MEMO

To: UPCC; HSSCC
From: English Department Advisory Council, on behalf of English Department
Date: March 8, 2016
Subject: Curriculum Process and CDD Proposal Concerns

We write to express concerns about how review of the Digital Writing and Media Arts (DWMA) department’s B.S. in Content Design and Development (CDD) proposal was handled within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The CHSS Dean’s approval of the CDD program proposal despite the fact that it was rejected due to a tie vote in the CHSS Curriculum Committee raises questions about the respective roles of faculty and administration in the curriculum review process at KSU. We hope you will join us in seeking answers to the questions raised in this memo and consider whether the Content Design and Development proposal should be reviewed by UPCC at this point. The concerns outlined in this memo relate to apparent violations of SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation and the AAUP’s principles of shared governance.

In addition, the English Department is impacted by the CDD degree and has expressed serious reservations about the disciplinary foundations of the proposed program and about its overlap with the English major and professional writing minor. The English Department raised these concerns during and after consolidation, in meetings with Dean Dorff and Associate Dean Li, and in CHSS Curriculum Committee meetings. Some of the Department’s concerns are recorded in Curriculog, and we have included a summary of our primary objections in this document.

**Context and Process**

*January 26, 2016:* DWMA’s proposal for a B.S. in Content Design and Development was approved on first reading by the CHSS Curriculum Committee (5 in favor, 4 against, 1 abstention).

*February 9, 2016:* DWMA’s proposal for a B.S. in Content Design and Development was rejected on a second reading by the CHSS Curriculum Committee as the result of a tied vote (5 in favor, 5 against).

*February 16, 2016:* Dr. Linda Treiber, chair of the CHSS Curriculum Committee, notified committee members that “[a]lthough the package was rejected as a result of a tie vote at the HSSCC level, the proposals were moved on in Curriculog to the level of the Dean.” Dr. Treiber quoted from an “explanatory email . . . from Dr. Whittlesey, Associate Vice President for Curriculum at KSU” (see attached copy of this email). According to Dr. Whittlesey, “In the case of a tied vote, the fair thing to do is to move the proposal forward and not disadvantage the proposal originators because of a tied vote.”

*February 23, 2016:* Dean Dorff attended the CHSS Curriculum Committee meeting, proclaimed it a closed meeting of the committee, and spoke about his decision to approve the CDD degree proposal despite the fact that it was rejected due to a tie vote in the CHSS Curriculum Committee. This is listed on the CHSS Curriculum Committee agenda as “Conversation with: Robin Doff, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSSCC MEMBERS ONLY).”
Questions

We understand that shared governance on curricular matters involves the approval of a dean, the provost, and the president as part of the normal curriculum review and approval process outlined in the *University Handbook*, Section 3.7:

Category 4. All other proposals (that is, proposals not in Categories 1, 2, or 3) require approval by the:
1) Department curriculum committee (in conjunction with General Education Council if the proposal is related to a core course)
2) Department chair
3) College curriculum committee
4) College dean
5) UPCC or GPCC
6) Dean of Graduate College in the case of graduate courses or programs
7) Provost/VPAA and President.

The standard process was not, however, followed in the case of CDD. The faculty vote on the CDD degree proposal was overruled by administration. Dean Dorff included this comment in Curriculog after the program was “approved by force” within that system: “By moving this proposal forward, I am expressing my strong support for the degree program. The Provost determined that the proposal should be moved to the Dean’s level after the tied vote at the College Curriculum Committee. Consistent with our practice of shared governance, I am now sending the proposal to the UPCC.”

According to SACSCOC principle of accreditation 3.4.1, “each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration.” Also, according to the AAUP’s *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, “[t]he faculty has primary responsibility for . . . curriculum,” and “differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand” (see Appendix A). In light of these principles, why was it determined by administration that faculty approval did not need to be obtained at the college committee level before CDD moved ahead for consideration by the dean and then by UPCC?

After considering the information above and Dr. Whittlesey’s comments in the attached letter (see Appendix B), we hope you will join us in seeking clarification and answers to the following questions:

- When a curriculum committee consists of an even number of members, as the CHSS Curriculum Committee does, what voting procedures should be followed? [See Appendix B: Letter from Dr. Treiber quoting Dr. Whittlesey.] Under what circumstances should a curriculum committee chair vote or abstain from voting? [See Appendix A: Policy and Procedure Information - *Robert’s Rules of Order.*] Because CHSS has 10 departments and consequently 10 voting members, this will continue to be an issue for the HSSCC and therefore must be addressed.

- Why was the process described in the *University Handbook*, Section 3.7 not followed? The *Handbook* states, “Rejection of a proposal at any of its designated levels of review precludes
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and English faculty with Dean Dorff was ignored; instead, Dean Dorff and Associate Dean Li allowed for written feedback on degree program drafts. Instead of acknowledging evident disciplinary commonality and the very relevant expertise of English department writing faculty, this one-way communication approach exacerbated consolidation-related tensions, prevented collaboration, and resulted in unaddressed overlap. As a result, the English Department has had no other option than to continue to voice objections.

For the benefit of UPCC members, we offer a summary of the English Department’s most significant reservations about the program:

- We object because CDD is described as a writing degree; because it emphasizes “professional writing”; because, as the Program Description states, the degree “prepares students for creative and technical approaches to writing for digital spaces . . . and content development” and therefore reproduces instruction already provided in English Department courses; and because
it draws heavily on the courses—and therefore the expertise—of English faculty without providing any means for these faculty to participate in the creation and delivery of a degree to which their disciplinary knowledge (in rhetoric, composition, digital writing, technical and professional writing, etc.) is so relevant.

- While we appreciate DWMA’s efforts thus far to carve out a unique niche for themselves, we argue that many syllabi and course assignments do not yet align with the proposed focus or offer adequate instruction in concepts and skills that are not already addressed in English Department or School of Communication and Media courses. Similarly, some program descriptions, courses, and syllabi and are not sufficiently differentiated from professional writing, the name and focus of the English department’s Professional Writing minor and Master of Arts in Professional Writing program, which already necessarily provides instruction in and practice with writing for digital contexts and what CDD labels “content creation.” We argue that the proposed degree overlaps with the English department’s creative and professional writing courses and our Professional Writing minor.

- The CDD justification information states, “Taking classes alongside the other majors in our department forecasts the kind of teams that a content designer, developer, or strategist can expect after college”; however, the curriculum and degree requirements do not seem to encourage or enable students to make these useful connections. The connection between CDD and and the B.S. in Technical Communication in particular should be strengthened.

- We do not see evidence that the proposed CDD degree actually “blends the humanities with a focused study of technology,” as suggested in the Justification statement. We take issue with a Bachelor of Science degree offering digital humanities coursework in a department that offers no humanities content.

- We question whether—with only four faculty and with those faculty holding degrees in Creative Writing (MFA in Poetry), Rhetoric and Composition, and Literature—the B.S. in CDD has the resources necessary to succeed and meet SACS accreditation requirements (see Appendix A, SACSCOC principle 3.4.11).

We hope that you will carefully consider these objections, especially since the CHSS Curriculum Committee vote indicates that faculty from other departments share some of our reservations about the quality and viability of the CDD program.

In conclusion, the English Department is concerned about the role of shared governance at KSU and the potential conflicts with the principles of the SACS accreditation board. The regular procedures in place for resolving consolidation issues and for reviewing curriculum proposals have been abandoned in order to advance a proposal despite significant faculty concerns. We hope that you will join us in seeking clarification from administration and in asking that CHSS Curriculum Committee procedures be restored to their long-established patterns, in keeping with shared governance principles. Further, we request that UPCC send the CDD proposal back to CHSS and to DWMA for revision in light of the concerns expressed by the CHSS Curriculum Committee.


APPENDIX A: Policy and Procedure Information

**AAUP, Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities:** According to the AAUP’s *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, “[t]he faculty has primary responsibility for . . . curriculum,” and “differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand.” “The Academic Institution: The Faculty,” Section 5 of the *Statement*, begins,

> The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty. It is desirable that the faculty should, following such communication, have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board.

**College of Humanities and Social Sciences Curriculum Committee Procedures:** “After passage of the proposal, the author of the proposal will forward the proposal package to the Dean for review.”

**KSU University Handbook:** According to the *University Handbook* Section 3.7. Undergraduate and Graduate Curriculum Review and Approval Process, “Curriculum is the collective responsibility of the faculty. The curriculum development and review process will be guided by the policies and goals of the university, colleges, and departments. Proposed changes and reactions to those proposals should be communicated to all interested parties and multiple viewpoints should be considered.” Further, “Rejection of a proposal at any of its designated levels of review precludes adoption of the proposal in its present form and must be accompanied by a written explanation of the rationale behind the rejection. This explanation is to be distributed by the rejecting level of review to all earlier levels of review and to the initiator of the proposal” (Section 3.7).

**Robert’s Rules of Order, Article VIII. Vote. 46. Voting:** On a tie vote the motion is lost, and the chair, if a member of the assembly, may vote to make it a tie unless the vote is by ballot.

**Robert’s Rules of Order, Article X. The Officers and the Minutes. 58. Chairman or President:** If a member of the assembly, he is entitled to vote when the vote is by ballot (but not after the tellers have commenced to count the ballots), and in all other cases where the vote would change the result. Thus, in a case where a two-thirds vote is necessary, and his vote thrown with the minority would prevent the adoption of the question, he can cast his vote; so, also, he can vote with the minority when it will produce a tie vote and thus cause the motion to fail; but he cannot vote twice, first to make a tie, and then to give the casting vote.

**SACSCOC, The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement. PROGRAMS, 3.4. All Educational Programs.**

> **3.4.1:** The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. (Academic program approval)
3.4.10: The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. (Responsibility for curriculum)

3.4.11: For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration. (Academic program coordination)
Dear HSSCC Members,

I have received notification that the BS in Content Design and Development proposals were moved to the next level of the the College Curriculum committee. Although the package was rejected as a result of a tie vote at the HSSCC level, the proposals were moved on in Curriculog to the level of the Dean.

I have included portions of the explanatory email that I received from Dr. Whittlesey, Associate Vice President for Curriculum at KSU, quoted below:

Dr. Whittlesey noted that,
"We have actually had negative votes to move forward in the past, especially under the old hard copy process, if that negative vote was just at one level of review. We ask committees with negative votes to try to work out their issues with the originator of the proposal. But sometimes that is not possible"

"My perspective is I don't recommend having a committee with an even number of committee members, especially for the reason that we currently have, tied votes. In the case of a tied vote, the fair thing to do is to move the proposal forward and not disadvantage the proposal originators because of a tied vote."

"The Curriculog system does have an override function built into it for circumstances such as this, so that the system can be manipulated to match institutional curriculum review and shared governance policies and processes."

End quoted message from Dr. Whittlesey.

Finally, I would like to add that I appreciate all of your efforts regardless of whether you were for or against the proposal. I think that our committee has behaved with dignity and grace throughout the process. Thank you.
Sincerely,
Linda

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