

UC 9169 06F

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To: Undergraduate Council

From: Sarah Fishman, Martha Haun co-chairs, Core Committee

Meetings Oct 11, Nov 8 2006. Members present at one or both meetings: Martha Haun, Sarah Fishman, Betty Barr, Kyne Homerstad, Natalie Houston, Richard Kasschau, Matthew Nicol, Laurence Rapp, George Trail

The Core Committee met twice to grapple with the issue of assessing student learning in the Core/ general education for purposes of satisfying both the Coordinating Board and SACS. We have considered a variety of ways the university might undertake that assessment, including standardized testing, embedding questions in senior level exams in every department, and collecting student work generated for courses over their careers that the university can use to assess core competencies in a variety of areas. The Core Committee is strongly considering the final option. In addition, to continue the process of assessment that began with undergraduate writing, the Core Committee would like to ask that the university begin the process of assessing a key competency, critical thinking. Before moving ahead to any formal recommendations for a vote however, the Core Committee would like to get input, ideas, suggestions and recommendations from the full Council.

Our work has narrowed to two broad areas:

- Recommending that the University develop or purchase an electronic system that would function as a repository of student work generated in core courses and in courses in the major. Student learning in the Core (General Education) across a variety of competencies could then be based on sampling and assessing the materials stored in the repository. For example, future assessments of undergraduate student writing would be able to sample student papers in the repository rather than having to collect those papers each time. Likewise for critical thinking and quantitative reasoning. In addition to responses to using this to assess our Core, we would like ideas from the Council about the kinds of student work such a repository might collect. (examples, students could be required to upload one paper written for English 1304, one paper written for a Core Humanities course, an assignment completed for a Science, Math or Math Reasoning course, a writing assignment from a 3000 level course in the major...)
- One way to start the process of assessing critical thinking would be to survey our faculty to determine what aspects of critical thinking we consider important. Faculty can be asked to fill in a quick electronic survey. An ad hoc committee would be assembled to compile the information, which would then be used to determine how to assess the student work, and even what kind of student work should be assessed. A SAMPLE of what such a survey might look like is attached to this report.

Once again, we are asking for discussion/ideas and input. We hope to use that input to make some formal recommendations to the UC early in the spring.