Hi Charly,

Please can you forward the appended material to CCC members now, so they have time to digest ready for discussion at the meeting on the 21st. Please also add this as an agenda items for the 21st.

Cheers,

Geoff

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----- "My cat" is not a float. Every string should learn to swim. ------

Hi CCC,

You will recall from the last meeting the proposed changes to the university's Math and 5 Ws general education requirements. While the Math part is uncontroversial, the 5 Ws part has produced a lot of discussion, particularly in the Humanities. As an outcome the following alternative proposal has been developed, which we can send forward to UCC if you (CCC) endorse it. So, please can you read it, discuss in your departments, and be ready to vote it up or down at the meeting on the 21st. Thanks!

Cheers,

Geoff (on behalf of all the people who helped develop the proposal)

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The College of Arts and Science supports the expansion of the Writing Across the Curriculum (the 5 "W"s) requirement to a broader notion of Communication Skills. Within that broadening CAS believes that the general notion of writing is a core communication skill that should be taught consistently across the university (general education should be _general_, as "glue" that holds our undergraduate programs together as parts of one university). CAS agrees that individual _specialized_ writing requirements are appropriate for individual schools/colleges, and supports the devolution of those special requirements. In the context of this overall response, CAS notes:
+ Devolution of general education has resource implications. General education requirements should be organized at the university level to conserve resources.
+ If the current system of 5 "W"s is to be dropped, something better should be ready to replace it. This applies in CAS and at the university level.
+ It would be better to have a UCC subcommittee to assess individual schools/colleges’ general education requirements for communication skills, rather than place full responsibility on the School of
Skills, rather than place full responsibility on the School of Communication.
+ Some schools already place very high requirements on their students, and cannot afford to increase the general education requirements.
+ In order to maintain writing skills (whether general or discipline specific) it is necessary to continue developing and practicing those skills.

CAS hence opposes the proposed change, and instead proposes the following:
+ General writing skills should be retained as a university general education requirement.
+ Specialized writing and other communication skills should be devolved to the schools/colleges.
+ The development of general writing skills should be achieved by a combination of the composition requirement and something better than the current system of 5 "W"s. Whatever that combination is, it should not increase, and hopefully it can decrease, the general education load on students. CAS offers its services in the development of this new requirement, including school/college/discipline specific writing courses.
+ Beyond the development of general writing skills, the individual schools/colleges should be given the responsibility for maintaining and improving those writing skills, as well as teaching their own specialized forms of writing.
+ If this is done the UCC will responsible for assessing the university's general education writing requirement, and the schools/colleges will be responsible for assessing their own specialized writing requirements.

CAS has the following questions regarding the 5 "W"s writing requirement and the change recommended by the UCC:
+ Would it be renamed "Communication Skills"?
+ If the change goes ahead as proposed by the UCC (complete devolution), and one school/college does something that SACS does not approve of, are we all in trouble?
+ What writing and other communication skills do other schools/colleges expect their students to have when they graduate? CAS would like to confirm its belief that there is a common core of a general notion of writing, which should be taught and assessed centrally.
+ How many "W" courses are currently offered in each school/college?
+ Has the 5 "W"s writing requirement been formally or informally evaluated, to confirm or deny any claim that it's "not working"? If not, CAS suggests this be done before making any change. It would be useful to know what aspects (e.g., not enough classes, individual classes not achieving the goal, not exposing students throughout their career) are working, not working, and not evaluated.

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