INTERIM REPORT OF THE SENATE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN HONORS COLLEGE AND A NEW INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES PROGRAM

POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY SENATE ACTION SUBMITTED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Sheldon Davis
Kate Guiler
Rick Momeyer, Chair
Susan Mosley-Howard
Chris Myers
Tamika Nunley
Kate Rousmaniere
Karen Shaffer, ex officio
John Skillings

COMMENTS ON ANYTHING IN THIS INTERIM REPORT WILL BE RECEIVED IN THREE WAYS BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 28 AND MIDNIGHT, OCTOBER 8:

1. The ad hoc committee will hold three open hearings during the first week of October. At these open hearings any and all concerned parties are invited to testify. The hearings will be:
   
   • Monday, Oct. 2, 3-5 P.M. in Shideler 115
   • Wednesday, Oct. 4, 7-9 P.M. in Leonard Theater of Peabody Hall
   • Friday, Oct. 6, 3-5 P.M. in 111 Harrison (limited to testimony from students only)

2. Postings to the web site can be made (beginning 28 Sept.) at http://forums.muohio.edu/western_and_honors/

3. Private communications may be sent to the committee chair, Rick Momeyer, at momeyerw@muohio.edu or Department of Philosophy, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056

THE COMMITTEE’S CHARGE AND PLAN OF ACTION

The Miami University Senate created this ad hoc committee in the wake of dissatisfaction with the process by which a recommendation to eliminate the School of Interdisciplinary Studies made its way to the Board of Trustees. The Senate gave the committee three charges:
1. Bring to Senate a recommendation on whether the existing Honors and Scholars Program (H&S) should be recast as an Honors College;
2. Bring to Senate a recommendation on whether the Western College Program (WCP) should become an additional component of H&S (additional to Harrison, Honors and Oxford Scholars);
3. Bring to Senate a recommendation on whether some form of the WCP should be retained that would include a self-designed major and have a residential component, what might be its curricular content, and where it would be administratively located.

The committee began meeting in late July and took as its first task clarifying its options with respect to its charge. Recognizing that we operated in a climate of some distrust and suspicion, we next set about devising a strategy to assure openness and transparency in our deliberations. We came up with a Five Stage Strategy, as follows:

**STAGE ONE**: This was the period during which we organized, clarified our mission, and developed a meeting plan.

**STAGE TWO**: At this stage, we spoke with key stakeholders in the WCP and Honors: staff, advisors, students; interdisciplinary program directors, the Dean of the College of Arts and Science, the President and Provost, and Residence Life directors. In the very brief time available, we limited these conversations to persons directly involved in programming and those who make the crucial decisions on the issues with which we were dealing.

**STAGE THREE**: Stage three is this document: the publication of a range of recommendations we are considering making to Senate for action.

**STAGE FOUR**: Stage four is the time during which we gather feedback from the broader community (including students, faculty, staff, and alumni). This feedback may be given in three ways: testimony at open hearings, postings on the discussion board of a web site, or by private communication directly to the committee (Cf. p. 1)

**STAGE FIVE**: After the open hearings and postings and private communications are shared with all committee members, the committee will reconvene, as often as needed between Oct. 9 and Oct. 20 to formulate its recommendations, now informed by this feedback. These recommendations will be submitted to the University Senate on Monday, Oct. 23 (to be held on the Hamilton campus). According to Senate rules, no action on these recommendations will be taken at that meeting. But each subsequent Monday of the semester, as necessary, Senate will deliberate and act on these recommendations.
BRIEF OVERVIEW OF WHAT FOLLOWS

The recommendations the ad hoc committee is considering making to the University Senate are explained in detail in what follows. Here we highlight two significant aspects of a future WCP that we especially need advice on and which affect how the detailed recommendations that follow get implemented:

1. Whether a future WCP should be configured as
   • a traditional department in a division, or
   • as an interdisciplinary program in a division, most likely the College of Arts and Science (CAS), or
   • as an interdisciplinary program reporting directly to the provost or to multiple deans.

2. Whether the faculty teaching in the WCP:
   • hold continuing, open ended appointments, or
   • hold time limited appointments (of 2, 5, or a maximum of 10 years), or
   • hold continuing appointments in a department whose main mission is to run the WCP and whose faculty, along with Faculty Affiliates whose service to the program is time limited, teach the courses in the WCP, or
   • some other combination of the above.

What is common to all the models that could be assembled by the above possibilities is a program in which:
• students spending four years in the WCP design their own major and do a senior project;
• students spending only two years in residence in the Western Living-Learning Community have the opportunity to (largely) satisfy Miami Plan Foundation (MPF) requirements, some CAS liberal education requirements, and complete some Honors Experiences; and
• any Miami student may partially satisfy MPF (and CAS liberal education) requirements with appropriate courses, and do so whether or not that student chooses residency on the Western campus.

RECOMMENDATION SET ONE: THE WESTERN COLLEGE PROGRAM AND THE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM CONSIDERED TOGETHER

There are two matters on which the ad hoc committee is now prepared to make recommendations to the University Senate:
   1. The WCP in some form should continue with a new curriculum and administrative structure.
   2. The WCP should not be part of the Honors and Scholars Program.
Explanation of 1:

1). Even in recommending the elimination of divisional status for the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (SIS) in which the WCP was administratively housed, President Garland said (in his June, 2006 memo): “I see…the potential reconfiguring of the Western Program into a more appropriate structure not as an abandonment of the Western tradition, but as an opportunity to build on that tradition to make it a stronger and more central focus of the university curriculum.”

2). That said, the ad hoc committee has no desire to recommend simply an administrative relocation of the current WCP and its staffing. There must be acknowledgment that after more than 30 years the program has developed some serious problems, well documented in a variety of academic reviews that do not need to be rehearsed here, and that have not been successfully addressed for an extended period of time.

Explanation of 2:

1.) After extensive conversation with both Honors staff, students and advisory committee members on the one hand, and current WCP staff and students on the other, we could find no enthusiasm on the part of either for a forced “marriage.” There seemed to be willingness on the part of each to accommodate such an arrangement if necessary, but little conviction that it was necessary or desirable. This of course does not exclude, what we would wish especially to encourage: cooperation between a new WCP and the H&S Program.

2.) Fundamentally, all parties seemed to be of the view that the two programs are distinctly different because students are selected for the Honors programs on the basis of academic achievement, and students elect the WCP on the basis of academic interest. There is no more rationale for incorporating the WCP into Honors than there is for incorporating any other academic program—except that a new version of the WCP will need a new administrative location, and no other academic program does.

THE WESTERN COLLEGE PROGRAM

We note that Western campus has been home to a residential college and distinctive programming for more than 150 years. This committee acknowledges the history, traditions, and mission of both the original Western College (founded in 1853) and the Western College Program of Miami University. Western’s intensive living-learning community, centered in Peabody Hall, has nurtured students known for intellectual risk-taking and social engagement. WCP students, and its alumni, clearly value their education. In making recommendations about the future of Western, we are challenged to preserve those underlying qualities that best contribute to its mission. We believe this is possible, even while suggesting new programmatic and administrative structures to address issues raised in previous reviews and actions that have ended WCP’s divisional status.

WCP’s most distinctive contribution to Miami resides in its intellectual premise, which holds that no academic discipline is privileged above others, and that when students
explore the intersections (and barriers) among disciplines they can help advance a knowledgeable, creative, and just society. This premise helps provide a learning climate that has been particularly attractive to students who value intellectual risk-taking. These students are required to create and defend their own educational choices. Implicit in this learning model is that by taking responsibility for their own learning contract, students take control of the process of education and its application to their own lives. Thus at the end of Stage Two, the ad hoc committee has determined that the key features of a WCP to be preserved where possible are:

1). An integrative and interdisciplinary core curriculum concentrated in the first two years;
2). A residential living-learning community that coordinates co-curricular programming with the course offerings and is based in the historically significant Peabody Hall;
3). A self-designed major approved in the sophomore year and pursued thereafter;
4). A senior project;
5) The name ‘Western.’

The major challenge for the ad hoc committee has been to imagine a structure for a new WCP that builds on the Western tradition, strengthens the central focus of that program’s intellectual premise, and successfully addresses structural impediments to success. One of these problems, for instance, is the relative inaccessibility of the current WCP to non-Western students. The reasons for this are many, but one structural barrier has been that the current curriculum does not always lend itself to a course-for-course satisfaction of (MPF) requirements. Another problem is that where the course offerings do satisfy MPF requirements, they do not satisfy the additional liberal education requirements of the College of Arts and Science (CAS).

In trying to imagine a new WCP that will not merely survive but prosper and restore innovation and creativity, we have sought to suggest guidelines that would foster such an end. It seems to the committee that emphasizing the first two years of curriculum promises the best prospects for engaging Miami students interested in one or more of the following in their education:

- A small, intense, extended living-learning community that is together for many courses and correlated co-curricular programming over two years;
- An integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum that constitutes an alternative path through the MPF requirements usually met by what was always conceived to be the lead model, not the only model;
- Daily, continuing contact with a faculty closely engaged with students in class and through advising;
- The possibility (not a requirement) of continuing for two more years in a program that offers the opportunity for designing one’s own major course of study.

Beyond being guided by an intellectual vision of interdisciplinarity and student responsibility for learning, we also believe that a new WCP needs a unifying theme, and we will suggest at least one such possibility in what follows.
RECOMMENDATION SET TWO: WCP CURRICULUM

A new curriculum for a revitalized WCP should, in the view of the ad hoc committee:

- Satisfy as far as possible as a two year “package,” and through individual course offerings, all MPF requirements and all CAS liberal education requirements (except the foreign language requirement), and, to some degree, Honors Experience requirements for Honors Program students. These requirements should be met by the core curriculum in the first two years, consisting of not more than 6 (?) courses in year one and 4 (?) courses in year two.

- Students electing to satisfy all MPF requirements and/or CAS liberal education requirements through the WCP two year curriculum (or as many as the first two year curriculum of the new WCP program allows) should commit themselves as well to a two year residency on the Western campus and the integrated co-curricular programming that accompanies the first two year core curriculum. Other students not committed to satisfying MPF requirements in this alternative manner may take courses on a space available basis, and in doing so, satisfy the appropriate MPF and CAS requirements. Also, on a space available basis (with priority given to those committing to the full two year curriculum), such students are welcome to reside in the living/learning community that is Peabody Hall.

- Students successfully completing the first two years of the WCP are not presumed to be committed to the rest of the WCP, i.e., junior and senior seminar offerings, self-designed major, and senior project—or whatever that may be. They may (on a space available basis) continue to live on the Western campus if they so choose, but are free to pursue any other major in any other division that appeals.

- For at least the first two years of this new core curriculum being offered, admission will be limited to 70-75 entering students. This is half the residency capacity of Peabody Hall, and allows for its full occupation by both a first year and a second year class.

RECOMMENDATION SET THREE: THE CREATION OF A NEW CURRICULUM FOR THE WCP

- A faculty committee, consisting of some current WCP faculty and some non-WCP faculty, should be appointed to develop a new curriculum along the guidelines approved by University Senate.

- The new curriculum designed by members of this committee (and to be implemented by at least some of the members) should explore adopting such a theme as “Global Citizenship” or “The Environment and Social Change” around which to orient the curriculum.

- The creation of a curriculum beyond the first two years should await the appointment of a faculty for the new WCP, as this is appropriately their responsibility.
• The faculty committee charged with devising a two year core curriculum for a new WCP should as well be charged with consulting widely and broadly with relevant parties, including at a minimum:
  1. The CAS curriculum committee.
  2. The Liberal Education Council—to explore both how the new curriculum can satisfy the MPF requirements and to receive guidance on how to make the courses accessible to students from across campus.
  3. Residence Life.
  4. The University Honors Program—to identify points where the curriculum can appropriately offer the enriched learning opportunities needed to grant Honors Experience credit to students.
  5. Admissions—on how best to promote to incoming students this unique alternative way of satisfying MPF requirements and begin one’s university experience as a member of an extended living-learning community for two years.
  6. The International Studies Program, should a theme of Global Citizenship be a focal point.
  7. Whatever other academic units are appropriate as the curriculum takes shape.
• This committee shall not regard itself as committed to all the current forms of instruction, course staffing models, etc. of the current WCP. Imagination and innovation, always intended to be, and at its best, characteristic of the WCP, should be their guide.
• That said, this committee must be duly attentive to making appropriate economies in programming such that projected costs of instruction do not exceed the average instructional costs in the CAS.

RECOMMENDATION SET FOUR: FACULTY IN THE WCP

We are thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of different ways of staffing a new WCP. Here are the major possibilities:
• The faculty in the new WCP could be members of a department (or program), headed by a chair (or Program Director), and the department (program) would report to the appropriate University officers (see Recommendation Set Five).
• The initial size of the faculty for an entering class of 75 might best be set at 6-8 continuing members (including chair).
• There could be a “core” faculty in the program who also hold joint appointments in the WCP and at least one other department or program, even if working full time in the WCP.
• Faculty appointments in the WCP could be on a rotating basis for tenured members of the faculty, for 2, 5 or 10 years, never to exceed a total of 10 years except by special arrangement (here left undefined).
• Tenure track faculty in the program would follow the usual course of review and reappointment until the tenure decision is made. In addition to a continuing committed full time faculty of 6-8 (on the above sorts of contract?), the program would enlist Faculty Affiliates to teach in a manner similar to how other
interdisciplinary studies (IS) programs enlist (and compensate) faculty and departments.

RECOMMENDATION SET FIVE: THE ADMINISTRATIVE LOCATION OF THE WESTERN COLLEGE PROGRAM

This is another matter this committee remains unsettled on and for which it seeks advice. We see three possible locations for the WCP (now that divisional status in a SIS has been ruled out by the Board of Trustees).

1. As a department or program in CAS. CAS is the largest division and the one for which the WCP has the most compatible program; CAS hosts the greatest number of IS programs at Miami. Being located in CAS would give the WCP access to the greatest number of students potentially attracted to its way of satisfying a plethora of university requirements and ease the burden of providing a curriculum that satisfied CAS liberal education requirements in particular.

2. The second possibility is that the WCP be a program not located in a specific division, and reporting to at least two deans, e.g., Fine Arts and CAS. We do not know if this is workable, and its precedents are not promising.

3. Finally, WCP could be a free standing and unique IS program but reporting directly to the Provost (or through an Assoc. Provost), much in the manner that the Honors and Scholars Program does currently.

And speaking of the Honors and Scholars Program leads us to

THE UNIVERSITY HONORS AND SCHOLARS PROGRAM

There is no obvious reason why a committee primarily charged with considering the future of the WCP should also be considering the question of whether our Honors and Scholars Program (H&S) should become an Honors College. Indeed, there is no self-evident reason any ad hoc committee consider this question, as on the face of it this would appear to be largely a matter of organizational and administrative structuring left to those who are responsible for organizational and administrative structuring and the process of program review. But we have been charged with considering this question, and have sought to do so conscientiously, if not as extensively as we have considered the matter of the future of the WCP.

We began by asking what problem would be addressed, perhaps even solved, by recasting the H&S as a college, and what it would look like as a college. We did not get very far on the question of what an Honors College would look like as we heard of a number of problems needing to be addressed, and no clear answers as to how these would be better addressed if the program were to become a college. Indeed, our opinion is that these issues need first be addressed before further consideration is given to transforming the H&S Program into an Honors College.
Among the more pressing of these issues were:

- H&S is categorized as a “support unit” along with Admissions, Financial Aid, etc. and reports directly to the Provost. We believe the program would greatly benefit from an Academic Program Review, which it would not get unless seen to be an academic program.
- The program needs a more stable curriculum and a better financing scheme that might assure greater curricular stability. Its very ambitious restructuring only six years ago promised several core courses in addition to first year and advanced seminars and an abundance of “.H” courses (honors sections of regular curriculum courses) across the university. The program relies heavily upon the cooperative/charitable contributions of divisions and departments for faculty and courses, and this is not always forthcoming.
- This year saw the initiation of a requirement that Ox Scholars—the largest component of the Honors Programs—achieve 10 enrichment points and a certain G.P.A. for retention. This is a good beginning, we think, to a program that may need a good bit more program development.
- Admissions to the H&S Programs have varied widely in the last two years, and some consideration may need to be given to regularizing class sizes so the program may succeed at the level it is funded.

We have two points to convey to those who will decide whether H&S becomes a college, neither of which rise to the level of requiring Senate action at this time. The first is that the strongest argument we heard for such a change was that as a college, the program would be headed by a dean, the dean would sit with the Council of Academic Deans (COAD) where s/he could make the program’s needs known to those presumed to have resources to distribute, and thereby the program would be strengthened and students benefited. We thought this a considerably better reason for H&S becoming a college than another reason frequently advanced by those advocating an Honors College, namely, that it would be a good public relations move and help attract top students by the increased prestige of belonging to an Honors College. Committee members believe that it is substantive program, not “name,” that should characterize our honors programs. The committee thinks that the issue of making the H&S Programs a College and the issue of such a program being led by a dean are quite separate. While the former is appropriately a matter for faculty (Senate) determination, the latter is more an administrative decision, and does not have to be made on the organizational title or location of the program.

The second point is that we would urge considerable caution before turning Honors into a college. We have but one college at Miami and that college is closely identified with the core mission and identity of Miami University which places a high premium on liberal education for all of its students. Thus careful and full consideration ought to be given before undermining the unique status of the College of Arts and Science at Miami.
RECOMMENDATION SET SIX: WHETHER THE MIAMI UNIVERSITY HONORS AND SCHOLARS PROGRAM SHOULD BECOME AN HONORS COLLEGE

The considered judgment of this ad hoc committee with respect to the H&S Program and whether it should become an Honors College is that the University Senate recommend to the University Administration that:

• The University Administration and the H&S Program seek effective solutions to the above identified problems before further consideration is given to creating an Honors College.
• The H&S program be regarded as an academic program, thereby entitling it to an Academic Program Review.
• Within three years the H&S Program undergo a full Academic Program Review during which consideration is given to making it into an Honors College.