

Center for University Studies and Programs

To: Susan Jeffords, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
From: The CUSP Implementation Committee

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RE: Implementing GFO/EC Recommendations Accepted by the VCAA

September 28, 2010

Our group engaged in a spirited debate not only about the individual issues that we were tasked to decide upon, but around larger issues of how we might structure the next three-year phase of CUSP's work in order to insure that it become an even more coherent, vibrant, and distinctive first year and pre-major program.

The themes that surfaced most clearly were a desire for cross-campus collaboration and coordination around quality assurance for first year and pre-major teaching, assessment, and faculty development; differentiating the responsibility for some of the courses currently administered by CUSP; making sure all students have clear pathways to the degrees of their choice; and developing our capacities to provide students with the highest quality of integrated (inter)disciplinary learning.

The most pressing challenge among the group was twofold: 1) to answer the question of where courses, especially but not only the introductory sequences in chemistry and physics, would administratively reside (recognizing that the EC has given guidance about "lower division disciplinary courses"), and 2) how we might best hardwire more horizontal collaboration and coordination into the teaching, assessment, and governance system of the campus at the first year level.

Given the significance of the issues involved, we urge the VCAA to respond to these recommendations by the end of fall quarter and also suggest that the CUSP Director report to the AC and EC in the spring quarter to evaluate the progress made on the changes undertaken.

The following are the particular tasks you asked us to address, followed by the Committee's recommendations:

- **identify a range of credit options for the common first-year experience that does not “exclude or conflict with other pathways to degrees”**

To meet student needs for different curricular pathways and to continue to offer a coherent experience of interdisciplinary team-teaching—for both students and faculty—we recommend that FOCUS develop a system for the Discovery Core I that includes an option for students to take either a 5 credit course or a team-taught 10 credit course. The DC series, with credits ranging from 15 (5-5-5) to 25 (10-10-5), would continue to be required of all students (with a maximum of one DC III). FOCUS should develop a sophisticated Call for Proposals for the DCs, and, as part of this process, there should be a discussion with each program director about types of courses that would be most energizing for their faculty and programmatic needs. FOCUS should also review the policy about the number of entering credits necessary for students to forego parts or all of the series; address the need to stagger sections of I, II, and III for students entering at different points of the year; and decide how best to respond if a student fails a DC course.

- **develop an expanded model for FOCUS membership**

We recommend that FOCUS membership be open to all full-time faculty, that the lower-division leadership functions of FOCUS be made clearer, that each elected member serve a three-year term, and that each member receive an annual review letter from the CUSP Director or Associate Director for their merit and/or P&T file. We propose that one FOCUS member be elected by and from each of the undergraduate degree-granting programs (for a total of four), to be joined by an additional two at large members elected by the EC, after conferring with the CUSP Director on particular lower division needs. Members from TLC and the Library would continue to serve as ex-officio members. In addition, we suggest that selected FOCUS members be given 2-4 weeks of summer salary to fund necessary work on issues such as program assessment.

- **provide guidance to CUSP regarding the development of additional forms of first-year classes, including but not limited to: first-year seminars, FIGS, or other common experiences as identified by pedagogical research and national best practices; provide guidance on how CUSP can collaborate with programs to provide a seamless transition experience for students moving from first- to second-year classes and then into upper division programs**

The most basic of these questions has been resolved by opening up the Discovery Core to a mixed structure, although there is still a desire to build more “common experiences.” CUSP already hosts classes around “Learning Strategies” and “Navigating the University” and works extensively with the academic programs at the director and advising level, as well as

with admissions and student life. An extended orientation co-organized by CUSP and Student Life would be useful. FOCUS should continue to explore the question of how best to accomplish more common experiences such as through interest groups, first year seminars, and related ideas. In terms of their transition to majors, students are already being carefully advised and tracked.

- **articulate how the programs and CUSP should collaborate or coordinate to offer courses for which the programs have specific and relevant expertise, and in appropriate cases, for which they are accepting responsibility**

The goals of this discussion were to connect our desires around individual degree offerings to UW Bothell's commitment to accessible, high-quality education for all first-year students and to insure that cross-programmatic interest in the lower division courses remains strong. We recommend that academic programs (or a consortium of programs) be allowed, but not required, to house classes that primarily serve a particular program's needs.

The recommended procedure to request responsibility for classes would be submission of a memo, early in the fall quarter, from the program director(s) to the VCAA and the CUSP Director. This memo would include the rationale for such a change; any required changes in course title, numbering, prefix, or description; an indication of how the courses were to be staffed; and evidence of consultation with impacted programs, including CUSP. After consultations among all the relevant programs, there would be a sign-off on the form by the CUSP Director, Academic Program Director(s), and the VCAA. If disputes between programs arose during the process, the VCAA would mediate those differences. If the differences proved irreconcilable, the VCAA should work with the GFO leadership to resolve the matter. The CUSP staff, coordinating with the program staff and the registrar's office, would submit any necessary paperwork for the transfer.

As the institution reshapes itself, we also want to emphasize the need for continued coordination of the first-year experience across campus and therefore propose ongoing consultations between CUSP and the programs on hiring, assessment, faculty development, and the inclusion of best national practices for first-year education. FOCUS should take the lead in providing this coordination and articulating both annual and strategic priorities. As one aspect of this, FOCUS should be charged to establish assessment priorities and processes for all the lower division classes, regardless of whether those are housed in CUSP or in the academic programs. The assessment process would include the Discovery Cores, Writing and Communication, Math and Quantitative Reasoning, and the electives representing the Areas of Knowledge (NW, IS, and VLPA). Such an assessment would, in consultation with the relevant programs, develop a review protocol based on the learning objectives, which would inform the teaching of future iterations of the courses. All of these measures would enable us to continue to create a strong cross-campus lower-division culture of teaching and related activities.

- **advise the VCAA regarding a resource model to insure full-time faculty participation in CUSP.**

We recommend that the VCAA, during the fall quarter of 2010 and in consultation with the CUSP and program directors, establish a transparent and predictable budgetary mechanism that insures a link between full-time program hires and a commitment to staff a certain number of courses in CUSP with full-time faculty. This would entail the movement of appropriate funds from the CUSP budget into the programs to support full-time hires, and, if there are particularly good reasons, for some full-time hires with their budget lines retained in CUSP but with a faculty home in the programs. We recommend that this policy include clear guidelines about cost-sharing and buy-out arrangements. The specific course and faculty needs would need to be negotiated between the CUSP and program directors, but the VCAA would help to build a campus-wide culture grounded in the principle that lower division teaching is an embedded responsibility for all the programs and faculty members (taking into account particular program constraints such as size, lack of an undergraduate major, etc). This would all be dependent on assuring CUSP and programs the budget resources to staff the necessary range of courses.

These are our suggestions for the implementation of your charge letter, which reflects the EC/GFO recommendations for reauthorization of the charter that will govern CUSP until the next campus-wide review in three years. Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing support of lower-division education.