
George Scarlett, Chair

Overview:

As in the past, the main work of the committee has been to evaluate courses from students, faculty, and the curriculum committee – to decide whether courses count toward distribution, culture, and world civilization requirements. This academic year, the committee processed all of the petitions it received -- using a sub-committee structure, new petition forms and a uniform process for all three sub-committees. And we increased the functions of the Trunk website. The system has worked well this year and is recommended for future ARB committees.

Petitions for courses now go through (need to be approved by) relevant department chairs or a department’s program representative – including petitions for ex-college courses. Ex-college courses have one ex-college representative for all ex-college courses. That person follows the same procedures as are followed by any Tufts professor petitioning for a course to count toward a requirement.

With regard to the Trunk website, Maxine Bisazza has continued to develop the website so that each sub-committee’s activities are documented, so that forms are available to all, and so that archived material from previous years can be retrieved. A fall meeting with Carol Downing produced discussions with Linda Snell to add the ARB petition process and archival process (to aid sub-committee chairs in retrieving approved courses) to SIS. Next year, a major effort should be following up with Linda Snell to further automatize the petition and review process, relying more on SIS to provide support.

There were two meetings with students – one that led to the suggestion that we improve the feedback we give to students receiving notice that their petition was rejected and the other that led to clarifying for students what the ARB is meant to accomplish and what it is not meant to accomplish (the students were looking to ARB to develop a new peace and justice distribution requirement).

Because of the unusual snow February, we were unable to hold our mid-year meeting – that meeting is scheduled to discuss “philosophical” (not process) issues that might lead to major changes in the undergraduate curriculum; the major issue for some on the ARB committee has in the past been evaluating when courses count or do not count for the World Civ. Requirement – and whether the W.C. requirement is a requirement that should be continued or dropped.

Leadership Positions for Next Year:

Chair:
At our end-of-the-year meeting, George Ellmore volunteered to be next year’s chair, and the current sub-committee chairs will continue as sub-committee chairs for the coming year.

Sub-Committee Chairs:

Joe DeBold is continuing as the sub-committee chair for distribution requirements.

Laura Baffoni-Licata is continuing as sub-committee chair for culture and language requirements,

Nancy Levy-Konesky is continuing as sub-committee chair for world civilization requirements.
Issues for Discussion

While the streamlined ARB continues to work well to make ARB more efficient, the main conceptual issues continue to be the following:

1. Culture is the most obvious ongoing conceptual issue – in part because culture no longer has a clear, geographical criterion for defining but also because so many new culture petitions have to do with so-called “trans-boundary” courses on global issues such as health; without a clear geographical criterion, we have in place a fifty-percent or more rule to decide whether a course has enough content about a culture to count toward the culture requirement – however, it is difficult, to say the least, to apply this rule with great certainty. Similarly, with trans-boundary” courses, it is difficult to determine just how much a course is introducing students to perspectives from other cultures vs. speaking about a global issue from one, American, perspective mainly. We need more discussion to develop better criteria or better ways to measure.

2. Another conceptual issues has to do with the overlap between petitions for culture and petitions for world civilization. The overlap seems to have grown now that students do not generally take “dedicated”, “World Civilization” courses – raising the question of whether we really need a separate world civilization requirement. We have no answer to this question, only the feeling that the question needs to be raised and discussed. In fact, several on the ARB committee feel that it is time to seriously consider doing away with the World Civilization requirement – and three from the committee expressed this view at a meeting headed by Dean Bauer.

Concluding Remarks:

This report could not be complete without mentioning the outstanding support given to the committee by Maxine Bisazza. Maxine has provided all of the background work needed to keep the committee organized, on time, and with much needed supports.