

UNC ASHEVILLE

ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE

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Report on 2009 Faculty Perceptions of ILS

*In Spring 2009 APC distributed a survey to full and part time faculty with the intention of measuring perceptions of the Integrated Liberal Studies (ILS) curriculum (see Senate Document SD0808F).*

*It is APC's intention to work towards the goal of improving ILS and general education at UNC Asheville in collaboration with the ILS Oversight Committee (ILSOC). APC is charged with ultimate responsibility for curricular changes and development, but APC recognizes that ILSOC has primary responsibility for overseeing the development and administration of ILS.*

*On October 2<sup>nd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2009, APC Chair Chris Bell met with Archer Gravely to discuss the statistical significance of the findings of the 2009 survey. Archer Gravely performed a number of statistical analyses of the results. First, he created correlation matrices. Next, he identified statistically significant correlations.*

*The following conclusion was drawn:*

- 1) Respondents who expressed satisfaction with particular elements of the program were more likely to express satisfaction with others, and vice versa. Psychologists have a name for this -- the Halo Effect -- and it was clearly present in survey responses.

*On October 22 the Academic Policies Committee met to discuss the survey results.*

*The following conclusions were drawn:*

- 1) There is a notable level of concern about the clusters and the variation in faculty collaboration that seems to exist today, everything from loose or non-existent confederations to highly formalized links. APC recognized that the clusters were initiated intentionally with broad expectations to invite faculty involvement. APC further recognizes that defining a set expectation for faculty coordination is problematic. If the expectations for coordination are set too high, the clusters will generate an unreasonable amount of work for faculty. The "Food for Thought" cluster sets a high standard, but may not be practical for all groups. Still, most respondents indicated that the clusters needed more management, oversight and clearly stated expectations. APC recognized that ILSOC has also identified the clusters as the component of ILS with the most need, and that ILSOC committee members are developing criteria and procedures to tighten this element of ILS.
- 2) Concern about the complexity of ILS relative to the general education system it replaced may be related to the clusters requirement. The clusters requirement is by far the most complex of the various ILS components (choices restricted to course categories, science course meeting cluster requirement can't also be used to meet lab science requirement, etc.).

- 3) The writing intensive requirement has perhaps had the biggest impact on classroom practice at the university, insofar as it encourages teachers to engage students on several levels through their writing process. At the same time, this application process was repeatedly cited for its difficulty. Streamlining the application process, especially for renewals, should help alleviate these concerns.
- 4) While the overall response rate of the survey was good, APC had concerns about the low participation rates in the survey for junior and part-time faculty.
- 5) The survey was rich in useful criticism, and these critical comments demand response and consideration. APC recognizes the need to “close the loop” by addressing specific faculty concerns through a range of communications (senate minutes, formal reports, etc.) that outline ILSOC and APC responses and initiatives.
- 6) The survey revealed some discrepancies between perception and reality. For example, the numbers of petitions for ILS components has reduced dramatically, and transfer students are having fewer problems completing requirements, yet respondents consistently identified these areas as problematic. APC will need to disseminate information to the university about how things are changing in the course of ILS implementation and development.

*The following actions steps were established:*

- 1) APC has invited ILSOC chair Patrick Bahls, cluster coordinator Kim Brown, and Dean of University Programs Ed Katz to meet and discuss specifically how ILSOC is addressing the issue of clusters and to help formalize the response to the faculty.
- 2) APC will continue to monitor expressions of faculty concern regarding ILS complexity. Evolution of the cluster requirement and greater familiarity with ILS may resolve the complexity question. If not, future action should be discussed.
- 3) APC will administer the ILS Perceptions Survey spring semester every other year. APC will consider adding incentives to encourage participation (e.g., a drawing for a consumer electronics product limited to those who have responded to the survey).
- 4) APC commends the Cluster Coordinating and the Writing Intensives Committees for initiating efforts to address the concerns raised by the survey and encourages them to continue doing so in the future.