

## Core Curriculum Category B Assessment Committee

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### Memorandum

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To: The Curriculum Committee  
From: The Core Curriculum Council  
Subject: Recommendations for Changes in Category B to Enhance Student Learning  
Date: 25 January 2000

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The Category B Assessment Committee has conducted student surveys for the past two years and faculty surveys this year. As a result of these surveys, evaluations of syllabi, a faculty focus group, and numerous interviews and discussions with faculty teaching Category B classes we offer the following recommendations concerning:

- Category Goals
- Enrollment Caps
- Fieldtrips and Off-Campus Activities
- Teaching Materials
- Course Syllabi
- Computer Resources
- Wellness and Nutrition
- University Museum or Gallery
- USI Website
- Outside Speakers

### Category Goals

#### Wording for B1

Previous copy:

B1. The ability to make informed, intelligent ethical judgments

Students should recognize their ethical and moral obligations to others and their responsibility to contribute to the common good. They should be able to recognize issues involved in moral dilemmas, identify and question underlying assumptions, and learn how others have resolved such matters.

Recommended new copy:

B1. The ability to make informed, intelligent ethical judgments

Students should enhance their understanding of their ethical obligations to others and their responsibility to contribute to the common good. They should be able to articulate

important ethical issues and to identify alternative positions on those issues (including the grounds of those positions). They should also develop or refine their own ethical viewpoints and be able to defend them.

#### Wording for B2

Previous copy:

B2. The ability to make informed, sensitive responses to the arts

Students should engage in significant encounters with the fine, performing, and literary arts. They should be encouraged to develop appropriate means of interpreting a painting, a play, or a poem, and they should discover ways in which works of art invoke ideas and feelings.

Recommended new copy:

B2. The ability to respond thoughtfully to the arts

Students should enhance their understanding of the fine, performing, or literary arts. They should begin to develop means of interpreting works of art and understanding ways in which such works express ideas and evoke feelings.

### **Enrollment Caps**

We recommend a consistent enrollment cap of 35 students for all Category B classes. **In order to accomplish this goal, we recommend that the Director of the UCC work with the Vice Presidents, the Deans, and the Office Of Institutional Research to develop a strategic plan for hiring more fulltime faculty and adjuncts. The Strategic Plan should estimate the number of fulltime faculty and adjuncts who will be needed in order to reduce class size to 35 (or to a size which is practical given the University's projected ability to acquire the necessary resources). The Plan should also estimate the costs of hiring additional staff and project how many additional staff members will be hired in each of the next ten years. In addition, the plan should specify how resources are to be acquired to implement the plan. In order to insure that the Plan is made available to the University community prior to the start of the 2001-2002 budget deliberations, we recommend that the Strategic Plan be completed by November 1, 2001.**

Rationale: Over 60% of students surveyed said that their ability to learn has been hampered by class overcrowding at least once in a UCC course. Over 30% of UCC faculty surveyed express concerns about how the enrollment caps in their courses promote UCC goals and facilitate important writing assignments. These concerns are especially pronounced in courses with a cap of 60 or more students such as Philosophy 200, Philosophy 201 and Art 201. To encourage better teaching and learning, especially with regard to writing assignments, we urge a 35 enrollment cap in all Category B courses.

## **Fieldtrips and Off-Campus Activities**

The University should provide more resources for field trips and other off-campus activities **that** enhance student learning in Category B courses; such encouragement depends on significantly increased funding for these activities. **Specifically, we recommend that the Director of the UCC conduct a survey in order to determine the type, number, and cost of off-campus activities desired by faculty teaching courses in Category B. Upon completion of the survey, the Director of the UCC should work with other University administrators to develop a plan for annual funding off-campus activities. The Committee recommends that funding for off-campus activities be a line item in the UCC budget. Decisions regarding the disbursement of funds should be made by the UCC Council. The Director of the UCC should be the fiscal agent. In order to insure that the Plan is made available to the University community prior to the start of the 2001-2002 budget deliberations, we recommend that a plan for annual funding of off-campus activities be completed by November 1, 2001.**

Rationale: Close to 50% of students surveyed felt off-campus events and trips significantly enhanced their learning in Category B classes, however 50% of the faculty felt that funding for fieldtrips was inadequate.

## **Teaching Materials**

The University must allot additional funds and resources for photocopying; creating slides, maps, transparencies, websites, CD-ROMs; purchasing or making videotapes; and developing other learning materials to support Category B courses. **Specifically, we recommend that the Director of the UCC oversee an audit of existing learning materials and identify individual faculty members' specific needs. The Director of the UCC should work with other University administrators to develop a plan to increase annual funding for learning materials. In order to insure that the Plan is made available to the University community prior to the start of the 2001-2002 budget deliberations, we recommend that a funding plan be completed by November 1, 2001.**

Rationale: When surveyed, less than 50% of the faculty felt the funding for creating new teaching materials was adequate.

## **Course Syllabi**

After studying course syllabi, the committee recommends that all Category B course syllabi include the core-curriculum goal met by the course and a clear explanation of how that course meets the goal.

Rationale: Over 40% of students surveyed did not feel that UCC courses make the goals of the courses clear and 43% of students responding did not understand the connection of UCC courses to their education.

## **Computer Resources**

We recommend the University create more computer labs and provide a larger variety of software for student and faculty use. We also encourage more frequent and regular workshops to instruct faculty in new advancements in computer technology and the use of that technology in the classroom setting. We further urge the hiring of student workers to assist individual faculty with the integration of new technology in classroom and professional presentations.

**Specifically, we recommend that each academic year the Director of the UCC oversee an audit of existing software, workshops, and student worker support. Each academic year the Director of the UCC should identify individual faculty members' specific needs for software, workshops, and student worker support. The Director of the UCC should work with other University administrators to develop a plan to provide additional, annual funding for software, workshops, and student worker support. In order to insure that a funding plan is made available to the University community prior to the start of the 2001-2002 budget deliberations, we recommend that a funding plan be completed by November 1, 2001.**

Rationale: Over 50% of the faculty surveyed seldom or never utilize computer technology in their UCC classes. Thirty-six percent of the responding faculty feel that the computer resources available to their students are inadequate in meeting the needs of their UCC Category B classes.

## **Wellness and Nutrition**

The Committee **recommends that the Director of the UCC oversee a study of existing campus policies and practices which effect students' ability to follow food-pyramid guidelines. Possible policies might include, but need not be limited to, vending machine offerings. In the event a study indicates policies and practices are inadequate, the Director of the UCC should work with University administrators to improve policies and practices. The Committee recommends that the study be completed by May 1, 2001.**

Rationale: Most students surveyed (24% never, 30% seldom) report they follow the food-pyramid guidelines less than half the time.

## **University Museum or Gallery**

We recommend creation of a university museum or gallery for modern, contemporary, student and faculty art. . **Specifically, we recommend that the Director of the UCC work with other University administrators to develop a strategic plan for the creation of a university museum or gallery. The strategic plan should include information on location, design, costs, and specific strategies for funding. The Committee recommends that the strategic plan be completed by May 1, 2001.**

Rationale: Of students surveyed, 57% report that they have not visited an art gallery in the past year. Because USI lacks an art gallery or museum to exhibit works by modern or contemporary artists our students usually cannot experience such art. We clearly **cannot** assess our students' understanding of experiences they do not have, nor can students evaluate accurately their own understanding of such art.

## **USI Website**

The committee recommends that the **Director of the UCC work with appropriate University officials to ensure that** events which might be of interest and involve Category B faculty and students **are prominently displayed on appropriate websites. Events should be listed in a timely manner** (at least 30 to 60 days ahead). **Sites should** be updated regularly.

Rationale: The USI website still carries a 1998 calendar, is rarely updated, contains little timely useful information, and is difficult to navigate. We urge that the website include important and timely information.

## **Expert Speakers from Off Campus**

We recommend that the University significantly enhance funding to bring expert speakers to campus and that faculty lead workshops to help prepare other faculty to make use of such speakers and topics in their UCC courses. We suggest that various Schools coordinate their efforts. For example, the School of Liberal Arts might amplify some events already occurring regularly (e.g., visiting artists and writers) and then add others (e.g., a visiting composer, musician, filmmaker, choreographer). Moreover, the School of Education might bring experts in wellness, fitness, and nutrition (e.g., an athlete, a dietitian, a yogi, a dancer). The preparatory faculty workshops would occur the semester before the speaker comes to campus and would be led by faculty in that particular discipline. Follow-up public events should occur in the weeks after symposia or public discussions whereby those stimulated by the speaker might converse and enhance their appreciation for the topic and discipline.

**The Director of the UCC should work with other University administrators to develop a plan for increasing annual funding for speakers relevant to UCC goals. The Director of the UCC should also seek to acquire the necessary resources (e.g., funding, release time) for faculty leading workshops. In addition, the Director of the UCC should work with other appropriate administrators to recruit speakers and coordinate the efforts of the various Schools. In order to insure that the Plan is made available to the University community prior to the start of the 2001-2002 budget deliberations, we recommend that a plan for annual funding of speakers (and faculty leading workshops) be completed by November 1, 2001.**

Rationale: Discussions with students and faculty and review of existing practices led to this recommendation.