

Honors College Curriculum Faculty Actions Spring 1996

Faculty Actions

I. Principles and goals of an honors college curriculum (pg. 4)

As a public honors college, St. Mary's is committed to the ideal of providing excellent and challenging education to a diverse population. The College has the following goals for its curriculum:

1. To maintain high academic standards
2. To create a sense of intellectual community in which the academic disciplines are appreciated as unique and as interrelated
3. To develop our students' ability to think critically and creatively, to foster curiosity and promote inquiry
4. To encourage student choice of educational goals and courses
5. To emphasize learning between faculty and students and between students and their peers
6. To sponsor a culminating project of quality and originality
7. To hold all community members to high standards for intellectual and creative endeavors, and to forge a sense of community responsibility and personal integrity in its members so that they will be able to function successfully and meaningfully in a world that is increasingly complex and interdependent

As an honors college, St. Mary's will seek talented students who are serious about their education. As a public college, it will continue to recruit a student body that is diverse socio-economically, ethnically, and by age. These two characteristics of academic strength and social diversity define the mission of this college.

II. General Education Curriculum

A. Course revisions

1. Reform of the legacy requirement from a two-course sequence to one core course in history (HIST 105). (pg. 5)
2. Abolition of the senior seminar requirement (pg. 6)

B. Guidelines for general education courses (pg. 6)

The general education program at St. Mary's College provides the following elements within the liberal arts curriculum: (1) breadth of study, introducing students to a number of academic disciplines, and (2) synthesis, encouraging students to see relationships across these disciplines. The Honors College curriculum should develop these two motifs of breadth and synthesis to the greatest extent possible.

General education courses are the purview of the entire faculty, and all components of the general education curriculum are of interest to all faculty members. Of necessity, the program is based in the disciplines, and initial responsibility for the development of most component courses rests with the discipline faculty. However, each discipline faculty should make every effort to attend to the special needs of general education and seek the view of the faculty at large. Further, interested faculty members across disciplines should be encouraged to develop alternative GEC offerings.

The following guidelines are to be observed in forming courses for this curriculum:

1. In most cases, this curriculum is formed of categories housing one or more of the academic

disciplines represented at the College. All of these categories are defined by statements of goals, and courses within these categories should address these goals rather than be guided by the imperatives of major programs. In many cases, it will be necessary for the general education offering to meet a major requirement, however, the general education course must be attentive to those students who may not seek further study in the field. It should aim to convey significant content and methodologies of the discipline or area of study by focusing on broad themes, concepts, and theories.

2. Many general education courses will represent introductions to the academic disciplines of the liberal arts. Such courses should represent the discipline and reveal the historical and cultural context out of which the discipline arose. They also should reveal the operative principles of the study and allow for statement of and challenge to the specific point of view of the discipline.
3. A general education course that represents a particular discipline should strive to show the relationship of that discipline to other fields of study. Cross-disciplinary study also may be represented in special courses developed for this curriculum and/or promoted in the method of team teaching.
4. Many courses in general education will be amenable to addressing issues of concern in the modern world. When appropriate, these issues should be represented
5. Courses in general education have a special obligation to address learning skills to the greatest degree possible and provide opportunities for the reading of significant texts, careful writing, discussion, quantitative manipulation, and critical and creative analysis.
6. The number of choices of courses permitted in each category should be limited in order to foster the development of special courses for the GEC, to allow students the opportunity for shared experiences, and to promote the plan for linked courses.
7. In general, these courses should be placed at the 100 and 200 levels, to allow students to complete most of their general education requirements in the first two years of study. Exceptions may be considered for special reasons, such as courses which promote synthesis or diversity.
8. It is desirable that the size of general education courses be as small as possible. Obviously, the number of sections will be linked to the total number of students to be served, to available resources, and to the specific nature of the enterprise.
9. In most cases, general education courses will be served by existing courses. However, it is important to understand the special character and significance of the general education curriculum. To retain the vitality of this program, continuing discussion and review are necessary. The modification of existing courses and the development of new courses should be promoted, and resources must be provided for such purposes. The goal is to provide courses that respond in a meaningful and coherent way to the particular goals of the GEC

C. Formation of a GEC committee (pg. 7)

Membership of the GEC committee shall be one faculty member elected from each division, one at-large faculty member, and two students.

The GEC Committee is charged:

1. To direct and promote the development of the General Education Curriculum of the College.
2. To hold workshops on the General Education Curriculum for the purpose of promoting the

coherence of the Curriculum.

3. To receive and evaluate requests for support of projects that will strengthen the General Education Curriculum. The committee shall advocate for money in support of these projects through the normal budget process.
4. To review proposals for courses for inclusion in the General Education Curriculum, and with the consent of the relevant participating departments (those currently offering courses with the given component), recommend to the Faculty Senate the approval or denial of such proposals. The review process would follow the procedures outlined below, depending on circumstances:
 - a In cases where the proposed course is under the HEGIS code of a participating department, the consent of that department will be necessary and sufficient
 - b In cases where the proposed course is under the HEGIS code of a non-participating department, the consent of participating departments will be necessary. In cases of disagreement between or among participating departments, the Committee will make an independent recommendation to the Faculty Senate.
5. To receive requests from students for exceptions to the GEC by substitution or transfer, and in consultation with the relevant departments, approve or deny such requests.

D. Procedures for approval of additions to GEC

1. Programs wishing to propose a course to serve as an addition or a substitution to existing components of the GEC must prepare a proposal containing:
 - a course Catalog description
 - b narrative description of the course
 - c proposed teaching rotation
 - d name(s) of proposed instructor(s)
 - e indication of the component of the GEC where the course would reside
 - f narrative discussion of how the proposed course conforms to the published goals of the component where the course would reside
2. The proposal must be submitted to the curriculum committee (or its successor).
3. Upon receiving the proposal, the committee will request a recommendation from the department or departments which at that time offer courses within the specified component of the GEC.
4. After the committee receives the solicited recommendation, the consideration of the proposal will follow the current procedures for course approval.

III. Cross-disciplinary study programs

A. Statement of purpose (pg. 9)

1. To promote increased understanding of the interrelationships among traditional areas of a liberal arts curriculum
2. To encourage faculty and students to work together across disciplinary lines in order to explore cross-disciplinary issues and themes of common interest
3. To encourage students to take electives and to group them coherently around issues and themes.

4. To foster curricular attention to geographical and thematic areas of study that may not be well represented by existing majors, and that, as newer intellectual fields, often promote diverse patterns of teaching and learning, and attention to contemporary concerns and to issues of diversity and equity.

B. Definition (pg. 10)

1. Cross-disciplinary study programs involve at least two disciplines.
2. Programs require from 16 to 24 credit hours of study, at least 8 of which must be at the upper division level.
3. Programs must include an integrative component such as an introductory course, upper-level seminar, or other group activity.
4. Students must declare their participation in such a program at least by the end of the first week of their senior year, and will be encouraged to apply by the end of the junior year.
5. Students who declare their participation before the senior year may, at the discretion of the program committee, have the option of doing their St Mary's project in the program, provided that they secure the approval of the department in which they are majoring.
6. Students who successfully complete the minimal requirements for programs will have that achievement noted on their transcripts.

C. Approval procedures (pg. 11)

1. To achieve recognition as a cross-disciplinary program, the same process will be followed as for the establishment of majors.
2. Such programs will be proposed by a group of at least four faculty representing at least two disciplines.
3. A proposal should state:
 - a. What the program will add to the curriculum, why it is appropriate for the St. Mary's curriculum, and how its existence will benefit the College in co-curricular and other ways.
 - b. How the proposers have developed the sense of purpose, community, and identification necessary to propose a formal curricular entity, and what commitments they have for active faculty participants over the next several years. In the case of subject- or theme-based programs, successful development and teaching of a course can be especially helpful in demonstrating the necessary sense of community and identity.
 - c. A coherent, multi-disciplinary curriculum of 16 to 24 credits with a common curricular component, and whether St Mary's projects will be an option. (Project credit cannot count as part of the required credits.)
 - d. Any details regarding prerequisites, declaration, advising, and other aspects of the program that go beyond the minimal definition above. Programs should be prepared to discuss any implicit prerequisites and how they might minimize them.
 - e. Available resources for the program, including courses already in the curriculum, interested faculty and administrators who may not be on the program committee, library resources, programmatic and administrative resources available to the program, and any co-curricular and area resources and opportunities.
 - f. Additional resources that are required or desired, including courses, faculty expertise, course releases, library acquisitions, internship or co-curricular opportunities, and additional general program needs such as program funds and administrative resources.

- g Requirements for St Mary's projects and procedures for student application to conduct a project in the program.
 - h A proposal for program administration that reflects the particular needs, resources, and goals of that program.
4. The approval of proposed programs must consider the level of faculty support and current and expected curricular resources available to the program, the program's significance to the curriculum in light of the College's mission, and available College resources.
 5. The planning committee will review each program every three years to determine its continuing viability and to provide any advice on future directions. Outside reviews of the program may be requested by the program and/or by the planning committee.

D. Administrative procedures (pg. 12)

1. When a program is approved program participants shall propose faculty representatives for a program committee and program coordinator(s) to the Provost for approval. Service on these program positions is considered a significant form of faculty service. Members of the committee may, with the agreement of the program participants, serve without term; coordinators will serve for a two-year term, renewable once.
2. Under the leadership of the committee coordinators, the committee members will share the advising, programmatic and other responsibilities of the program. The Provost, in consultation with the planning committee, will authorize course releases to replace faculty teaching in cross-disciplinary study courses, using funds from one faculty line reserved for this purpose.
3. The College will provide funds to support cross-disciplinary programs, including programmatic costs such as visitors, workshops, and incidental expenses such as copying and stationery. The Provost will authorize any course releases for administration of the program. Most releases will be aimed at a two-year formative period; further releases will require strong justifications in terms of the work required and the contributions of the program to the college curriculum as a whole. Requests for administrative release after the two-year formative period must be considered in light of the needs of other cross-disciplinary study programs and the curriculum generally.

Program committees will submit yearly budget requests for all support other than course releases to the Provost's office one month in advance of the deadline for budget initiatives for the following year. The Provost will place these budgets before the budget review committee, along with his or her recommendations.

IV. St. Mary's Projects

A. Project guidelines (pg. 13)

1. **General College Requirement** The completion of one St Mary's project is a general college requirement. Students may conduct their projects within a single discipline or across disciplines, including in established cross-disciplinary programs, provided they have completed sufficient required coursework in the relevant discipline(s). Projects must be approved by a department in which the student is majoring. Students in the honors program or those pursuing an independent student-designed major (ISDM) may use their honors or ISDM project to fulfill the St Mary's project requirement, provided that the requirements for the St Mary's project are met.
2. **Credit** St Mary's projects will require eight semester hours of credit.
3. **Supervision and Sponsorship.** St Mary's projects will be supervised by a faculty mentor.

designated by the faculty in the student's major or cross-disciplinary program.

4. Nature and Types of Projects The nature of the project is flexible and may be a research project or an expression of creation in the arts. It may involve collaborative work, components of internships, study abroad programs, and other experiential formats, as well as more traditional research skills. A shared group experience as part of the project is encouraged. Specific guidelines for projects are developed by majors and cross-disciplinary study programs in response to the following criteria. These guidelines are approved by the curriculum committee and published for student and faculty reference.
5. Criteria for Projects.
 - a Student-initiated Students will be responsible for proposing a project that can gain the approval and support of the sponsoring program and faculty.
 - b Methodological Competence. A St Mary's project must demonstrate methodological competence. The project must identify an area to be explored, and propose a method of inquiry appropriate for the topic and any relevant disciplines.
 - c Achievement, Synthesis, and Reflection. A St Mary's project, which may take many forms, must draw on and extend knowledge, skills of analysis, and creative achievement developed through previous academic work. The project must include a reflection on the social context, the body of literature, or the conceptual framework to which the project is a contribution.
 - d Public Presentation. A St. Mary's Project must be shared with the College community through posters, presentations, or other means.

B. Procedures for review and approval of projects (pg. 14)

1. Submission of Catalog Descriptions. The St Mary's project in each program will appear in the catalog as a course description, with the HEGIS code (e.g. BIOL, ART, HIST) reflecting the academic discipline in which the project is performed. Faculty of each program must submit a catalog description that is consistent with the Guidelines for St Mary's projects. This description must be approved by the curriculum committee before it can appear as a course in the catalog. (Cross-disciplinary program committees may choose IDIS as the HEGIS code, or they may develop their own code.)
2. Filing of a St Mary's project At the time of registration in the St Mary's project, the student must submit to the Registrar a contract form which describes the nature of the project, and is signed by the student, the faculty mentor, the student's academic adviser, the Chair of the department in which the project is being done, and in the case of cross-disciplinary studies programs, the program coordinator. This contract must propose a date of completion, sequence of credit distribution, a title, and a description that identifies the nature and type of project, the components of the project, and the form that the public presentation will take.
3. Procedures within each Program Other requirements for approval and filing of individual projects are to be established by each program of instruction as appropriate to the discipline and the nature of the project.

C. Project supervision (pg. 15)

Supervision of six eight-credit St. Mary's projects is equivalent to the teaching of one four-credit course. Supervision credits will be accrued in the faculty member's name in cases where a faculty member does not supervise six projects in a given year.

V. Honors Program

The faculty should resolve the role of the honors program within a year of the time that an honors

college curriculum is adopted

Vi. Class Schedule

The faculty should continue to pursue how a community time can be incorporated into the weekly schedule. The academic policy committee or some other faculty body be charged with this task, with a reporting deadline of December, 1996. (pg. 17)

Vii. Resources (pg. 21)

1. Endorse the target goals for honors college resources as identified as a core budget in Figure 1, goals to be pursued vigorously by the College.
2. Endorse the FY97 initiatives for curriculum development (Figure 2).
3. Endorse the FY98 initiatives identified in Figure 2, including establishing pre-tenure sabbaticals, augmenting full-year sabbaticals, adding staff for program support, and funding the volunteer student projects. Urge that the College fund these initiatives as fully as prudent given other institutional initiatives.
4. Acknowledge that the College cannot yet provide detailed answers to questions of facilities renovation and await the report of the master plan committee, which began work in February, 1996. Urge that this report be completed and circulated for College-wide review and discussion by December, 1996.
5. Reserve the right to slow implementation of the honors college curriculum if the needed resources are not forthcoming. (A formal review is proposed for fall 1999). WIT. Assessment of Implementation

The faculty shall evaluate the progress of implementation of the honors college curriculum beginning in the spring of 1999. This assessment will be presented to the faculty for review during the fall 1999 semester" (pg. 27).

IX. Transition Protocols (pp. 27)

1. At the time that the revised legacy course is developed by the history faculty and approved by the normal faculty process, successful completion of HIST 105 satisfies the legacy requirement of the GEC for all previous catalogs.
2. Successful completion of a St. Mary's project satisfies the senior seminar requirement of the GEC.
3. Beginning with the 1998-99 catalog, the St. Mary's Project will be listed as a requirement for graduation. Students completing a senior seminar will be exempt from this requirement, but the Catalog will state that this exception may be ended by faculty action and a one-year notification of students.
4. Transfer students should be allowed to come in under the catalog for the year in which they started their college education.
5. The faculty adopts the following goals for percentage of students engaging in St. Mary's projects in the designated years:

1997-98: 10-15%

1998-99: 20-25%

1999-00: 20-25%

2000-01: 50-75% 2001-02: St. Mary's Projects required of all graduating seniors.