

Revised Report to Faculty Senate

from the Faculty Senate Committee on Public Affairs

March Session of the Faculty Senate, 2009

Faculty Senate Committee on Public Affairs:

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Charge:

From the University Committees Handbook: “The charge of the Faculty Senate Committee on Public Affairs will be to articulate learning outcomes for the Public Affairs Mission to insure all students, as a graduation requirement, will meet or exceed these goals. The Committee will review the reports on majors generated by departments, the report from the Faculty Senate Committee on Basic Required Courses, and the report on co-curricular activities to identify where current student experiences lead to competencies in the learning outcomes. Further, the committee will recommend options for students to meet these competencies where competencies are currently lacking.”

Incorporated within this report are the recommendations of the Committee on Basic Required Courses. That committee had as its charge the examination of “the Basic Required Courses of the current General Education Program to determine if revisions should be made to a Program that has remained virtually unchanged for a decade, so that we may more accurately address the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to succeed in the 21st century, with particular attention to the issue of financial responsibility.”

Committee on Basic Required Courses:

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Overview:

Missouri State has had a statewide mission in Public Affairs since June, 1995, when Governor Mel Carnahan signed into law SB 340 and called on Missouri State “to produce citizens of enhanced character, more sensitive to the needs of the community, more competent and committed in their ability to contribute to society, and more civil in their habits of thought, speech and action.” The mission is now part of our identity as the second-largest university in Missouri, and it is within that context that this committee tried to find a way to ensure a focus on Public Affairs without placing undue burdens on faculty or students and without compromising the need for faculty to determine their own curricula.

With the two-year suspension of GEP 397 from the curriculum due to end in Fall 2010, we were asked to examine existing curricula to see to what extent Missouri State’s statewide mission in Public Affairs is already integrated and how the mission could best be fulfilled without increasing burdens on faculty or students. Two questions were at the center of our inquiry. First, what separates MSU from other state universities in Missouri? Because the Public Affairs mission is part of our statewide identity, we wanted to ensure that the overall experience offered to Missouri State students has a greater emphasis on Public Affairs than they would receive at other Missouri universities. Second, are our students distinguished in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for a 21st century global society?

The inventories of Public Affairs content prepared by faculty, department heads, and deans in Fall 2008 confirmed that there already is a tremendous amount of Public Affairs content offered to students at every level. Accordingly, we are not recommending changes to existing courses; rather, we are asking programs to showcase more clearly and more systematically what they already do in the area of Public Affairs. We are suggesting that all programs and departments

articulate and clarify where and how they already address the three central themes of Public Affairs (Ethical Leadership, Cultural Competence, and Community Engagement) and that they include this information in course descriptions.

In making our recommendations, the committee tried to work within the context of best practices at Public Affairs-oriented universities throughout the country. We explored several models of Public Affairs education, both curricular and co-curricular, as well as several methods of measuring the outcomes of Public Affairs within curricula (e.g., standardized exams, final reflective essays, upper division classes within majors dealing with Public Affairs). Ultimately, extensive research of successful Public Affairs initiatives at other universities, including the University of Maryland, Michigan State University, the University of Minnesota, IUPUI, and others suggested that our recommended model of fulfilling Missouri State's mission—including the three themes of Cultural Competence, Ethical Leadership, and Community Engagement—was not only consistent with the best practices of Public Affairs-oriented universities, but that it offered the most autonomy and flexibility to faculty and departments in fulfilling the mission of the university.

Further, we suggest that a combination of these practices with changes in General Education, including a new University certificate in Public Affairs, will create a multi-faceted program that emphasizes Public Affairs throughout a student's career at Missouri State. This certificate, which will also help to recruit students to Missouri State for four years, will help students to see the connections among different disciplines within the context of Public Affairs and will form a basis for further inquiry in their chosen disciplines.

It is important to note that we recognize and support that faculty guide the curricular process; the goals and themes of Public Affairs recommended here are deliberately broad in order to allow every academic unit to define the ways in which they address Public Affairs, with the understanding that individual academic units and departments must be free to determine the content and focus of their courses. Thus, we suggest no requirements for courses in terms of Public Affairs content, but only suggest that departments already highlight what they are doing.

The recommended changes to General Education are an integral part of the proposal because they help to bring even greater focus to Public Affairs. All universities may teach General Education, but very few do so with an emphasis on Public Affairs. The newly approved GEP 101, for example, introduces first-year students to the Public Affairs themes that will be carried throughout their four years.

In addition, while our proposal does not incorporate co-curricular activities because it is difficult to measure participation and outcomes effectively, we recognize that such activities serve the University's Public Affairs mission in many ways and should be encouraged as an essential part of a broad education.

NOTE: Though there are recommendations for curricular changes included in this report, any curricular change would have to go through the regular curricular approval process and, in the case of the Public Affairs Certificate and new General Education courses (e.g., a course in financial responsibility), would need approval by the appropriate curricular committees, the Senate, and the administration before they could be implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the University adopt the following major goals for each theme of Public Affairs:

Ethical Leadership:

GOAL: Students will articulate their value systems, act ethically within the context of a democratic society, and demonstrate engaged and principled leadership.

Cultural Competence:

GOAL: Students will recognize and respect multiple perspectives and cultures.

Community Engagement:

GOAL: Students will recognize the importance of contributing their knowledge and experiences to their own community and the broader society.

GOAL: Students will recognize the importance of scientific principles in the generation of sound public policy

Rationale for Recommendation 1: Working with the three themes of Public Affairs, we identified what goals related to Public Affairs were already part of curricula and used those as the basis of our recommended goals. In addition, these

goals are very much in keeping with best practices at public affairs-oriented universities and programs across the country. Our goal was not to place burdensome new requirements on students or faculty, but to highlight and focus what was already being done well. Adopting relatively general, but measurable, goals allows programs and departments to continue to articulate the ways in which they meet those goals in their own ways. See the Appendix for some possible learning outcomes for each goal.

RECOMMENDATION 2: All General Education courses are encouraged to:

- a. Include Public Affairs content taught in General Education courses in their catalog course descriptions.
- b. Where appropriate, include relevant Public Affairs objectives and measurable outcomes for those objectives in course syllabi.

Rationale for Recommendation 2: Because General Education is already closely linked to the three main goals identified above, it makes sense to use General Education as the core for the Public Affairs mission. Though it is understood that not all General Education courses will have Public Affairs content, articulating and publicizing the Public Affairs content that already exists will emphasize how the General Education curriculum addresses the University's overall mission and the use of a common set of goals will help to strengthen the integration between departmental/program Public Affairs content and General Education Public Affairs content. Ongoing periodic reviews of General Education courses by CGEIP would ensure that the Public Affairs content of General Education courses is maintained.

RECOMMENDATION 3: All programs/departments are encouraged to:

- a. Include Public Affairs content taught in department courses in their catalog course descriptions.
- b. Where appropriate, include relevant Public Affairs objectives and measurable outcomes for those objectives in their course syllabi.

Rationale for Recommendation 3: While departments and programs will have different approaches and different emphases for Public Affairs in their curricula, it is clear from the Public Affairs inventories completed by department heads and deans that Public Affairs is addressed across the University in a variety of ways. By articulating and publicizing the Public Affairs content that already exists, departments and programs can emphasize how their curricula address the University's overall mission.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Institute **University Certificate in Public Affairs:**

- a. This certificate requires 15 hours; all credits towards the certificate must be taken at Missouri State (no transfer credit, no dual credit, no advanced placement).
- b. All courses taken towards the Public Affairs Certificate must be designated as having Public Affairs content. A maximum of 6 hours towards the certificate may be used from General Education Basic Required Courses, with the remainder coming from other General Education courses.
- c. Departments and programs should submit to CGEIP updated syllabi and rationale for any General Education courses they wish to have designated as Public Affairs General Education courses—courses that count towards the Public Affairs certificate. To meet the requirements for this designation, courses would not be expected to meet all three areas of Public Affairs, but they should show a significant engagement with at least one of the three areas.
- d. This certificate will not replace academic minors; students with a non-comprehensive BA or BS would still need to complete a minor in another area.

Rationale for Recommendation 4: This proposed certificate will highlight the emphasis on Public Affairs in General Education at Missouri State and will serve as a foundation that will lead to a deeper engagement with Public Affairs issues in students' later studies and beyond. But because the Public Affairs Certificate depends on the idea that our General Education program is substantively different from General Education elsewhere, we also recommend the requirement that all courses towards the certificate be taken at Missouri State. The goal is to encourage students to think about and engage

with the three themes of Public Affairs from their first semester to their last. The certificate not only ensures that students receive a foundation in Public Affairs, it serves as an ongoing public reminder of our statewide mission.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

NOTE: This recommendation was forwarded from Faculty Senate to CGEIP following an affirmative vote at the February session of the Senate.

The following changes to General Education should be made (these would result in a net loss of one credit hour from General Education)

- a. Remove GEP 397 (3) from the required General Education Courses
- b. Remove CSC/CIS 101 (2) as a Basic Required Course
 - Students will demonstrate competency through an external waiver exam. Students who do not demonstrate the necessary skills will need to take CSC/CIS 101.
- c. Add LIS xxx (1) (Information/Computer Literacy) as a Basic Required Course.
 - Course to be developed by LIS, with input from CIS, CSC, and ENG; the committee will look at information and computer literacy needs for students and will also help to implement new waiver exam.
- d. Replace IDS 110 (1) with GEP 101 (2) in the Basic Required Courses.
 - GEP 101 will have a large Public Affairs Component, which was a part of the course as it was proposed and approved by Faculty Senate
 - UHC 110, which is required of Honors students in place of IDS 110/GEP 101, will be changed from a 1-credit to a 2-credit class to keep it parallel with GEP 101.
- e. Include FGB 150 (2)* or ECO 200 (2) as a required Financial Responsibility course in the Basic Required Courses.
 - *Note: FGB 150 will need to be revised from a 3-credit to a 2-credit class and approved.
- f. Require Writing II to be taken before a student completes 75 hours.
- g. Make no basic changes to other Basic Required Courses; they should continue to emphasize Public Affairs content and continue to identify, define, and incorporate 21st century skills and competencies.

Rationale for Recommendation 5: The Committee on Basic Required Courses recommended that the above changes be made to better serve the needs of students in the 21st century. For example, the Committee suggested, “since most students appear to have computer literacy skills when they arrive on campus, this course may not need to be in the core.” However, students often lack the necessary skills in research and information technology; the substitution of a new Information Literacy course for the computer course will better serve the students’ needs. Similarly, the inclusion of a financial responsibility course is proposed to address a lack in students’ understanding of financial issues that affect them. The permanent removal of GEP 397 from the list of required courses is possible because Public Affairs is and will be addressed both in General Education and within programs and departments in a more systematic and integrated way.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Systematically evaluate the success of the Public Affairs mission.

- a. Programs, Departments, and Colleges should highlight Public Affairs activities in their annual reviews and evaluate their programs in relationship to the stated goals for the Public Affairs Mission.
- b. Track National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for longitudinal data related to Public Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Systematically evaluate the success of the Public Affairs mission via curricular process. CGEIP will review designated Public Affairs General Education courses to ensure that the content and objectives continue to meet Public Affairs goals.

Rationale for Recommendations 6 and 7: Ongoing evaluation of our success in meeting the Public Affairs Mission is necessary. NSSE is a useful tool because it will provide a baseline and changes over time of students’ attitudes towards

issues related to Public Affairs. Departments and programs are in the best position to judge whether their students are meeting the goals of Public Affairs in the three themes outlined above.

APPENDIX: POSSIBLE EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Ethical Leadership:

GOAL: Students will articulate their value systems, act ethically within the context of a democratic society, and demonstrate engaged and principled leadership.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will demonstrate a clear sense of the purpose of leadership, the ethical dimensions of leadership, and the relationship between leaders and followers in a free society.
- Students will translate leadership concepts, theories, and models into practice in solving problems and facilitating change.
- Students will understand the impact of individual differences and different situations in the practice of leadership.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically, to analyze complex and diverse concepts, and to use reasoning, judgment, and imagination to create new possibilities in leadership situations.
- Students will articulate a vision to others in an authentic and convincing way that animates and motivates them to address issues within their own communities or organizations.
- Students will recognize other people's talents and utilize them in accomplishing a shared agenda and in facilitating change.

Cultural Competence:

GOAL: Students will recognize and respect multiple perspectives and cultures.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will effectively examine the relationships between their own cultural background and social identities and their belief systems.
- Students will demonstrate a clear sense of their own identity in relation to social justice.
- Students will recognize the ways in which history, geography, language, religion, and culture have contributed to the complexity and diversity of contemporary global society.
- Students will recognize and differentiate among diverse worldviews and will understand the ways in which those views have been expressed in speech, writing, action, and the arts.
- Students will interact effectively and respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures and will be able to work through conflicts with civility.

Community Engagement:

GOAL: Students will recognize the importance of contributing their knowledge and experiences to their own community and the broader society.

GOAL: Students will recognize the importance of scientific principles in the generation of sound public policy

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will apply academic and disciplinary knowledge and personal experiences to address societal problems.
- Students will recognize their capacity to lead in community or work settings.
- Students will engage in activities directly benefiting either the University community or the civic community.
- Students will identify the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.