

## **Implementation Task Force Subcommittee on Core Courses and Global Awareness September 28, 2006—FH-128**

**Members Present:** Chris Blackwell (CL), David Morgan (MLL), Derek Parsons (MUS), John Shelley (REL), Paul Wagenknecht (CHM), Simon Lehtinen (Student), Tony Caterisano (HES), Kate Kaup (PS)

**Members Absent:** Kevin Treu (CS), Will Walker (Student)

### **Call to Order and Introductions**

- The meeting was called to order at 2:05 by Chris Blackwell.

### **Discussion of AP and Transfer Credit**

The CGA Subcommittee of the ITF met for an hour on Thursday to continue discussion of how credits transferred from other institutions and credits awarded based on AP or IB tests might fit in with the new curriculum and its requirements.

Conversation was brisk and focused, with the members of the committee offering different opinions, presenting scenarios based on their differing perspectives, and raising rigorous and appropriate questions.

Discussion was evenly divided between two fundamental questions:

- \* Can non-Furman credits satisfy the particular and clearly defined CGA requirements, as described in the CRC document “Invigorating Intellectual Life”? Where is the line between practical compromise and hypocrisy, or between attention to principle and hide-bound paralysis?
- \* What will be the practical and philosophical, immediate and distant consequences of any decision on this matter?

In more detail, some of the considerations that the committee discussed were:

- \* The fact that CGAs, unlike GERs, are not limited to introductory or survey courses, but may be assigned to courses at any level of study; thus a student who places out of History 101, for example, might nevertheless satisfy the “Historical Analysis” CGA with a Senior Seminar in the History department. Similarly, a student who is excused from Mathematics 101 would nevertheless satisfy the “Mathematical and Formal Reasoning” CGA with (we expect) almost any higher-level course in Mathematics.
- \* The fact that credit based on tests taken in high-school is very different in kind from credit based on college-level work at another institution, and in the latter case, credit for

work at a junior college or technical school is different from work done at a liberal arts college or university.

\* The extent to which it is difficult to judge the effect on prospective students that any policy might have, and particularly to judge the inevitably various effects of different kinds of policies. A policy that awarded no credit of any kind from AP scores might have a significant effect on recruitment. But would a policy that awarded credit toward graduation but not toward CGAs have the same effect? Would we simply lose good students, or might we make space for applicants who are more sympathetic with Furman's goals?

\* Would students be precluded from completing double-majors by a policy that awarded no CGA credit based on AP scores? Would students be exempted from getting a truly rich Furman education by a policy that did award CGA credit based on AP scores? Which is worse, a student who eschews Music because she cannot join that major with one in Spanish, or a student who completes majors in Music and Spanish but never takes a course in Mathematics or Biology?

\* Would certain departments be helped or hindered by a policy awarding CGA credit based on AP scores? Would students, excused from taking a requirement in the department, flock toward the higher-level classes there, thus more easily achieving majors? Would they, on the other hand, slip by, never having had a potentially life-changing encounter with the faculty in that department? Given the detachment of CGAs from departments, is it even possible to predict?

\* What are other schools doing? We have anecdotal evidence that other prestigious schools are eliminating or limiting credit-for-AP, and that certain graduate and professional schools are no longer counting prerequisites-by-AP. But the plural of "anecdote" is not "data", nor do these bits of report tell us anything about the planned or real consequences of other schools' decisions, nor about their reasoning in deciding as they did.

The CGA Committee recognizes that these questions have arisen in other contexts, especially during the discussion in the Academic Policies Committee during the Spring of 2006, and in discussions among the Deans, the Registrar, and Admissions, not to mention discussions during the Faculty Retreat that began the 2006/2007 school year.

The members of the CGA Committee hold differing opinions on the question with which we were charged, but we agree that it is an important one. Given our current information, we do not believe that we can work toward a formal recommendation with any confidence.

We would like to request, then, from ITF Steering, from the Chair of the Faculty, and from APC, more specific instructions and parameters to guide and constrain our discussion. It would be helpful to have answers to the following questions, in decreasing

order of priority, as answers to the earlier ones might obviate the need for answers to later ones:

\* What is the background to APC's decision, communicated through Linda Bartlett and Brad Barron, that "As we discussed in Monday's meeting, APC (Academic Policies Committee) spent a great deal of time reviewing our current policy in regard to the award of credit for both AP and IB (International Baccalaureate) exams. Ultimately we affirmed our current policy, which is to award placement or credit for scores of 4 or 5 on AP exams and for scores of 6 or 7 on IB tests." What is the status of that decision – does it need approval from the faculty generally? – and what was the reasoning behind it? We would rush to say that we are not casting doubt on the appropriateness of APC's decision nor expressing any shared judgment on its rectitude. Merely, we agree that the limits of our own conversation will come more clearly into focus with a better understanding of what APC considered, how it came to its decision, and the constitutional status of that decision.

\* Should CGA assume that its recommendation must fit into existing policy structures, or should we feel free to propose constitutional innovations?

\* Is it CGA's job to consider the effect on recruitment and retention that any decision might have, or are we to focus on applying the principles of the CRC document to the question of extra-Furman credit on pedagogical merits alone?

\* Should CGA take upon itself the kind of research necessary to compare our potential actions with those of other, comparable institutions?

As Chair of CGA I would like to express gratitude and admiration for my colleagues, who approached these discussions with insight, conviction, and a wholesome collegiality that is entirely in the spirit of the curricular innovations that are our shared project. The fact that the committee refrained from offering quick answers to these difficult questions reflects its energy and dedication to doing this job correctly, and ensuring that the institution as a whole benefits from our work.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Blackwell