

Final Proposal

Substitute Motion: CEPP moves that the faculty adopt the core curriculum described below.

Rationale:

CEPP proposes that the faculty revise the core curriculum, through reducing and rationalizing the all-college requirements. We believe that the existing curriculum serves us well in its focus on liberal arts educational values, but imposes constraints that may narrow students' educational opportunities.

Organizing Principles

Early in their discussions the members of CEPP agreed that organizing principles were necessary to guide the committee's thinking. The following statements summarize the principles that provide the basis for CEPP's recommendations to the faculty:

- All-college requirements should insure that students develop foundational skills and understandings in knowledge areas that are central to a liberal arts education. In defining these central areas, the members of CEPP have taken into account the views of Skidmore faculty (gathered in meetings and conversations throughout the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 academic years), Skidmore educational tradition as articulated in the college's mission and vision statements, and current national trends as outlined in the American Association of College and University's white papers: "Contemporary Understandings of Liberal Education" (1998); "Education: The Changing Agenda" (1999); "Mapping Interdisciplinary Studies" (1999); and "Survey on Diversity Requirements" (2000).
- The language and intent of our revisions should focus on student learning and maintain a balance between the complementary goals of achieving (1) student understanding of central disciplinary content and (2) student competence in essential skills (e.g., critical reading, fluent writing, and quantitative understanding).
- A revised core curriculum should be efficient in its use of faculty resources and student time, and its structure should be readily comprehensible to both students and faculty.
- A revised core curriculum should enable students to take responsibility for their own educational goals by allowing them to select from a broad set of courses that are consistent with all-college goals. The role of academic advising will be critical in guiding students as they learn to take responsibility for their own education.
- The all-college requirements should provide an educational foundation, but should not be designed to achieve all of the goals of a Skidmore education. Work in both the major and elective courses should supplement the core curriculum, providing students with critical opportunities to pursue a liberal arts education.

Requirements

1. Expository Writing (1 course):

Through the successful completion of one designated writing course, students learn how to develop a thesis and organize an essay around it with appropriate transitions between paragraphs and between sentences. They learn how to reduce grammatical and spelling errors through proofreading. Students develop an understanding of the need for evidence that supports assertions and to write with the reader in mind. This requirement must be fulfilled by the end of the sophomore year. Those students who need to take EN103, "Writing Seminar I," as preparation for meeting this

requirement, must do so by the end of their first year.

2. Quantitative Reasoning (1 course):

In QR1 students demonstrate proficiency in basic quantitative skills (e.g., arithmetic, percentage and percent change, practical geometry, linear equations and linear growth, compound interest and exponential growth, data presentation and description, basic probability and statistics, and intelligent use of a computational technology). Students must fulfill the QR1 prerequisite in one of the following four ways: (1) scoring 630 or better on the MSAT I exam; (2) scoring 570 or better on any mathematics SAT II exam; (3) passing the College's quantitative reasoning examination before the end of the first year; or (4) successfully completing MA100 before the end of the sophomore year.

Students build upon and apply quantitative reasoning skills in the context of specific academic disciplines by successfully completing a designated QR2 course. All students must fulfill the QR2 requirement before the end of the junior year.

3. Interdisciplinary Study (2 courses):

The Liberal Studies program provides an integrative educational experience for all students. It includes two requirements:

Liberal Studies 1-Human Experience: In this single, team-taught course all first-year students learn the ways in which different academic disciplines raise questions and seek answers concerning human experience, and develop the ability to define central ideas in readings and lectures presented in a variety of forms.

Liberal Studies 2: Students engage in interdisciplinary study that extends and focuses the inquiries begun in LS1. Students are required to complete one LS2 course successfully before the end of their sophomore year.

4. Breadth Component (4 courses):

The purpose of the breadth requirements is to ensure that students come to know and understand the central questions, content, and types of analysis that characterize the major knowledge domains of the liberal arts: the humanities, arts, social sciences, and natural sciences. Students who have completed these requirements should be able to identify, understand and evaluate the significance of continuously developing knowledge in each of these domains. Courses fulfilling the breadth requirements will ordinarily be at the introductory level.

Students must successfully complete one course in each of the following fields:

Natural Sciences: Students actively engage in the process of understanding the natural world through the use of scientific methods. Students study phenomena that are the product of natural processes and are known through the senses rather than only through thought or intuition. Through the laboratory component of courses meeting this requirement, students will design and execute experiments (where appropriate as dictated by the discipline), collect data by observation and/or experimentation, and analyze data. Student learning goals thus include mastery of both content and process.

Courses in this category are typically, but not exclusively, offered in biology, chemistry, exercise science, geoscience, physics, and psychology.

Social Sciences: Students study the organizational structure of human societies. They learn about the origins, functions, dynamics and relations of large-scale social forces (such as institutions and cultures) and their intersections with the individual and small groups. In addition, students explore the connections between historical processes and contemporary social issues. Social scientific inquiry uses a combination of conventional scientific methods and humanistic, qualitative approaches.

Courses in this category are typically, but not exclusively, offered in American studies, anthropology, economics, government, history, and sociology.

Humanities: Students examine and reflect upon human culture as expressed in historical tradition, literature and languages, art and music, ideas and beliefs. Students learn about diverse heritages, customs and values that form patterns and analogies but not general laws. The humanities search for an understanding of the unique value of the particulars within human contexts and thereby create a climate that encourages freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry.

Courses in this category are typically, but not exclusively, offered in art history, classics, dance, literature (in English and in other languages) music, philosophy, religion, and theatre.

Arts: Students actively engage in the making or performing of artworks as modes of creative invention, interpretation, expression, and discovery. Through the critique and analysis of artworks, students develop a context for and an understanding of their own creative output as well as the creations of others. The fundamental student learning goals include the advancement of technical proficiency and the refinement of critical aesthetic sensibility.

Courses in this category are typically, but not exclusively, offered in creative writing, dance, music, studio (visual) art, and theater.

5. Culture-Centered Inquiry (2 courses):

In Culture-Centered Inquiry students learn that culturally based perspectives and values are not universal and in so doing enhance their ability to interact with persons from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Students fulfill this requirement by completing:

1. One course in a foreign language, and
2. One course designated as either Non-Western Culture or Cultural Diversity Study.

Non-Western Culture: Students investigate a way of life and set of cultural assumptions significantly different from Western perspectives. In these courses, students examine the social, political, literary, aesthetic or linguistic arrangements of cultures.

Cultural Diversity: Students investigate the interaction of culturally distinct peoples within a given socio-political context. These courses may focus on diversity in the United States or on inter-cultural relations in other contexts. However, at least one of the groups examined will have non-western origins.

Foreign Literature and Language: Students expand their use of a foreign language or their understanding of the literature of that language by studying in its non-translated form. A student may choose a course from the language and literature courses offered by the departments of Classics or Foreign Languages.

NOTES:

Courses may “double-count” for two of the three following categories: the conventional proficiencies (EW, QR), Culture-Centered Inquiry, or Breadth. “Triple-counting” will not be permitted. Under this proposal students will need ten courses to fulfill the all-college requirements (not including Writing Seminar 1 or QR1) compared to 11-15 courses under the existing curriculum. With maximum double-counting, students could complete the requirements in six courses compared to eight courses in the current system.

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