



OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back!

The summer has flown by and we are once again preparing for our annual faculty workshop and the start of the new academic year. The information in this booklet will be used as the foundation for our discussion at the workshop on August 27 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Camp Lounge. I would like to take this opportunity to put this material in context for you.

Returning faculty members will remember that in April of 2009 the faculty approved the framework for a new general education program to replace the current Cornerstone Program. As a reminder, several important structural changes (shifting to a four credit course, moving graduation to before May Term, reducing the number of courses required for graduation, and reducing the number of required May Terms) were approved by faculty in April of 2008. In order to take the next steps, late in the spring I formed several summer working groups to finalize the criteria for the courses, create an assessment plan for the new general education program, and to create an implementation plan that would outline the timeframe for the transition to the new general education program. The material in this booklet is the product of the summer working groups.

First, let me begin by thanking the many faculty and staff members who gave of their time to participate in this final stage of the process. The dedication the Simpson faculty has for this place and our students is truly amazing! I want all to know that I am very proud of this faculty and the work that you have performed on this huge project.

Second, I am very pleased with the outcome. Each of the committees took their task seriously and they were diligent in executing their responsibilities. I know that our conversation will be benefited by the care the groups used in crafting the documents and proposals. Please review the enclosed agenda, and prepare for the discussion by reading the materials. Our conversation will be much richer if everyone has read the various materials. Each session will be primarily to Q & A, so please come with questions. The criteria working groups will be able to explain their refinements of the criteria, the assessment working group will help us understand how we might assess our new general education program, and the implementation team will outline how we might get from our current academic program to our new one. Also, don't be afraid to ask members of the committees your questions before August 27. We will only have about 45-60 minutes to discuss each of the components.

Finally, the working groups have agreed that we will not vote on any of the proposals at the August 27 meeting. After the discussion, the working groups will gather to discuss concerns, questions, issues and possible revisions. Once the documents are ready, they will be forwarded to the appropriate standing committee. You will note in this version of the proposal we are using the term Area of Engagement to describe the required course areas. These were formally called Ourselves, Civilization and the World courses. Areas of Engagement better matches up with our overarching goal of engaged citizenship. The criteria for the Areas of Engaged Citizenship (AEC) courses, the embedded skills, and the implementation plan will be sent to EPCC. The assessment plan developed by the Assessment Working Group (AWG) will be sent to APRC. Once the standing committees believe the proposals are in final form, they will be sent to the full faculty for discussion and approval. It is my hope that the faculty will conclude this phase of the process in September or October. Once again, we will take the time the faculty feels it needs to review, discuss and vote on the proposals. It is in no one's best interest to rush the process. At the same time, and because I believe the proposed new curriculum is an exciting strengthening of our academic program, I see value in making the transition on the schedule outlined by the implementation team. My hope is that by the beginning of spring semester we are actually approving courses.

As in any complicated process, making a change in general education will not be without its unintended consequences. There will be glitches along the way. We may need to slow down the process, and we may find ways to speed it up. The last two years of watching the faculty of Simpson College rise to the challenges presented during the strategic planning process during the review and creation of the new general education proposal and in all of my day to day interactions with them lead me to believe that all that is being proposed can be accomplished on the schedule outlined.

I look forward to your participation in this important conversation.



Steve Griffith, Vice President
Dean for Academic Affairs

P.S. As you can see on the agenda, I have also scheduled a conversation with Dr. Rosemary Link, our new associate vice president for academic affairs, about our Evening, Weekend, and Graduate programs. I found it helpful as I became your dean in July of 2006 to start my service with an open-ended discussion about the overall academic program, and I think that Rosemary will benefit by hearing your thoughts and concerns about EWG. In addition, our last task for the day is to review the guidelines that have been developed for peer observation of teaching. Workshops on classroom observation will be held on Tuesday, September 29 from 12:30-1:30 and again from 3:30 – 4:30. Our new review processes include significant elements of peer observation and it will be helpful for us to know best practices.