

From: Kenton Rodgers
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2015 6:36 PM
To: Amy Rupiper Taggart; Larry Peterson; Kent Sandstrom
Cc: Bernhardt Saini-Eidukat; Birgit Pruess; Sean Sather-Wagstaff
Subject: RE: Salutations

Dear Amy:

Thanks for your reply. The challenge of satisfying everyone is clear. However, I think it's important to keep in mind that, according to the AAUP, ownership of and responsibility for the curriculum lies with the faculty under shared university governance. Hence I feel that when broad, sweeping changes to the curriculum are being proposed, an extensive and good faith effort to satisfy as many interested/invested faculty members as possible should be a foregone conclusion of having initiated the process.

Many members of the faculty would likely concede that the current general education curriculum is imperfect. And changes that target those imperfections would be healthy. However, from the data presented in the proposal, it is not clear that the perceived dearth of, for example, critical thinking skills among our students and graduates is attributable to a simple lack of coaching, instruction or lack of opportunity to practice the skills. All it seems to tell us is that a majority of those polled perceive critical thinking skills to be lacking. It is possible that the issue is related to breadth of knowledge. If that deficiency has its origins in how course content is delivered, so be it. That can be addressed through other means. But it is unclear how or whether skewing the curriculum away from existing content areas, especially in mathematics and the sciences, will address the critical thinking issue. As I see it, the current proposal describes an experiment wherein two variables, curricular content *and* delivery, are changed together - questionable experimental design. Both the stakes and costs of that approach seem awfully and unnecessarily high.

Alternatively, the agreed upon gen. ed. outcomes could be targeted through the existing curriculum, as Bernie, me and others have suggested. The outcomes will facilitate assessment that could inform efforts to effectuate improvement in the delivery of course content. In contrast to what was stated at Monday's Faculty Senate meeting, I agree with Bernie that the sciences seem to have been selectively targeted for downsizing in the proposed curriculum. In my view, removing the laboratory requirement would be a *terrible* move. The Science and Math cutbacks are simply counterintuitive, given the oft-lamented underperformance of US students in mathematics and the sciences and the frequently proclaimed importance of an informed electorate. It seems unlikely that either of those issues will be effectively addressed by attenuating science and mathematics components of the gen. ed. curriculum.

Considerable support for approaching the gen. ed. outcomes via the existing curriculum seemed apparent from the Faculty Senate discussion on Monday. That approach would (a) likely work and (b) avoid our sending our students the implicit message that we deem the arts, humanities, mathematics and sciences unimportant by the omission of their names from our curricular requirements.

Thanks for your consideration of these concerns.

Best regards,
Kent