Westfield State University
Curriculum Committee Minutes for May 5, 2011

In attendance: Marsha Marotta, Enrique Morales-Diaz, Volker Ecke, Joseph Camilleri, Liam Harte, Stanley Jackson, Carlton Pickron, Elizabeth Starr, Christin Cleaton-Ruiz, Supriya Sarnikar, Mary Allen Watson, Dominick Farbo, Jennifer DiGrazia

Chair’s Report:

Meeting was convened at 4:04 (when we had quorum) by Chair Morales-Diaz

Minutes from April 28 meeting amended to read “4:04” as the time called to order and then approved: 10 yes, 0 no, 2 abstentions

Chair Morales-Diaz reminded everyone that the last meeting of the year is focused on addressing CAR business and will take place at 10:00 on Tuesday, May 16 in the SLR

The committee then discussed how to proceed with a discussion of the ROCCC report and how to understand/interpret ACC’s charge. It was proposed that we discuss specific items of concern as articulated by our campus constituencies and the Curriculum Committee members using page 15 of the ROCCC document.

Liam Harte requested that he go on record to state that ACC doesn’t have the authority to give Curriculum a deadline for a response and to suggest that the way to approach the ROCCC Report should be determined by the Curriculum Committee. We discussed that Curriculum and ACC were two governing bodies that co-exist, and that one did not have the authority to demand action from another by a particular deadline.

We then discussed whether or not the ROCCC document made the case for the need for change. Some committee members voiced the desire for a more systematic study in order to make that case. Other committee members suggested that ROCCC did make such a case and that the evidence reflected in the ROCCC document was reflective of a desire for specific changes to the CORE at WSU. We also discussed whether or not the ROCCC document was recommending a synthesis of the proposals/structures presented in ROCCC with the current CORE. It was proposed that ROCCC was recommending a synthesis, but there was disagreement; some believed the framework proposed by ROCCC would require intensive restructuring and re-thinking of the current CORE, and it was suggested that we did not have the resources to engage such a project. There was some general discussion about whether those we should focus on overhauling the current CORE, or whether we should re-structure the CORE using the framework articulated in the ROCCC document. We discussed that one of the major differences between the current CORE and the structure proposed by ROCCC was whether or not students satisfied requirements using a skills-based or a discipline-based model. We also discussed the matrix that the ROCCC writers had used to help illustrate the multi-dimensional, skills-based model that is being proposed in the ROCCC report and whether or not that was a move away from (and if so, a necessary move) the current model of the common CORE that is in place.

We moved to discuss the need for stronger and more writing instruction throughout a student’s years at WSU, and we discussed how the current CORE is different from the re-structuring of writing instruction proposed by ROCCC. We discussed that the Composition Committee was suggesting a modification of the ROCCC proposal so that writing instruction was spread over three years of a student’s time at WSU: a first-year writing seminar, a sophomore/second-year theme-based writing course that could be taught by a range of
instructors across WSU, and a junior-year writing seminar. It was proposed that a junior-year writing seminar might be far too costly to staff and institute. Questions were raised as to how we would staff that course and who would teach it.

- We discussed that whatever changes we make—whether those modifications result in an overhaul of the current CORE, or whether we adopt the model (whether that model represents a different model than the one currently in place) the model proposed by ROCCC, it has been made clear by our NEASC work that we need to incorporate a tool for assessment of that CORE.

- Finally, we discussed some alternate models at other schools and we raised the issue that there are different methods of meeting NEASC standards. Some methods allow for more student choice and students are allowed more freedom to determine which courses and programs of study they might take to meet the requirements for a B.A.

- We agreed that ROCCC was a complex report/proposal. We discussed whether to: examine the ROCCC recommendations section by section; work with the specifics as a means to address the whole; address the philosophy and use to that make recommendations about the proposed specifics.

- Because our current committee is viable until May 31, we discussed the possibility of meeting a couple of times after our May 17th meeting (which will be devoted exclusively to the CARs) to extend our conversation.

- We unanimously voted to adjourn at 5:10 p.m.