

April 8, 2013

Barbara D'Ambrosia  
Professor of Mathematics  
Chair of CAP

Dear Barbara:

The University Budget Committee met this morning to consider three documents concerning the proposed new Core Curriculum:

1. My letter to you as Chair of CAP concerning University support of a Core curriculum that the Faculty may decide to provide our students;
2. Rich Mausser's discussion of the proposed Core from a macro-economic perspective for the University;
3. An analysis of savings and expenses related to the new Core drafted by Jeanne and reviewed by David Wong and myself.

These items are attached for your information.

While some of the figures may be subject to further refinement, Jeanne's document indicates that the proposed new Core would cost less than the current Core. Similar estimates of likely savings have ranged from \$100,000 to \$150,000; the documents attached calculates a possible savings of \$150,640. These savings take into account setting aside a fund of \$27,000 "Pedagogical Innovation Fund" to support faculty development related to the planning and implementation of a new Core. These funds are also in addition to the existing and potential new resources outlined in my letter to you.

Rich Mausser suggested that consideration of a new Core should be seen not only in a budgetary perspective but also in a strategic perspective. Concerning the budgetary aspects, he reported that he has not had a concern about the financial impact of a new Core because of its provision of a move from 128 to 120 credit hours. Such a move would realize budget savings of an estimated \$320,000, according to his "Scenario 1 – Flat Enrollment" on the attached sheet. (This is in addition to the amounts listed in the previous paragraph.)

Concerning strategic issues, Rich emphasized the need to be more nimble and more responsive to the market of potential students. He reported on an email he received Friday from Brian Williams which gave an assessment from Brian concerning the attractiveness of the proposed new Core from an Enrollment perspective. The decrease in size is a plus, attractive to both new first-time and transfer students. The foundational competencies and the adjustments to the foreign language requirement would also be attractive in this regard. The integrated courses could be a distinctive feature of our curriculum and attractive to new students as well.

Building on the comments he provided from Brian, Rich suggested that a new Core could result in an increase in enrollment. His "Scenario 2 1% Enrollment Increase" suggests that an even modest increase in enrollment could result in a net budget improvement of \$662,000.

Rich concluded by emphasizing that supporting a new Core would be a reasonable investment in being responsive to a rapidly changing educational environment – an investment as important as an investment in a new sports team or a new or renovated building.

The discussion that followed raised a number of issues. While there were some questions about one or another points in my comments and those of Rich, there seemed to be no disagreement with the general thrust of our presentations. No major budgetary impediments to moving forward were identified. The value of the short-term planning in Jeanne's document was recognized, but one member expressed a desire for more long-range assessment of implications of the proposed new Core. While most of the savings identified were associated with reducing the number of part-time faculty, what would be the impact over time on the size and make-up of the full-time faculty, for example? Another member raised questions about faculty compensation. While the proposed Core would not directly address faculty compensation issues, shouldn't we consider any curricular change with an eye to increasing faculty compensation? Could the projected budget savings be directed to address compensation issues, for example? Another committee member praised the value of the flexibility of the new Core, but this in itself is not a budgetary issue.

We did not take a formal vote, and we will discuss the new Core at our next regular meeting this Friday, in part for the benefit of three committee members who were still in Chicago at the annual meeting of the Higher Learning Commission. But the following I think fairly summarizes what we heard and discussed:

1. The expenses of the staffing and operating of the proposed new Core can come from the reallocation of existing resources.
2. Existing and potential new resources will be available to cover the cost of faculty development and related costs of planning and implementation.
3. From a University budgetary perspective, there are financial advantages to moving to the new Core.
4. The proposed new Core has the potential to be attractive to new students thereby improving enrollment and the corresponding net tuition revenue.

This gets back to the essential point of my letter to you, a point that was mentioned several times at the meeting by Rich and others: the faculty should choose to offer a Core curriculum that is best for our future students, based on the curriculum's educational merits. If passed by the faculty, a new Core will be supported by the University.

I am copying the University Budget Committee on this message. Perhaps you will receive additional comments from other members, but I believe this message gives an accurate accounting of our discussion, and I am including the materials we discussed for your information. I hope these comments are useful to CAP and to the Faculty at large as you consider the proposed new Core.

Sincerely,

John T. Day  
Provost and Academic Vice President

