To: Weinberg Faculty  
FR: Curriculum Policy Committee (CPC)  
DA: December 4, 2018  
RE: Proposed modifications to the Weinberg College Degree Requirements

Overview:

After a series of meetings considering the issue, the WCAS Curriculum Policy Committee unanimously approved the proposal for changes to the Weinberg College Undergraduate Degree Requirements on December 4, 2018. The proposal now passes to the full WCAS faculty for discussion and vote.

In detail:

The Curriculum Policy Committee is an interdisciplinary, standing committee made up of continuing faculty and undergraduate students from WCAS (listed below). The CPC is charged with vetting and approving (or rejecting) significant curriculum changes.

A set of proposed modifications to the Weinberg College Degree Requirements was submitted to the Weinberg College Curriculum Policy Committee early in the fall quarter of 2018. This proposal is the culmination of some 2 years of work by the ad hoc Committee on Degree Requirements (chaired by Ann Bradlow, Associate Dean for Academic Initiatives & Professor of Linguistics), the faculty who participated in the Foundational Disciplines Convention, and Dean Adrian Randolph. A synthesis of these endeavors was presented to the Curriculum Policies Committee. After a series of meetings and discussions, the CPC unanimously voted to endorse the recommendations for consideration by the full faculty.

The CPC’s usual practice is to vote and report, but CPC members want to convey their enthusiasm for the proposal and highlight noteworthy aspects for Weinberg Faculty. What follows are some of the aspects of the change that individual members of the committee particularly appreciated about the proposal.

Weinberg College Level Learning Goals:
CPC members appreciate that the revised statement of College-level learning goals is elegant and clear. In our deliberations, one committee member said, “The statement of overarching learning goals is simple and powerful - observe, critique, reflect, express. I'm already thinking about how I will incorporate discussion of these imperatives into all my classes at Northwestern” (Faculty Member).

First-Year Seminar:
All of the committee members agreed that, “The re-imagining of the fall quarter seminar . . . will open up new possibilities for the types of assessment and teaching and even topics that may be offered in these key introductory courses” (Student Member). Faculty agree that the new Freshman Seminar structure, “will help students adjust to college in a relatively stress free manner,” and are pleased that these courses will continue to be taught by faculty members.
**Writing Requirements:**
CPC members are also enthusiastic about the proposed new structure of the writing requirement which includes an early writing requirement and a discipline-specific 300-level writing course. One committee member said, “I fully support the modifications to the WCAS writing proficiency requirement. A 300 level course that satisfies the Advanced Expression learning goals will give our students the opportunity to focus on effective communication in [their] field.” Another said, “students will have writing exposure early on in school, and then also in their later years after they have had some time in school. This seems like a nice way to grow as a writer at different stages in the academic journey.”

**When Cultures Meet:**
CPC members unanimously applaud the addition of “when cultures meet” overlays. A faculty member said, “I am most compelled by the overlay requirements that centers the politics of cultural interactions and cultural exchange. I am particularly excited that they offer all students the opportunity to grapple with questions of inequality, justice, inclusion, and diversity.” Students were similarly enthusiastic, saying this requirement is “a necessity, and key to the broad education and reflective student that WCAS endeavors to create.”

We look forward to discussing this exciting curriculum proposal.

With kind regards,
The Curriculum Policies Committee

Prof. Laura B Nielsen (chair), Sociology & Legal Studies
Prof. Kyla Ebels-Duggan, Philosophy
Prof. Steve Jacobsen, Earth and Planetary Sciences
Prof. Jennifer Nash, Gender & Sexuality Studies and African American Studies
Prof. Robin Nusslock, Psychology & Institute for Policy Research
Prof. Heather Pinkett, Molecular Biosciences
Thomas Ritz, SAB representative to CPC from Legal Studies (a senior)
Dillon Saks, SAB representative to CPC from Economics (a junior)
Prof. Mary Finn (ex officio), Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs & English
Prof. Laura Panko (ex officio), Assistant Dean for Curriculum and Assessment & Biological Sciences
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<td>Cristina Traina</td>
<td>In addition to my thanks for the hard work devoted to the proposal, I have two comments. First, I do not believe that we can afford to delay the question whether the number of courses required for graduation should be reduced to 42 or even to 36. The latter would require restructuring majors and reconsidering the number of classes required in each of the distro areas. But this is not something we can put off if we wish to retain the Pell-eligible students we recruit and keep all students out of the hospital. Far better to take some extra time and get it right, because all the salutary changes we are considering will be thrown back on the table if we delay discussion of the number of courses required for graduation. Second, I agree that language about difference as well as justice, power, and and/or inequality should be reintroduced into &quot;When Cultures Meet.&quot;</td>
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<td>Mark Witte</td>
<td>I may have this wrong, but if we change the treatment of AP credits or make other changes with the result that students take more foreign language in their first year, this will result in less ability to experiment with a wide array of classes that would aid in selecting a major.</td>
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<td>dario fernandez-morera</td>
<td>I see no need to change DR. Students do very well as is. If it is not broken dont fix it</td>
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<td>Cynthia Nazarian</td>
<td>I strongly disagree with the proposal to reduce the first-year seminar requirement from two to one. The proposed replacement is insufficient for numerous reasons. First, because critical and analytical writing is discipline-specific—it's the core of the humanities, not STEM fields whose methods are more investigative than rhetorical. Secondly, the proposal would push evaluating student writing from the first year back to the fourth, which is when students typically write honors thesis. If an honors thesis shows unsatisfactory writing, there is no time left to remedy. Thirdly, honors thesis are NOT writing exercises, but research exercises. Faculty who evaluate them do not do so primarily on the basis of writing; to assume that this can take the place of a quarter-long first-year seminar is incorrect. If there is a problem with the existing first-year seminars or if they are not sufficiently focused on writing, then a better solution would be to ensure that they are taught by faculty who practice critical/analytical writing (i.e. by humanities and soft social sciences faculty). Dropping the second first-year seminar threatens the goal of ensuring all students are able to write convincingly and clearly.</td>
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<td>Jili Sun</td>
<td>I support the conception of 2 overlay in the degree requirement, because it will help students to observe, critique, reflect and express many crucial phenomena happening in the US and in the world. It will help them in a long term in their profession and in their life. I definitely heard the reasons of opposition in the discussion in terms of time management for students, adjustment of the current existing courses designs, the possibility of teaching these topics. We should remain open in the design of those new courses, the way to measure the words in the statement etc. but they are very important themes of discussion in every student's life. This challenge of change is worth taking.</td>
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<td>Christiane Rey</td>
<td>Will students be able to fulfill the second part of the written expression requirement, connected to a particular field of study, by taking an advanced writing course in a foreign language?</td>
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<td>Sara Broaders</td>
<td>I like the change to the writing requirements because I think its a great idea for students be exposed to discipline-specific expression. At the same time, I think that writing requires regular practice and that the change sets students up to struggle by requiring writing in the 1st year and then not again until students enroll in 300-level coursework. I think it would be much better to require an &quot;Advanced Expression&quot; course in addition to TWO earlier writing courses. Assuming that any course could be designated as a writing class, students could benefit from greater exposure to writing without needing to take additional courses.</td>
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<td>The course that would best fit the advanced writing requirement in Psychology is PSYCH 205-Research Methods, rather than a 300-level course. If the proposal could be broadened to indicate that departments could &quot;flag&quot; which of their courses have a substantial critical writing component, that might be better than having a 300-level course rule.</td>
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