

Minutes for the **Carolina Core Committee Meeting**
February 9, 2016, 12:30 – 2:00 pm
Thomas Cooper Library, Room 204

Members Present:

Joseph Askins, Susan Beverung, Mary Ann Byrnes, Kenneth Campbell, Rob Dedmon, Helen Doerpinghaus (Administrative Co-Chair), Kris Finnigan (ex-officio), Andy Gillentine, August Grant (ex-officio), Manton Matthews, Alfred Moore, Chris Nesmith, Joe Rackers (Faculty Co-Chair), Nicole Spensley (ex-officio)

Members Absent:

Pam Bowers (ex-officio), Sara Corwin, Ron Cox, Daniel Freedman, Brian Habing, James Kellogg, Kathleen Kirasic (ex-officio), Gene Luna, Brian Shelton, Kimberly Simmons

Specialty Team Chairs Present:

Pat Gehrke, David Hitchcock, Chris Holcomb, Camelia Knapp, Adam Schor, Shelley Smith

Specialty Team Chairs Absent:

Sam Hastings, George Khushf, Mary Robinson, Francisco Sanchez

Guests:

Claire Robinson, University Advising Center; Patti Marinelli, GFL

Joe Rackers called the meeting to order, and Committee members introduced themselves.

Several corrections were suggested to the November 10, 2015 Minutes, which were then passed as revised.

Claire Robinson, Director of the new University Advising Center, presented an overview of the work being done by UAC. The Center is implementing innovations rapidly, among them the Quick Start online module and accompanying quiz. As of now, 200 advisors have accessed the module, 134 have completed the quiz, and 89 (66%) received perfect score. Claire is pleased with the feedback and enthusiasm among participants. She noted that of 32 questions on quiz, the two Carolina Core questions spurred the most inquiry.

Key goals of the UAC are:

1. Establishing common messaging to all constituencies to make sure interpretations are common to all students and advisors, for example regarding the question of whether overlays are required.
2. Training academic advisors

Advisors looking for answers about the Carolina Core have four sources of information: 1) Degree-Works, which will be going live in May; 2) Quick Start training/quiz; 3) the advisor survey done one year ago; 4) major change advisors. They are gathering information on trends and themes from these sources. Joe asked how Carolina Core Committee members could better assist the UAC and advisors. Claire responded that CCore Committee members can encourage as many advisors as possible to take the training using the four-tier modules, and helping ensure that everyone understands the concepts.

The complexity of overlays was noted, and that while overlays are not required, most take one. Helen Doerpinghaus wanted to make sure everyone in the room understands that overlays are not required. The chart says overlays ‘may be used’. The reason it matters is that ENGL 102 has lots of students transferring in who do not have the INF component. It is important that all ten of the Carolina Core components are met. Given the fact that 40% of students bring in transfer credit and despite the fact that overlays are not required, the department pathway for a major may suggest an overlay. Rob Dedmon suggested using different terminology in the Carolina Core Requirements chart, calling the “overlay section” something different. There was further discussion about placement of overlay in the chart, and whether the term should be eliminated. Joe commented that it is important to keep communicating about such issues. Helen asked that Rob work with Claire to devise a new word/term. Joe said that the CCore Committee welcomes UAC’s help, and that he could speak for music advisors who greatly appreciate the UAC’s work.

Kris Finnigan mentioned two new Carolina Core course approvals since last meeting, MUSC 310 (AIU), and the change in course number from PHIL 110 to PHIL 114. There are a total of 15 Core course proposals awaiting approval. She described the progress being made on the Carolina Core website, noting that she and Director of Information Resources Geniese James benchmarked general education websites at peer institutions for comparison. The new website architecture has been assembled, and work is proceeding on content text.

Kris posed a question to Committee members regarding whether changes to previously approved Carolina Core courses needed to be vetted through the Specialty Teams again. There was discussion about what criteria would determine whether a revised Core course needed Specialty Team review, and who would make the decision. Proposed criteria included changed learning outcomes, changed core content of the course, or any substantive change to the course or its assessment. It was suggested that the College Representative might be the one to decide. The group in the end agreed that all such proposals should pass back through the Carolina Core process, and the appropriate Specialty Team chair(s) could decide whether to “quick approve” a proposal as a minor change, or not.

Nicole Spensley reported on the Carolina Core Program Review process, and provided handouts with information on the review calendar, and data on pilot results. She noted interrater reliability issues, and relayed concerns raised during reviewer training for GHS. There was great discussion among faculty being trained, who had widely differing specialties. The category “unable to evaluate” was added to the rubric, to accommodate assignments that did test what students were asked but that were used differently than what was intended for the rubric.

GHS Specialty Team Chair Adam Schor said he was glad they incorporated the new category. The pilot revealed problems with the rubric, which he felt cannot be used as is going forward. Some evaluators did not feel qualified to evaluate history, which he likened to languages, in needing people who really know the field. When assignment itself does not require the student to do what the learning outcome asks, the student cannot be blamed.

Nicole felt that the planned webinar will help address how to make assignments appropriate to the learning outcome. She noted that similar issues came up with the SCI review of biology and chemistry, courses. Helen wondered if it were possible to have assignments where raters were given the facts and answers. SCI Specialty Team Chair Camilla Knapp argued that training for instructors of Carolina Core courses on how to craft assignments would be the most useful, with guidance on what a meaningful assignment would be. The focus of the assignment should be on understanding subject matter, not on

the learning outcome. Adam was wary about asking instructors to change assignments, just to make them easy to measure. Camilla responded that the point was not to make them easy to measure, but rather effective to assess.

In the course of the discussion, it was clarified that regional campuses are not undergoing specialized training, but rather the same as on the Columbia campus.

There was further discussion regarding whether the source of the GHS assessment issues was vague learning outcomes, or the heterogeneity of the reviewers. There was some degree of faculty reviewer concern about lack of subject matter expertise in a few other pilots (VSR, AIU, ARP) as well, though not in all. It was noted that the expert is the person in classroom, and that perhaps reviewers need to step back from the substantive details to look at whether the instruction is based on criteria reviewers can agree reflects the intended outcomes. Several agreed with this line of reasoning, arguing that reviewers need to divorce themselves from subject matter and focus on skills all agree the students need, as long as faculty experts can vouch for the content, and the assignments have used appropriate terminology. Given that the Carolina Core is concerned with lower level courses, there should be a large enough pool of experts in a given learning outcome to tap for assessment and review. Helen reminded the group that the SACSCOC deadline is looming for the submitting the Fifth Year Interim Report; learning outcome revisions need to be completed quickly, and all 10 LO's need to be in a regular cycle by this time next year.

Nicole introduced Patti Marinelli, who reported on the GFL pilot. The 121/122 courses offered in most languages every semester were targeted for assessment. For the few languages without comparable 121/122 courses, reviewers considered the 109/110 courses. Some colleges require language competency only through the 110 level; the 122 level is required by Arts & Sciences. Each language assesses its own students; there is a common instrument for the assessment of all languages.

Nicole then reviewed the VSR pilot, commenting that interrater reliability results indicated that the rubric would need adjusting. Reviewers did determine that the assignment was appropriate. Two raters, randomly paired by Blackboard Outcomes, looked at each artifact. For this pilot, there were only artifacts from one course. When it comes time for full implementation, the same concerns about faculty expertise might arise. She is already addressing this with the VSR Specialty Team. Several more points were raised about how the perspectives on learning outcomes may shift with new faces on the Specialty Team. Joe reminded members that if the rubric changes fundamentally, it may need to be brought back before the full CCore Committee. Nicole will send out the request for reviewers for the ARP pilot soon.

Helen introduced Joseph Askins, who is responsible at Thomas Cooper for overseeing the LIBR 101 offerings. There is a recurring issue for students who transfer ENGL 102 in, and get credit for CMW, but not INF. Helen asked Joseph if it would be possible to have online INF modules, and whether INF competency might be tested. Joseph described the 35-44 sections he oversees per semester, noting the need to hire many adjuncts. There are always more students than seats, particularly in the RN-BSN program. He has been exploring what types of similar tests already exist, and also how many students in LIBR 101 are already familiar with the skills the course is attempting to impart, particularly among the IB and AP populations. He has been running pre-test since last summer, with just 18 questions. Students must self-declare transfer status, academic year, and other basic information.

Results indicate that only 2.5% are proficient. Joseph concludes that testing for the INF competency is not likely to work well, and an INF course is needed. His colleague Jack Turner is concerned about

whether imparting these skills should fall to LIBR 101 instructors; perhaps the LIBR 101 should be divided by group, for example IB/AP, juniors/seniors. Ideally, INF skills should be incorporated through all Carolina Core courses.

Chris Holcombe inquired what kinds of tasks are sought as part of the INF competency test. Joseph responded with examples such as the content of MLA citations; identifying a time period during which an event is likely to have occurred; estimating how long it takes for an article to appear in an academic journal; demonstrating how to read record in catalogue. He offered to send test out to the Committee members. Chris asked how much of the enrollment pressure would be relieved through the use of the test. Helen noted that the test needs to dovetail with the INF learning outcomes, and suggested that Joe, Joseph and she meet with the INF team before the April Carolina Core meeting, to devise a possible test.

Helen will be convening a group to plan the Webinar – Helen, Joe, the 10 Specialty Team leaders, and Lydia Frass from CTE. Kris and Nicole will be drafting a policy on assessing the Carolina Core.

Joe reminded everyone of the Carolina Core Forum Wednesday, March 16, 11:30 in RH Theater, on the subject “Carolina Core and Assessment”. He also announced that he would be stepping down as faculty co-chair after the April 2016 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Minutes submitted by
Kris Finnigan