

## Faculty Senate Task Force on Curriculum

### Part I

#### Definitions of Curriculum

Institutions have multiple curricula in place, designed, taught and experienced by students. Often these curricula have little in common with each other in terms of content, coverage or effectiveness. Therefore, it is useful to consider at least four concepts of curriculum, each of which might independently be assessed across a number of domains.

- The *designed* curriculum consisting of content described in catalogues and syllabi. The bulk of faculty attention is focused here considering course content and sequence, program goals and outcomes.

- The *expectational* curriculum consisting of specific assignments and levels of student performance. This is more often the student's view of curriculum, based not on course content but rather on requirements that must be met and the levels of performance needed to meet them.

- The *delivered* curriculum consists of what faculty actually teach. In contrast to design, this curriculum is behavioral and may vary significantly across classrooms and from original design.

- The *experienced* curriculum consists of what students actually do. One element of this curriculum is student course-taking patterns, especially when these occur within a distributional or elective design. A second is student behavior. Regardless of what a syllabus analysis might indicate, how much writing (for example) do students typically engage in to meet their class assignments and for what purpose. ( Excerpted from Gaff, Ratcliff and Associates, Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum, 1996 edition). A third element is co-curricular activity that students experience outside the classroom but remain an important component of their overall education.

These four aspects of curriculum are equally important in assessing quality. Appropriate indicators should be designed to reflect them all. For the purposes of the curriculum task force report, however, only the first aspect, the *design* of curriculum is being addressed.

### Part II

**What is curriculum and who defines the curriculum? Can one individual have authority to develop a course that is not supported by the department?**

There are many varied definitions of curriculum lying on a continuum that encompasses a narrow and strict view of only what is stated in syllabi or program requirements to a broad definition of all curricular and co-curricular experiences (as defined by the students themselves). Again, for purposes of this report, the committee chooses to restrict its comments to the design aspect of curriculum which refers to the content that is delivered through classroom instruction, clinical or field experiences and student assignments. Discipline faculty determine the development and assessment of curriculum. The expectation is that discipline faculty will develop curriculum on sound scholarship undergirding the discipline.

In some cases, it is possible that a course might not support Divisional goals but does support curricular goals of the campus at large. The Division serves as an appropriate sounding board for any new course and in most instances will “approve a course,” prior to sending it through channels for campus approval. When campus needs support it, individual faculty need to have flexibility to develop and offer courses that support broad aspects of the campus curriculum. These courses need to be reviewed and approved in an alternate format involving faculty and administrators.

**Should a department have the autonomy to develop new programs without input from other affected faculty? Should one campus have the autonomy to develop programs independently from the other campuses?**

Divisions have autonomy to develop new programs. However, faculty, students and the institution are not well served when program development occurs in isolation. Secondly, as a faculty we are working towards the goal of helping students make connections between our courses and disciplines to further their understanding of complex issues and concepts from multidimensional perspectives. Therefore, our curricular development is enriched when we seek ideas and opinions from those discipline faculty who can assist us in tracing perspectives other than our own.

Individual campuses have slightly different missions and constituencies. Therefore, programs that are conceived at one campus may or may not serve the needs of students at another campus. While campus faculty are well served to involve appropriate colleagues in any curricular development, a campus does and should have the autonomy to develop programs that serve the needs of their students. The obvious exception to this statement is system

schools who have agreed to system-wide approval of programs rather than autonomously developed campus programs.

**Who considers curricular decisions and do we have a curricular plan against which we can measure appropriateness of new program requests. Can campus administrators implement curriculum that is contrary to faculty wishes?**

Curricular decision making is a multi-level process starting with individual faculty and moving through system-wide (or in some cases campus) approval which takes into consideration student and community perspectives. We believe that holistic curricular decisions should be based on a long range plan that is developed collaboratively between faculty and administrators for the future growth of the IU East campus and benefit of students. The plan should consider:

- what we want IU East to become in the future
- current needs of students and the community
- our mission as a comprehensive baccalaureate institution
- our mission as a transfer institution
- our mission as a campus that invites more and different students to participate in increasing quantity and quality of programming
- a process for responding to experimental programs in a timely (albeit limited) timeframe
- a process for reviewing the plan and making needed adjustments
- a process for reviewing campus programming

We believe that if such a plan were in place, faculty would use the plan as one criteria upon which to make curricular decisions. Moreover, faculty and administrators would have procedures to follow when programs outside the framework of the plan were suggested. In addition, we believe that individual program or course decisions should be based on the appropriateness of the learning objectives, evidence that the content is current and an appropriate fit with the learning objectives. Furthermore, curricular decisions are not complete without an assessment designed to give Divisions (and the campus) feedback on student learning and continuous evaluation data on the appropriateness of the learning objectives and content of the curriculum.

### **Part III**

Questions that we still have:

1. While discipline faculty need to routinely review curriculum for currency and feedback from assessment data, would it serve the institution to do a program audit every 10 years or so to see if the programs and courses we offer are still appropriate based on the long range curricular and academic plan, student learning, student interest, etc.?

2. Would it serve us to develop a general education requirement for all degrees based on our shared beliefs in our “educated graduate?”
3. Would it serve us to develop a core of courses that would serve as a foundation for all students in their first year of any program?
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