

QEP Subcommittee on Curricular and Co-Curricular Initiatives

February 11, 2016

Present: Pothering, Wright, Jones, Francis, Ciarcia, Hansen, Mignone, Cabot

Guests – Roof, Callicott

Discussion regarding Goal 2: Course infusion, New courses, Establishment of a Hub

1. Strategy 1 – Course Infusion and New Courses

Subcommittee discussed criteria to employ in determining the suitability of content for infusion and the determination of what constitutes a course appropriate to be deemed one within an academic program of sustainability.

Subcommittee member Todd LeVasseur submitted the following information via email:

In terms of vision/value statements at the national level, this is a good resource: <http://www.aashe.org/resources> and this <http://www.aashe.org/resources/profiles/campus-sustainability-profiles> where you can link to a quick summary of many campuses and their mission/value statement as it pertains to sustainability. I think looking at regional Universities/Colleges that are working on sustainability might be worth our time—Furman is doing great stuff, as is Appalachian State (and of course Warren Wilson), especially as these are schools that compete with us for students.

In terms of our immediate campus, this is the possible list of classes that comprise our undergraduate ENVT minor: <http://catalogs.cofc.edu/undergraduate/environmental-studies-minor.htm>
All of these by definition have to include 1/3rd or more content devoted to sustainability, from various disciplinary perspectives. Notice the list does not include various special topics courses offered, especially (and usually, but not always) on the HSS side of things. This is a good starting point, though (oh yeah-there is a new course in Historic Preservation being offered beginning next year that is not represented in this list, as well). I will drop off with Bob results of a survey conducted by Seth Pritchard in 2012, gauging student interest in ENVT becoming a major, that can be passed out on Thursday at the meeting. Data from this survey suggests that if we were to generate an “Environmental and Sustainability Studies” major, we’d have 250 declared majors within the first 2 to 3 years, and within 5 years, anywhere from 400 to 500. There is huge student demand for this, and I think one of the key oversights of the QEP proposal is that it does not mention either the ENVT or MES programs that are already doing the heavy lifting on the academic side of things in regards to sustainability-related themes here on campus. It seems that if one of our key tasks as a QEP committee is to embed sustainability in our curricula, then building on CofC’s existing academic programs where sustainability is one of the guiding SLOs for the program is a prudent strategy.

Todd recommends visiting the programs in place at Furman and USC-Columbia to understand better how the curriculum was set and is continuously reviewed. Additionally, both campuses ensure that there are co-curricular offerings to complement the curricular. <http://www.environ.sc.edu/programs>

From Subcommittee member Jen Jones via email:

All of the Sustainability rating systems (Princeton Green Schools, Sierra Club's Cool Schools, AASHE STARS, etc.) all have sustainability courses available as receiving credits. Most center on AASHE STARS certification which uses this to classify their courses as either **sustainability courses** or **courses that include sustainability**:

Sustainability courses

Sustainability courses are courses in which the primary and explicit focus is on sustainability and/or on understanding or solving one or more major sustainability challenge (e.g. the course contributes toward achieving principles outlined in the [Earth Charter](#)). This includes:

- 1) Foundational courses in which the *primary and explicit* focus is on sustainability as an integrated concept having social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Obvious examples include Introduction to Sustainability, Sustainable Development, and Sustainability Science, however courses may also count if their course descriptions indicate a primary and explicit focus on sustainability.
- 2) Courses in which the primary and explicit focus is on the application of sustainability within a field. As sustainability is an interdisciplinary topic, such courses generally incorporate insights from multiple disciplines. Obvious examples include Sustainable Agriculture, Architecture for Sustainability, and Sustainable Business, however courses may also count if their course descriptions indicate a primary and explicit focus on sustainability within a field.
- 3) Courses in which the primary focus is on providing skills and/or knowledge directly connected to understanding or solving one or more major sustainability challenges. A course might provide knowledge and understanding of the problem or tools for solving it, for example Climate Change Science, Renewable Energy Policy, Environmental Justice, or Green Chemistry. Such courses do not necessarily cover “sustainability” as a concept, but should address more than one of the three dimensions of sustainability (i.e. social wellbeing, economic prosperity, and environmental health).

While a foundational course such as chemistry or sociology might provide knowledge that is useful to practitioners of sustainability, it would not be considered a sustainability course. Likewise, although specific tools or practices such as GIS (Geographical Information Systems) or engineering can be applied towards sustainability, such courses would not count as sustainability courses unless their primary and explicit focus is on sustainable applications. If there is a sustainability unit, module or activity within one of these courses, but it is not the main focus, the course may be counted as a course that includes sustainability.

Courses that include sustainability

A course that includes sustainability is primarily focused on a topic other than sustainability, but incorporates a unit or module on sustainability or a sustainability challenge, includes one or more sustainability-focused activities, or integrates sustainability issues throughout the course.

While a foundational course such as chemistry or sociology might provide knowledge that is useful to practitioners of sustainability, it would not be considered to be inclusive of sustainability unless the concept of sustainability or a sustainability challenge is specifically integrated into the course. Likewise, although specific tools or practices such as GIS (Geographical Information Systems) or engineering can be applied towards sustainability, such courses would not count unless they incorporated a unit on sustainability or a sustainability challenge, included a sustainability-focused activity, or incorporated sustainability issues throughout the course.

Subcommittee recommends the establishment of a Steering Committee on sustainability to oversee two principal functions: 1) create and implement an incentive system to encourage course infusion; 2) establish and implement an approval process for designating courses as sustainability courses. The Subcommittee came to the conclusion that this Steering Committee would work closely with the QEP Director. The FYE Committee serves as a model in terms of composition and jurisdiction. The Sustainability Steering Committee would be empowered by the Faculty Senate.

Discussion about whether the QEP Subcommittee on Curriculum and Co-Curriculum would dissolve after completing its review of the QEP Proposal and creation of recommendations.

Discussion about whether the Subcommittee should complete an audit of current courses offered to determine the current number which are sustainability-focused or contain some sustainability content. Jen Jones completed such an audit covering 2009 to 2011 (?). Recommendation: This audit should be updated.

Recommendation: Subcommittee recommends that courses that include sustainability or are sustainability-focused courses carry credit for many majors and they should not only count toward a potential major in sustainability.

Recommendation: The student learning outcomes linked to such courses should definitely include the measures of sustainability literacy.

The Subcommittee had a discussion which centered around whether or not the Subcommittee should recommend an undergraduate major in environmental and sustainability studies. There seems to be two prevalent positions: one that it would be a good idea, building on momentum from existing successful related graduate program and minor as well as existing support for a proposed new major that could seed sustainability into it, versus the position that it is a bad idea since environmental studies distorts the overarching aspects of sustainability that needs to holistically consider interaction of its environmental, economic and social aspects by giving unwarranted over emphasis to the environmental component. Rather than vote on the idea of a new major, the Subcommittee decided to view as a test of the receptiveness of the faculty committees and senate to a new undergraduate major that places sustainability into the mix by seeing how the minor name change proposal fares in the process.

2. Strategy 2 - Hub

Discussion about the idea of a Hub – an office which would develop and coordinate the curricular and co-curricular offerings across the campus and any business operations related to sustainability. The current Office of Sustainability should be located within the Hub as should the Sustainability Steering Committee.

The Hub will likely settle within the President's Office because of its multipurpose and institutional purview.