

COAL: Academic Programs Committee Summary,

Meeting 9-13-06

I. Trends, both internal and external, that we have identified:

1. Nationwide, international student enrollment has declined from 28% to 22% over the last few years. This trend represents a threat to our diversity goals.
2. International students also report increasing politicization of visa requirements, also a threat to diversity goals.
3. Trend: Changing societal attitudes toward the value of the liberal arts (reduced understanding and appreciation) also a challenge to accomplishment of mission of COAL. "Knowledge for its own sake becoming more and more a foreign concept." This is a threat but also an opportunity to demonstrate the importance and value of the liberal arts curriculum.
4. Trends within academia in general also noted in this university: push for on-line courses, heavy-handed ("penny-wise, pound-foolish") cost-control measures, excessive concern with credit-hour production.

II. SWOT Analysis:

A. Strengths

1. COAL provides many general education, capstone, and service courses to majors throughout the university
2. Talent and energy of faculty and students.
3. High levels of success and recognition of our students-National Debate Title, etc.
4. Many COAL courses specifically support the goals of "fostering lifelong learning" and "developing educated persons."

B. Weaknesses

1. The world and our community sometimes fail to see value of liberal arts and the College of Arts and Letters.
2. We don't track and showcase the achievements of our graduates.
3. Excessive paperwork, meetings, and bureaucracy often crowd out time and energy needed for best teaching and research.

C. Opportunities

1. To strengthen our curriculum based upon higher academic standards
2. Change system so both departments get credit for double majors.
3. To create curriculum audit

4. Increase our visibility and raise awareness of accomplishments of our faculty and graduates within our communities and constituencies.

D. Threats

1. Grade inflation a threat to credible academic standards.

2. Trends of declining international student enrollment a threat to diversity goals.

3. Bureaucratic and political hurdles for international students and study abroad programs also hurt diversity. Is our diversity real? Or is it just rhetoric?

4. Slavish emphasis on credit hour production a threat to the liberal arts curriculum. The mission of creating "educated persons" presupposes some education in liberal arts.

5. Push for on-line courses not appropriate for maintaining academic standards in some courses- languages, speech, communication, etc.

6. Heavy-handed cost-control measures sometimes lessen the impact of the teaching professional upon the students' learning experience.

7. Cutting required language hours to make room for more major courses poses a threat to the liberal arts curriculum.