



Executive Dean's Statement on Insight Areas to the CCI

CCI Retreat
Fawcett Center
Friday, September 14, 2007

The statement below forms the basis for my asking the CCI to engage in the following actions:

- **The panels for the Insight Areas**—to develop a one-page template for each area that can be used as a basic review mechanism for courses across curricular levels in determining the extent to which specific courses might be used to satisfy “Insight Areas courses through GEC credit” or “Insight Areas intensive courses.”
- **The college curriculum committees in the arts and sciences**—to review courses in their respective areas using the templates to determine whether their courses:
 - Meet criteria as an “Insight Areas course.”
 - Meet criteria as an “Insight Areas intensive course.”
 - Have gaps in these areas that might provide good opportunities for course development, especially at the upper division level.
- **The CCI by its normal operations in conjunction with the ASC Office for Curriculum and Instruction (Adelson):**
 - To establish a workable timetable for the tasks associated with these activities.
 - To collect the reports from the college curriculum committees and review them to determine whether there is a general alignment of values, given the templates (or perhaps as this process suggests that the templates might need to be modified).

- To work with the Curriculum and Assessment Office to develop an assessment mechanism for “targeted” existing courses as specific data related to how the insight areas might meet expected learning outcomes goals.
- To work with the academic advisors (GEC and departmental) to determine workable ways to implement a 0-credit requirement that would be transparent, intuitive, and flexibly met.
- To work with the University Registrar’s Office to determine how the transcript might bring visibility and recognition to this requirement as a “degree asset.”
- To work with the communication officers and the advisors across the arts and sciences to convey to students our views of the values added in having the insight areas as curricular assets.

Royster’s Thoughts about Insight Areas

Prominent among the 2007-2008 list of agenda items that constitute the ASC landscape of curriculum-related policy needs, issues, and concerns is our critical need to forward the implementation process for the decisions that we have made over the last two years. Among these vital processes remains the challenges of implementation with the insight areas. So, I wanted to just share with you my thoughts (my brainstorming really) about how we might frame this thorny problem and how we might begin to see new ways to get hold of what needs to be done:

- The goal this year from my perspective is complex:
 - To identify a relatively simple framework for incorporating these values into the curriculum.
 - To do so in a way that is simultaneously transparent and intuitive for students while being manageable for academic advisors.
 - To make the insight areas visible as learning assets (i.e., well-grounded in knowledge and experience) and recognize-able, specifically on the transcript, as a curricular requirement.
- Everything in my view is keyed by two facts:
 - The insight areas are **0-credit** and counted toward the B.A. and B.S. degrees through other requirements.
 - We should recognize our privilege of using the distinction between “credit hours” required and “courses”/course content (i.e., particular types of knowledge and experience) required.

With these two facts in mind, we have—in my view—a great opportunity to think outside the box.

- As an approach to addressing the implementation problem as defined this way and actually meaningfully fulfilling the goals articulated above, I suggest that we consider 2007-2008 as an experimental year with an opportunity to think more thoroughly about our options and learn how we might best do something sustainable with the insight areas. This approach would mean that we:
 - Hold off on changing the requirements beyond what we've already done with diversity and visual literacy.
 - Keep the diversity requirement as it is for the time being (social diversity in the U.S., non-Western, and Western—non U.S.).
 - Look at the o-credit as an opportunity to re-cast this particular set of general education “values” as fill-able across the curriculum and define-able as a **degree** asset and not just as a **GEC** asset. This re-framing would dictate a need to articulate specific criteria that we would be able to use to filter courses—GEC, major, minor, and elective courses—rather than thinking in a more static way about just implementing a GEC “requirements.”
- In this regard, I'm wondering if we might think of insight areas in a way similar to writing and writing intensive courses, with some courses specifically designed as GEC courses that count for insight area requirements (cf. the English 367 courses, designed to satisfy the second level writing requirement but deliberately designed also to fulfill the U.S. social diversity requirement) and with other courses designed as insight area intensive courses with specific criteria for insight area values (knowledge and experiences) clearly and deliberately imbedded into the fabric of courses that have other primary goals as well or that might be designated for majors or minors or electives, rather than the GEC requirements.
- If the committee sees this approach as reasonable, then I think that:
 - We should ask the insight area panels to create one-page templates to filter the extent to which existing courses can be labeled either: an Insight Area course within the GEC or an Insight Area intensive course across the curriculum.
 - Over the course of the year, we might ask the college curriculum committees to use the templates to review the courses in their departments in order to determine: which courses meet criteria for IA courses; which for IA intensive courses; and where opportunities are for course development, especially for upper level courses for the GEC, but perhaps also for major and minor courses with no pre-requisites.

- The CCI might then review these reports to determine the extent to which we have a general alignment for the values identified for insight areas across the arts and sciences
- We would need to concentrate this year on conveying to students our view of the values added by gaining knowledge and experience in our insight areas and to monitor perhaps the enrollments in a few targeted courses for the assessment of certain insight area related learning outcomes.
- We would need to work with the Registrar's office to see how we might **mark** knowledge and experience building in this O-credit way.
- We would need to work with the advising staff to see how they can manage Insight Area conversations/negotiations?

This plan or some other that defines the problem and lays out a workable process strikes me as an approach that will help us to see by the end of the year what sort of schema we will have the capacity to put in place—and to require of our students while demonstrating that the values added are indeed worth the effort for all of us.

Thank you ahead of time for your ongoing thoughtfulness about curricular matters; providing curricular leadership and oversight on behalf of the faculty; and, of course, the very hard work that I know that you will need to put in this year to keep our curricular offerings functioning at the very highest levels of excellence.