

Curriculum Committee Meeting  
Collins Conference Center  
October 6, 2005  
Unadopted Minutes

Members present: K. Meier, J. Hernandez, W. Anthony, B. Demkey, M. Einhaus, M. Korcok, D. O'Connor, S. McQuerrey, C. O'Nesky, J. Saldivar, P. Serpa, W. Simmons, K. Stallworth, P. Thompson, R. Torres

Guests: Janet Fulks, Bonnie Suderman

Dr. Hernandez welcomed everyone to the new meeting location and asked members to introduce themselves.

Biology Curriculum Revisions

Dr. Hernandez referred members to the Biology Curriculum Issues handout attached to the agenda and said that Janet Fulks was present to explain the Biology department's proposal for curriculum changes. Dr. Hernandez noted that also included in the Biology handout was information about budget concerns regarding their proposal and reminded members that their role was to make recommendations on the curriculum but concerns about budget restraints were not under the purview of the committee.

Dr. Fulks explained that her department is considering revising their anatomy and physiology courses to better serve the Nursing Program. As a part of their program review work, they looked at almost every school in the state and determined that their anatomy and physiology courses are extremely rigorous and beyond what every other school in the state requires. Most schools' anatomy courses are 3 hours lecture and 3 hours lab; BC's anatomy course is 2 hours lecture and 8 hours lab. Most schools' physiology courses are 3 hours lecture and 3 hours lab; BC's physiology course is 3 hours lecture and 6 hours lab. Their proposal is to align with the 4-year schools and reduce each course by 3 hours lab. The proposed anatomy/physiology course one would be 3 hours lecture and 3 hours lab; the proposed anatomy/physiology course two would be 3 hours lecture and 3 hours lab.

The biology instructors' initial reaction to teaching these courses with 3 hours less lab time was that they could not do it. To further study the issue, they looked at the results of the outcomes for a condensed anatomy and physiology course they teach for the LVN program and found that it was the course with the worst retention. Currently BC leads the state in retention and success rates by 10% for all allied health courses. The program outcomes assessment for the condensed anatomy and physiology course found that while retention and success were less for the course, the students remembered more and better than some of the successful students. The biology instructors think this may be because anatomy is structure and pure memory while physiology is function and when they get the two together it makes more sense and students can apply the information and critically think through problems better. The departmental faculty feel this will compensate for the reduction of lab time in their proposal.

Dr. Fulks said their proposal will fast track the good students and allow the department to double the number of students they prepare for the nursing program for no additional cost. It will also afford the pre-nursing students three extra hours to take a course in another area, or wherever they need additional coursework.

Members asked several questions and Dr. Fulks clarified that the proposed changes would not lower standards; the standards will stay the same because if decreased, students will not get through the nursing program and pass the Boards. She said that the proposal requires the students to spend twelve hours of class time. For the students who can't make it in twelve hours, there will be a safety net consisting of beginning classes and, hopefully, the Title V Allied Health Learning Community.

Dr. Fulks said they would also like to have an assessment test at some point. It is against the law to use assessment testing for entrance but they can apply the test and advise students that based on their experience they feel the student would be most successful starting with a beginning human biology course to get up to speed.

Mrs. O'Nesky said she felt that their proposed changes would be excellent preparation because students have to learn fast when they get into the Nursing Program. Once the students are in the nursing program, the skills and knowledge they gained in the proposed anatomy and physiology courses will be reinforced and built upon. Mrs. O'Nesky and the nursing faculty are in favor of the proposed curriculum changes.

Dr. Hernandez thanked Dr. Fulks for her explanation and noted that it was a great piece of thinking and work. The next step would be for the committee to receive and consider the actual curriculum.

Members felt it would be appropriate to take a vote of confidence on the proposed biology curriculum changes. O'Nesky/Demkey moved and seconded a vote of support for the proposed biology curriculum change with final changes to be submitted to the committee for approval. Motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Hernandez thanked Dr. Fulks again and told her it had been a very good experience. Dr. Hernandez said he thought it would be a good idea to invite faculty to meetings to hear explanations when considering significant curriculum changes.

#### Critical Thinking Report

Mr. Einhaus referred members to the critical thinking report attached to the agenda. He also distributed Title 5 section 55002 that requires critical thinking be included in every college level course. Dr. Hernandez clarified that Title 5 section 55002 is the basis the committee has used to vet course outlines for college-level difficulty or critical thinking. With the old curriculum forms, the critical thinking check off section covered this Title 5 requirement. In the new curriculum forms, the critical thinking elements are supposed to be evidenced in the student learning outcomes.

Mr. Einhaus began by telling members he attended a seminar after the last accreditation visit (Fall 2002) and received training on student learning outcomes and learned that critical thinking is one of the things that is generally assessed. The new WASC Accreditation Standards require student learning outcome assessment be addressed. Mr. Einhaus felt that because critical thinking is already required in every credit course, it would very likely be one of the things to be assessed. There are five courses on campus that meet a critical thinking requirement for transfer to the UC and CSU's and two of those are taught by Philosophy, 2 by English and 1 by Speech. He felt that Philosophy had a burden to investigate and discover what was going on with critical thinking because they were most likely to be affected by changes. He got permission to form a committee. The goals of the committee were: 1) initiate a dialogue among interested faculty, 2) explore the scholarly literature on critical thinking, 3) define critical thinking, 4) establish SLO's that would assist in the assessment of critical thinking, 5) establish standards of competency to assist in the assessment of critical thinking, 6) Investigate approaches to critical thinking assessment, and 7) make recommendations to the higher committees regarding the implementation of critical thinking assessment. Mr. Einhaus reported that the committee achieved some of the goals but not all of them. There has been dialog, a vast amount of scholarly literature has been explored and they have arrived at and approved a definition for critical thinking. "Critical thinking is the rational and reflective process of making and supporting judgments." Mr. Einhaus explained that a judgment is the mental equivalent of a claim, statement, or assertion; critical thinking is making assertions and defending them.

Goal number 4, the establishment of student learning outcomes, was arrived at recently and is part of the General Education proposal. The seven student learning outcomes (SLO's) for critical thinking are presented to the committee for debate or modification. They are: 1) make judgments that skillfully interpret information and phenomena, 2) skillfully support judgments, 3) identify and skillfully explore assumptions, implications, and alternatives to judgments, 4) identify and differentiate statements of opinion, matters of fact, and arguments, 5) analyze arguments into supporting judgments and supported judgments, 6) skillfully evaluate judgments, and 7) skillfully evaluate the support for judgments.

Dr. Hernandez told the committee that some of the items in the critical thinking report would be action items at the next meeting: goal number 3, the definition of critical thinking, and number 4, the SLO's. The SLO's have been imbedded in the categories proposed by the general education committee. The question is not the way the SLO's will be assessed but are these the SLO's the committee wants for critical thinking?

Mr. Einhaus explained the SLO's a little further. The list of SLO's needed to be inclusive enough to cover everything that could count as critical thinking but not so inclusive that everything was critical thinking. If critical thinking is being done in a course, one or more items from the list should be identified as occurring in the course. Every task or skill that is critical thinking would not be done in every course.

Dr. Hernandez clarified that these are general education SLO's. They are not SLO's that would appear in every course. The committee could stick with what they have been doing for critical thinking -- using compare, contrast, synthesis, etc., to meet the Title 5 requirement. This list of SLO's could be used for assessing critical thinking in general education courses which is separate from the kind of critical thinking component required for every college level course.

Mr. Simmons asked, "If these are SLO's for critical thinking, couldn't they be applied to every course in some degree?" Dr. Hernandez said that was a good question and something the committee needs to talk about. The committee could decide the critical thinking SLO's are going to be used only for assessing general education or they could decide they should be part of every college course to meet the Title 5 requirement for critical thinking.

Dr. Hernandez summarized the issues/action items so far. The first action item is the definition for critical thinking, the second action item is the SLO's for critical thinking and coupled with that is whether these SLO's should be only for general education or for both general education and to meet the Title 5 requirement for including critical thinking in every college level course. Members were asked to look at the definition for critical thinking and the student learning outcomes for critical thinking, take them back to their departments, discuss them, get feedback and be ready to take action at the next meeting. The next step will be to determine how these SLO's will be used. This topic may come up when members are discussing these issues with their departments.

Next, Mr. Einhaus talked about Communities of Learning and Integrated Practice (CLIP). Faculty on the CLIP project are trying to generate some assessment vehicles to be piloted in the spring. If they agree on something it will be tried in a small number of classes. They are hoping that what they do will be in line with the General Education critical thinking SLO's and there will be some standards of competency that can be used to recognize excellent performance, average performance, and what is below average. "Makes judgments that skillfully interpret information and phenomena" most of the time would be excellent performance, for example. The goal at all times would be to aim at the highest standard but the minimum to be accepted should also be defined.

Mrs. Suderman is in charge of the CLIP general education project and noted that at this time they are looking at what other institutions are doing and how they are assessing it; what kind of rubrics they are using and things like that. They hope to bring something to the Curriculum Committee at the end of next semester.

Moving to number seven on the critical thinking report, Mr. Einhaus asked everyone to take a minute or two and read the two paragraphs. Number 7 is a proposal for a critical thinking requirement or course for associate degrees. Dr. Hernandez clarified that having a formal critical thinking course or requirement is different from requiring critical thinking elements in all college level courses.

Mr. Einhaus was asked how the proposed requirement ducktails with the general education proposal received last spring. He answered saying that the critical thinking course requirement was not included in the general education proposal but the SLO's were. He explained that the General Education Committee was sort of deadlocked on the issue of a critical thinking requirement for the General Education Program and it was not included in the proposal. The Associate Degree does not include a critical thinking requirement but critical thinking is something that is supposed to be taught in all college level courses and may be the one thing that is assessed in our general education program. Critical thinking is a requirement at the CSU and UC level. Mr. Einhaus asked himself what is it we think we're doing here and is it the same thing they think they're doing and if so, why is there disagreement about the appropriate way to fulfill that goal? Mr. Einhaus concluded that the critical thinking requirement that the CSU and UC's imposed on their institutions was a remedial one. It was a deficiency they saw in the students coming to their institutions. We have students that are just as deficient if not more so but we do not require a critical thinking class.

Mr. Einhaus said he felt that addressing this student need should be done with a critical thinking course, not just a critical thinking requirement. The CSUs and UCs have a critical thinking requirement that is fulfilled with a diverse number of courses, for example, Introduction to Literature or Introduction to Logic. When Mr. Einhaus examined the courses approved for the critical thinking requirement at the CSUs and UCs, he found that not many of the courses were covering all the SLO's identified for critical thinking. If they were doing them they weren't doing them well and were covering them because it was required but the main focus of the course was on the introduction of the discipline and not on critical thinking skills. Mr. Einhaus said he felt the best way to serve the needs of the students at Bakersfield College is to have a course that focuses on critical thinking principles that are common to the greatest number of courses they are going to take instead of using an introductory course in a discipline as an opportunity to teach a few critical thinking skills.

Mr. Demkey spoke against a requirement for a stand alone critical thinking course or requirement saying that there are disciplines in the occupational area that do not require a stand alone critical thinking course. He suggested departments could require a stand alone critical thinking course in their major if they felt it was necessary. He also noted that many students receiving an AA do not go on and seek a 4-year degree. If they decide later to transfer, they can return to BC and pick up a critical thinking course. If we require courses that are not mandated by Title 5 we will be limiting the number of students who apply for an AA degree. Those students will get a certificate and then a job and skip the AA degree. If we keep our general education focused on the Title 5 requirements and the units around 24-27, more students will complete an AA degree.

Mrs. O'Nesky asked if there were statistics to support the assumption that taking a critical thinking course would improve students' success in other courses in the CSU and UC systems.

Mr. Korcok said there were. The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, which has been around since about 1954 and administered in various institutions and programs, improves critical thinking somewhat more than a year in college with a comparative baseline of courses.

Dr. Hernandez noted that the meeting was an hour and a half old and suggested framing the issues and adjourning until next time. He summarized the critical issues into 3 items. First is the definition for critical thinking, second are the SLO's for critical thinking and third is how are the SLO's going to be assessed. The third issue has two parts. First, how will they be assessed for general education and second, do we also want to alter how we ask every college level course to indicate to us how they do critical thinking? Currently that is done using terms such as compare and contrast, synthesize, etc in the course outline.

Dr. Hernandez clarified that the last debate/discussion was about adding a critical thinking requirement or course for general education and how that would be assessed. It could be done with a separate course or a separate category that could have several courses. Or, critical thinking could be imbedded in all general education courses. The assumption would be that a student who could get through the general education program would have studied critical thinking because it has been imbedded in general education courses. Dr. Hernandez asked members to think about the issues and discuss them with their colleagues. The issues will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Mr. Einhaus invited members to call or email him with any questions they might have on his proposal.

#### Curriculum Committee Information for College Council

The last thing attached to the agenda was information on the Curriculum Committee requested by the president's office for College Council. Dr. Hernandez asked members to review it and contact Margo right away with any comments or suggestions.

Dr. Hernandez thanked everyone for participating in a very good meeting.

3:30 pm.