

**College of Liberal Arts Council**  
**Nov. 6, 2007 meeting minutes**

Members present: Bardhan, Baertsch, Beardsworth, Benti, Bird, Breznikar, Burnside, Cáceres, Chonez, Curtis, Gadzekpo, Giblin, Gray, Lapham, Hillyard (proxy for Leonard), Ludwig, Netzley, Ojewuyi (proxy for Kidd), Pattisapu, Poquette, Rivera, Rodriguez, Schoof, Silver, Sloboda, Spaulding, Venable, Wang.

Members absent: Breznikar, Cook-Carson, Hutchins, Kidd, Leonard, Morshed, Ward.

**1. Welcome, Chair Alejandro Cáceres**

Cáceres called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. He announced that Chancellor Treviño's address to the Council scheduled for today has been postponed to the Dec. meeting.

**2. Approval of Oct. 2, 2007, meeting minutes**

Motion to approve by Netzley. Seconded by Rodriguez. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**3. Guest Speaker: Jim Allen, Director of University Core Curriculum**

(Virginia Rinella, Director of the Pre-Major Advisement Center, will address the Council at its February 2008 meeting)

Cáceres introduced Allen who spoke about the state of critical thinking (CT) in the core curriculum. He elaborated on how CT is defined and how the definition differs in different disciplines - it could be broadly described as a set of cognitive skills and intellectual standards with a commitment to improve thinking and guide behavior. He stated that the core curriculum at SIUC does not address CT as a separate issue, but generally expects its incorporation in core courses. He opened up the discussion to members with two questions: whether or not the Council feels that an additional course requirement in CT would be useful for CoLA curriculum; and whether or not CT is applicable in all disciplinary contexts.

A discussion followed, and the following issues and questions were brought up.

- No real need for a separate course on CT in majors, but could be useful at the core curriculum level. (Allen noted that studies have shown that freshman level thinking is very concrete, and that it may be a challenge to introduce sophisticated concepts involved in CT at this early stage. However, the senior year may too late)
- It was suggested that philosophy core courses could be a natural area to include CT.
- What has persuaded the Council that CT is lacking in the CoLA curriculum? The Council should proceed with caution on this matter, and not assume that CT is lacking in core courses. In fact, introducing CT too early could be discouraging to freshmen students who may not be intellectually prepared to think critically, and this could harm retention

rates. (Cáceres noted that CT may not be lacking as such, but this may be an opportunity to discuss the possibility of its inclusion as a course at the pre-major level)

- CT is already incorporated in core courses, but it could be further highlighted so that those students who are more engaged can benefit. This may actually increase retention. Students are willing to learn, they just need more help and guidance. We cannot say we're doing enough in terms of CT, more is always possible and a good thing.
- Do core course assessments results show that CT is being incorporated? (Allen affirmed that they do)
- The positive correlation of writing to CT and the need to discuss the two issues together. The class size appropriate for a course in CT.
- The Illinois Board of Higher Education emphasizes that writing and CT skills are important, but does not suggest requiring a separate course for it. Peer institutions do not seem to require separate core courses on CT.
- Knowledge transfer between classes is poor, and this hurts the development of CT skills.
- Requiring and 'standardizing' CT could be a paradox since CT involves independent thinking.

Allen noted that it would be fair to say that we're all engaged in teaching CT in some way, even though it's not done in a systematic, focused and sustained manner. He added that the CT score (national) for SIUC students is a dead average.

Cáceres thanked Allen for sharing his expertise with the Council.

#### **4. Committee Reports**

Academic Policy – Sloboda stated that the committee has approved the RME for consolidation of two art education specializations (BFA and BA) into a BFA, and it recommends that the Council approve the RME. The combined BFA will require one more class compared to previous requirements.

The Council voted unanimously to approve the RME.

Promotions – Giblin reported on behalf of Leonard that the committee is working with the student-run public relations firm Pyramid on promoting CoLA at high schools and also among undeclared SIUC students. He requested that if members have access to promotional materials from their individual CoLA departments, that they may be forwarded to Leonard.

Teaching and Learning – No report. (Findings on state of teaching CT at peer institutions included during discussion following Allen's address).

Grievance – No report.

Selections & Election – No report.

#### **5. Dean's Remarks, Alan Vaux**

No remarks. Apologies from Dean Vaux for being unable to attend this meeting.

#### **6. Associate Dean's Remarks, David DiLalla**

Associate Dean DiLalla made announcements regarding a workshop on coping with partner violence organized by Women's Studies, the last tenure and promotion workshop held two weeks ago, and stated that he, along with Dean Vaux, will be meeting with the faculty of all CoLA departments to offer their perspective on the state of CoLA. He also announced that the Budget Committee that is advisory to the dean will be meeting soon to discuss hiring issues for the year, and that the FHI hire for Crime Studies from last year has been completed. DiLalla also thanked all those who helped with the CoLA Open House on Saturday.

**7. Dean's Office Business, Anita Hutton**

Hutton made two announcements: speech communication major and senior Krystal Stein, a native of Nashville, Ill., is the 2007 Lincoln Academy of Illinois Student Laureate representing SIUC; CoLA has entered into partnership with Housing's Living Learning Community (starting Fall 2008), and CoLA students will be living together in Schneider Hall. CoLA faculties are encouraged to speak and be involved.

**8. Old Business**

None

**9. New Business**

None

**10. Announcements**

None

**11. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Rodriguez at 7:35 p.m. Seconded by Netzley.

Submitted by Nilanjana Bardhan/Vice-Chair (2007-08)