressive measure to ask our students to be engaged in more general education. Terry Bowers (English) said that if, at the end of our debate, people think there are real problems that need to be worked out by committee, that would be the time to task the committee with working out more precise details. Ms. Calini’s motion, he argued, short-circuits the process and is ill-timed. We’re not going to get any type of general education reform if we approve motions such as this. Deanna Caveny said that the Senate should be discussing the content of Ms. Calini’s motion and the content of the larger motion from the Ad-Hoc Committee rather than whether this is the proper time for such motions. Everyone here has the appropriate objective of having a better general education proposal, she argued. It is disrespectful of Senators to talk about the motives behind motions. In addition, she said that there would be less double-counting available in some majors than in others. Some majors have more hours, a more vertical progression. The Ad-Hoc Committee’s proposal could also harm the many students who come in with AP credit, she argued, because they might not be able to do as much double-counting. Ms. Eichelberger, referring to an earlier comment by Erin Beutel, that the proposal needed to have a consistent vision, argued that the goals approved by the Senate are the vision that has guided the committee.

Calvin Blackwell then moved to suspend the rules and consider the entire package all at once. (A motion to suspend the rules requires a 2/3 super-majority vote.) A vote was taken, and the Senate did not vote to suspend the rules.

Deanna Caveny then called the question on Ms. Calini’s motion to refer back to committee. The Senate approved calling the question. Ms. Calini’s motion failed.

Discussion then turned back to the main motion concerning Goal I.2. Richard Nunan said that one thing that he’s noticed about this motion is that there’s an assumption among Senators that students would satisfy these requirements early in their careers. This may be true for freshman composition, he said, and it used to be true for English 102. He then asked whether English 102 would continue to exist under this proposal. Ms. Eichelberger said that English 102 is not a requirement of this proposal. Currently, English 101 could most likely satisfy the proposal’s freshman composition requirement. English 102 would probably not continue to be offered because it would not precisely fit the way the new writing and literature course is proposed. Under this proposal, every department could reassess their own courses, put them forward to count. The English Department, might, for instance, go to topical literature courses rather than English 102. That’s a decision the English Department will have to make. Mr. Nunan said that the fact
that this course might be effectively replacing English 102 could be a convincing argument to the administration to keep a 20-student cap on it. But he said that the same argument couldn’t be made to the administration about having a 20-student cap for a speaking-intensive course. He worries that this will be too expensive, so we’ll wind up counting courses that have some writing or speaking component in them now for the other required courses in this part of the proposal. In that case, we would be creating a rather large bureaucracy for no great outcome. Ms. Eichelberger said that many other universities that have similar communication-intensive requirements do offer a large number of courses across disciplines. Currently, about 50% of students already take a public speaking class. So this might not be as expensive or difficult to implement as it might seem. In addition, if a requirement turns into an unfunded mandate, a future General Education Committee could alter such a requirement.

Darryl Phillips then proposed a friendly amendment, which was accepted, to insert the words “which will replace the current requirement for English 101 and 102” in number 3 on p. 19 of the Proposal. The sentence will now read:

3. The four required communication-intensive courses, which will replace the current requirement for English 101 and 102, must including the following.

Erin Beutel (Geology) said that she was concerned that certain classes that have a great amount of content cannot meet the requirements to be writing-intensive courses, if these requirements include significant revision and that a significant part of the grade be based on writing. Ms. Eichelberger replied that the Proposal doesn’t spell out precise requirements for Communication Across the Curriculum; these will be developed later and will be brought to the Senate for approval by a CAC Committee. In addition, she said that the communication-intensive requirement in the major needn’t be met by a single course. It can be met by an instructional sequence that spans a number of courses.

Calvin Blackwell (Economics/Finance), responding to a comment made by Mr. Nunan earlier about parliamentary shenanigans, said that if he has a problem with this proposal, it’s his obligation to use every tool to get the proposal he thinks is best, so he will continue to use parliamentary tactics to do so. He added that, in his view, the proposal could be simpler. Why not just keep English 101 and 102, he asked, and then have students take another writing-intensive course and another communication-intensive course. He doesn’t like the idea of telling departments what to do in their majors. An overly complicated general education requirement that forces students to come to advisors for help figuring it out does not foster independence. The details of this proposal are bad, he said.

Darryl Phillips then argued that this proposal actually reduces the writing requirements placed on freshman when a problem is that freshman don’t write often enough. He would like to see two writing-intensive courses required during the freshman year. Mike Duvall (English), pointing out that he was the one that had pulled up the responses of CofC students on a national survey at a prior meeting, said that data showed that CofC seniors, compared to seniors at other colleges, reported an even lower number of writing
assignments and reported feeling even less challenged by their coursework than CofC freshmen did, when compared with freshmen at other institutions. This proposal, he argued, spreads writing instruction out over the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years. In addition, there is flexibility in the proposal in terms of an instructional sequence that can be used to fill the writing-intensive requirement within majors. Mr. Duvall added that he’s worked in Writing-Across-the-Curriculum programs at other schools—the writing done in disciplines in such programs is completely driven by course content, he said. Such programs work well at other places.

Pete Calcagno (Economics/Finance) said that we keep referring to peer institutions and what’s being done elsewhere. He likes the idea of writing-intensive courses, but he wondered whether the peer institutions have English 101 and 102 and another writing-intensive course or some other model. Ms. Eichelberger replied that many different models are used at other schools. Some have a single freshman writing class, then a junior-level writing-intensive class in the major. Some have more than one WI course for freshmen; some have more than one course after freshman year. There is not a single model that is used more than another. But the thinking behind these programs is that students gain more by having writing instruction spread out over their college careers.

Scott Peeples (English) said that what we have in the proposal now is pretty simple: a freshman composition course, a writing-intensive literature course, a speaking-intensive course, and a communication-intensive course in the major. Ms. Eichelberger said that Mr. Peeples was almost right. But if a student had a speaking-intensive course in the major, then a third course could be writing-intensive.

Jack Parson (Political Science) asked if the writing-intensive literature course in the Proposal is equivalent to English 102. He asked, as well, whether this course would have to be offered in a department that does literary studies. Ms. Eichelberger replied that any department could propose such a course, but it would most likely be a literature department that would do so. Carol Toris (Psychology) asked if all four communication-intensive courses would consist of 3 credit hours. Ms. Eichelberger said that the course in the major doesn’t have credit hours attached to it, but that the other three would be 3 credit hour courses. Pete Calcagno asked whether students taking only English 101 and another writing-intensive course would be fully prepared to take upper-level English courses without having had English 102. Ms. Eichelberger said the writing-intensive literature course in the proposal would take the place of English 102, and that the English Department would have to decide what prerequisites to install for their 300-level courses.

Paul Young then moved to amend the motion by eliminating number 3e on p. 19. Hugh Wilder added a friendly amendment to remove number 3f as well. The requirements that would be eliminated under Mr. Young’s amendment read as follows:

e. A fourth approved communication-intensive class or instructional sequence within the major. If departments choose, this course or sequence may be the same as the one in which students receive instruction in gathering and using information in the major (described in Proposal I.1).
f. An “instructional sequence” within a major may be composed of multiple courses that provide sufficient communication instruction to the student who takes them all. A set of linked courses (such as a Learning Community or a minor) may also be classified as communication-intensive if the combined courses provide enough instruction to satisfy the criteria.

Doryjane Birrer (English) said that she was “stymied” as to why we would want to decrease the chances that our students leave with effective writing skills by removing a requirement that writing be done in the discipline, especially in light of Mr. Duvall’s sharing of the statistics that seniors are even less challenged in terms of their writing than other students at the College are. David Gentry (At-Large, Psychology) said that some of the reasons for this amendment might be that majors do not have sufficient time to fill the requirement, that courses are overly full, and that the requirement might require substantive changes in the major.

Deanna Caveny (At-Large, Mathematics) said that what her department does in terms of writing might be substantively different from what a CAC Committee might want. The content in Mathematics is so dense that students are not going to be writing five-page papers, but half-page proofs, and the revising process might be different as well. The problem, she argued, is that the details of what counts as writing-intensive aren’t in the proposal. She said she feels her students write a lot, but that their writing looks different from writing done in other disciplines. Ms. Eichelberger said that criteria would be developed so that every discipline would work with writing as it exists in their discipline. In addition, a committee would have to come back with criteria for Senate approval.

Mr. Young said that his main reason for moving to delete 3e is because he doesn’t want this committee—which doesn’t yet exist—to have power over what courses are taught in majors. He doesn’t want to be put in a position where he can’t teach 30 students in a class and has to tell 10 of them “to take a hike.” Ms. Eichelberger said that the cap of 20 students in communication-intensive courses doesn’t apply to the requirement within majors. Mr. Young said that he believes it does, according to his reading of the document. Norine Noonan, Dean of the School of Science and Mathematics, said that she thinks this requirement is somewhat deterministic. It assumes the majors don’t know what they’re doing. The proof, she argued, is “in the pudding”—do our graduates get jobs, are they successful in professional schools? If that’s happening, we don’t need to revisit our requirements. She said she doesn’t want to institute a requirement where others have power over majors.

Doryjane Birrer said that, while she can’t speak to all possible permutations of communication-intensive courses in majors, she previously taught at an institution with requirements similar to those being proposed here. The job of Communication-Across-the-Curriculum programs is to work with departments to develop writing assignments that are geared toward integrating course content. This doesn’t necessarily mean long assignments. Revising can be done on short pieces as well as long pieces.
At this point, a vote was taken on Mr. Young’s amendment. The Senate voted in favor of the amendment.

Richard Nunan then moved to amend section 3c of the Proposal by removing the language in red:

… Courses must also explore a significant quantity of literary works (at least five full-length prose works or three volumes of verse), must analyze ways these texts employ language imaginatively and artistically to create multiple levels of meaning, and must explore the ways some of these texts have been interpreted by literary critics.

Mr. Nunan reminded Senators that he had made an earlier amendment to move 3c to a different part of the proposal. That amendment failed, so the literature requirement is staying in the communication-intensive part of the Proposal. He said if the idea is to encourage departments other than English to teach literature in a writing-intensive way and make such courses available to students, he doesn’t want to preclude other departments from using their own disciplinary approach rather than literary theory. Paul Young said that a problem with this course is that what counts as literature is encoded in this document while committees will determine what counts as writing-intensive and speaking-intensive. Larry Krasnoff (guest, Philosophy) then asked whether students currently are required to read criticism in English 102. Ms. Eichelberger said “yes,” although she added that “there’s criticism and there’s criticism.” She would never have her English 102 students read Derrida, for instance, but they might read an interpretation of a story or a play. Kay Smith said that there seems to be a difference between using literature to teach something else like political theory and using literature to teach literature. Mark Long (Political Science) then asked whether the proposed course was about literature or about writing. Ms. Eichelberger replied that it’s a course that studies literature and writing. Jim Newhard (Classics) spoke in favor of the amendment, saying that even within one department, people have different focuses in teaching literature. Larry Krasnoff spoke in favor of the amendment as well. He said that it would be a problem if this requirement is taken so seriously so that a course like a political science course on utopian literature wouldn’t be allowed (such a course, he acknowledged, is taught by his wife). There are plenty of courses in an English Department, he argued, that take a cultural studies approach that wouldn’t count either, under the present language.

Discussion ended, and the Senate voted to approve Mr. Nunan’s amendment.

The Senate returned to discussion of the main motion as amended. Hugh Wilder suggested some further minor changes in the motion for consistency (these changes are reflected in Appendix 1, where the entire amended motion is reproduced).

Darryl Phillips asked that the entire motion as amended be read out loud. This was done, and Senators were assured that the amended motion would be posted to the Senate website.
Calvin Blackwell then moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion to adjourn failed. Several Senators then called for a quorum count. It was determined that the Senate had a quorum.

Darryl Phillips then argued that the entire motion that we’d been debating (concerning Goal I.2) was out of order. *Robert’s Rules* says this qualifies as, technically, an “absurd motion,” Mr. Phillips argued, because we’re referring something to a committee that does not exist. Mr. Mignone ruled against Mr. Phillips’ point-of-order, stating that he would interpret the main motion as being in order. Mr. Phillips then challenged the Speaker’s ruling. Larry Krasnoff argued against the challenge, saying that this kind of challenge would be crippling to the entire General Education reform process. He urged Senators to defeat it. Mr. Phillips said that if this motion is ruled out of order, as he believes it is, we could defer the work we’ve already done on it, and remove a formal vote from the process until later when we form a CAC committee.

Meg Cormack (Religious Studies) argued that if we wait much longer to vote, we’ll forget what we decided. We should vote now before we lose a quorum, she said. She then called the question on Mr. Phillips’ challenge. The Senate voted in favor of calling the question. Mr. Phillips’s challenge was defeated.

At this point, because a few additional Senators had left, there were calls for another quorum count. The Speaker determined that the Senate no longer had a quorum, and the meeting was adjourned.
Appendix 1.

General Education Motion Concerning Goal I.2: “Effective writing and critical reading; oral and visual communication”

Please note that this version of the motion reflects all amendments as of April 27, 2007.
--Postponed items appear in blue (these items address the formation of a CAC Committee and have been postponed until the end of the agenda, when the Senate discusses the formation of a General Education Committee.
--Added items appear in red.
--Deleted items have been struck through.

I.2a. The General Education Committee proposes the following as the defining characteristics of the second sub-goal.

Effective writing and critical reading; oral and visual communication

a. Students should be able to

• Understand, analyze, and interpret intellectually challenging written texts and oral and visual presentations
• Use writing and speaking to increase their own understanding of a topic and to communicate their point of view persuasively
• Strengthen written and spoken work through the process of drafting, revising, and editing
• Create formal papers and public presentations that are appropriate for the situation and audience
• Produce well-organized papers and public presentations that convey substantive information and that conform to the conventions of edited American English
• Interpret visual images and employ images to communicate ideas and concepts

b. Students should complete rigorous writing and speaking assignments and receive significant feedback on their work in first-year courses and in other courses throughout their college career.

I.2b. The Committee proposes the formation of a faculty committee, known as the Communication Across the Curriculum Committee, to oversee this aspect of general education. This committee will be a subcommittee of the General Education Committee (see “Committee Proposal”).

1. Composition of the committee: 5 voting faculty. 3 are also members of the General Education committee; 2 are the chairs (or chairs’ designees) of the departments of English and Communication.

2. A Director (or co-directors) of Communication Across the Curriculum, appointed by the Provost, will serve as a non-voting, ex officio member of the committee. The director or directors must possess appropriate expertise in communication instruction and must be teaching writing-intensive or speaking-intensive courses.

3. Duties of the committee:

a. Evaluate requests to designate a course or sequence as writing intensive (WI) or speaking intensive (SI).

b. Initiate, review and recommend changes to CAC policies and programs.

c. Work with the Assessment Committee and Office of Assessment to assess CAC program.

d. Support and advise the Director of CAC in training faculty who teach writing-
intensive (WI) and speaking-intensive (SI) courses, in guiding student mentors assigned to WI and SI courses, and in other areas of CAC administration.

4. The Committee will forward all recommendations for course designations and for changes to the CAC program to the General Education committee and to the Faculty Senate.

1.2c The Committee proposes that each student be required to complete four three communication-intensive courses or instructional sequences, as described below, to meet this sub-goal.

1. The CAC committee will use the defining characteristics of “effective writing and critical reading; oral and visual communication” (proposal 1.2a) to evaluate course proposals for writing-intensive (WI) and speaking-intensive (SI) courses. Since these criteria are still very general, the CAC committee will also develop more detailed criteria for WI and SI courses, according to the following suggested guidelines. These criteria must be approved by the General Education Committee and by the Faculty Senate.

   a. Assignments in WI or SI courses shall require students to demonstrate understanding of the course content and/or academic research; all such assignments have the dual goals of improving the students’ communication skills and of advancing the other learning objectives of the course.

   b. Students must generate a significant quantity of written communication or oral/visual communication. The amount of writing or speaking will be determined and published by the CAC committee.

   c. A WI- or SI-designated course must include several opportunities for individualized feedback by the instructor and revision by the student. Some of the writing or speaking may be informal in nature, but at least half of the assignments should be presented formally, in accordance with the conventions of an academic discipline, and/or in a format suitable for an academic or professional audience.

   d. A significant portion of the course grade (to be determined by the CAC committee) must be based on the quality of the student’s work in either writing or speaking.

2. Once these criteria have been established, courses may be approved as WI or SI if their department demonstrates that they meet the criteria. Departments will submit proposals for individual courses to the CAC committee, furnishing course descriptions and other evidence that this course meets the criteria.

3. The four three required communication-intensive courses, which will replace the current requirement for English 101 and 102, must include the following.

   a. During the student’s first year, one composition course (a writing-intensive course devoted to academic writing).

   b. At least one speaking-intensive course, which may also be a literature course (described in c, below) or a course in the student’s major.

   c. One course in literature, a rich and creative form of verbal communication. Courses satisfying this requirement must also be either writing-intensive or speaking intensive. Courses must also explore a significant quantity of literary works (at least five full-length prose works or three volumes of verse), must analyze ways these texts employ language imaginatively and artistically to create multiple levels of meaning, and must explore the ways some of these texts have been interpreted by literary critics. Departments wishing to have courses approved for satisfying this requirement will
submit proposals to the CAC committee, furnishing course descriptions and other evidence that the course fulfills these criteria for a literature course as well as the criteria for a communication-intensive course.

d. A third approved communication-intensive class in any discipline.

e. A fourth approved communication-intensive class or instructional sequence within the major. If departments choose, this course or sequence may be the same as the one in which students receive instruction in gathering and using information in the major (described in Proposal I.1).

f. An “instructional sequence” within a major may be composed of multiple courses that provide sufficient communication instruction to the student who takes them all. A set of linked courses (such as a Learning Community or a minor) may also be classified as communication-intensive if the combined courses provide enough instruction to satisfy the criteria.

g. Communication instruction within the major should include both writing and speaking instruction, although a department may emphasize one mode more than another.

4. Students will may select two to four examples of work completed in these required courses to be uploaded within their online record (as described in “Online Record Proposal”). These work samples may be used for institutional assessment, and students may choose to display them when applying for employment or graduate school admission.

5. Writing- or speaking-intensive classes will have no more than 20 students, and departments offering such courses shall not be penalized for any adverse impact on their department’s Delaware Study target number. If a communication-intensive sequence is designed by a major department, the caps of 20 are not required for all courses in the sequence.

6. A course’s designation as WI or SI is dependent on the faculty member who teaches it as well as on its curriculum. For a section of a course to be so designated, its instructor must undergo formal training in communication instruction. If a previously approved WI or SI course is later taught by another faculty member who has not received this training, that faculty member’s sections of the course will not satisfy a communication-intensive requirement.

7. Formal training in communication instruction for approved courses will be offered at a time convenient to faculty members (either during a summer institute or at some other convenient time), and faculty completing this training will receive a stipend for their time.

8. The College will provide additional support for faculty who teach WI and SI courses, such as pedagogical workshops during the academic year and, when appropriate, student mentors trained to provide supplemental instruction in particular courses.

Rationale: This new requirement recognizes that students need a higher level of research and communication skills than they can acquire through the current writing requirement (English 101 and 102 in the first year). The Ad Hoc Committee has heard this need expressed repeatedly by individual departments, by faculty participating in the 2005 Faculty Forum, and at many other meetings across campus. There is a clear consensus that many College of Charleston students still need further instruction in research, writing and speaking by the time they enroll in upper-level courses.
The present requirement of English 101 and 102, which focuses mainly on writing and not speaking, and which “front-loads” communication instruction in the first year, cannot equip students with all the communication skills that they will need throughout college. Confining such instruction to a single department makes the problem worse, since students may construe writing and speaking as minimal, quantifiable skills (an ability to proofread written work, a willingness to speak in public) that they should “get out of the way” and never develop further. However, writing and speaking are complex intellectual tasks that require students to deploy many different skills at once. The more complex the course material becomes, the more challenging, and the more dependent on disciplinary conventions, the communication becomes. Interpreting aural and visual information also becomes more challenging as a student attempts to navigate more complex information and concepts.

Students will learn and retain more of a course’s content through doing more and better writing and speaking on this material; moreover, students who do more of this writing and speaking over their whole college career will have more lasting, or “transferable,” abilities and intellectual perspectives after they finish here. Strong communication skills are a hallmark of a liberal arts and sciences education, and they make our graduates more effective in absolutely any field.

While some departments are already delivering excellent research and communication instruction to their majors and in their General Education courses, other faculty are less familiar with teaching these skills and may not yet be able to deliver this labor-intensive instruction alongside other teaching demands. Therefore we recognize that the following requirements can only be implemented over a period of time and that they will be more expensive to staff. We recommend forming a CAC committee as soon as possible to develop a strategic plan for developing and approving communication-intensive courses.