MEMO

TO: Members, Gen Ed Committee

FROM: Glenn Town and members of Kinesiology

CC: Rick Pointer, Bob Kuntz

RE: MA 05 Decision

DATE: Sep 4, 2009

It has come to our attention just this week that MA 05 will no longer count toward the reasoning abstractly requirement within the general education offerings. None of our members were aware of this sudden and abrupt change, nor was the kinesiology department involved in this decision. We therefore respectfully ask that the General Education Committee re-evaluate this decision based on the following issues:

1) Were any of the affected departments notified of this change? This change in the General Education requirements was not brought before the members of the academic senate, nor was the Kinesiology department or other departments affected by this change brought into this discussion. If this much autonomy is protocol for the Gen Ed committee then where are the checks and balances for the decisions being made?

2) Why was there no grace period offered to our students? The Records office still maintains that students need to graduate under the college catalog they enter as first year students. This immediate change deems all catalogs (including the most recent) null and void for students caught in this abrupt change. We have already had two of our senior students make sacrifices in their academic plans in order to accommodate this change. One has given up his Urban Semester and the other had to abandon pursuit of a Spanish minor.

3) Were all committee members from the Math department recused from this discussion and vote? The math department stands to gain considerably from this decision and therefore should have separated themselves from the topic.

4) How are the individual departments suppose to deal with the ramifications of this decision? Departments caught in this sudden change are now faced with curriculums that are null and void. Adding four additional units to the general education coursework of our students raises the total units for graduation. We are already at 60 units for our major. Should we drop one of our requirements to
counter balance this increase in gen ed requirement? Whatever we decide, academic senate needs to approve the change.

5) Is KNS 119 affected by this decision? This course received approval as appropriate for the abstract reasoning but was never taught due to the departure of Ryan Jorden. With the sudden change before us, we would want to consider activating this course and ask for funding to support this offering.

Thank you for considering these concerns
On Tue, Sep 8, 2009 at 5:59 PM, Ray Rosentrater <rosentr@westmont.edu> wrote:

Glenn et al,

The GE Committee will not be meeting until Sept. 17, so the committee will not have a chance to discuss your memo and make a response until after that date. Meanwhile, I don’t want to wait that long to give you some feedback.

1. I am perplexed that you were not aware of this change until recently. I saw many emails announcing the change going out to various groups. I thought that, in addition to multiple emails to students who had not completed the requirement and students who had enrolled in MA 005, at least two went to the full faculty. I may be mistaken in this and, if so, I apologize for not getting the word out about the change. I am in the process of trying to track down exactly what emails were sent by/to whom and why they seem to have missed you.

2. Rather than providing a grace period (which would cause a great deal of confusion), the committee planned for students adversely affected by the transition to use the petition process. The two seniors that you mention in your memo should probably be submitting petitions.

3. KNS 119 is affected by this decision. Since KNS 119 was submitted and approved on the basis of its similarity to MA 005 and since the assessment process found that MA 005 does not fulfill the criteria for Reasoning Abstractly, the decision applies to KNS 119 as well.

The finding that MA 005 does not adequately address the Reasoning Abstractly GE component is not a complete surprise. The original course proposal in 2002 included clearly stated misgivings in this regard. It is not entirely unexpected then that, when assessment finally was done, it revealed that the course was not meeting the area objectives.

Best regards,

C. Ray Rosentrater
Associate Dean for Curriculum
Westmont College
955 La Paz Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
Good afternoon Ray et al,

Thanks for getting back to me on these important issues.

Yes, I would be most grateful if you could provide KNS faculty with copies of the memo's sent out announcing this change. I did an Email search of MA 5 and Reasoning Abstractly. I also went back to my faculty and none of them could recall receiving such an announcement of this change.

Please be clear that I am not contesting whether or not MA 5 should remain as satisfying the Reasoning Abstractly goal. I am not a Gen Ed committee member and therefore have no right to do this. It's the sudden and abrupt change that students and faculty in KNS and other departments have been handed without the opportunity to process and rectify.

Of all the decisions made by the Gen Ed committee, the most troubling is the sudden and abrupt way in which this change has been phased out. I feel I have been clear on this point in my previous memo, but suffice it to say it does not feel like this decision was made with respect to the impact it would have on the affected departments and their upperclass students. If the committee would have honored the time tested tradition of phasing out classes based on the college catalog we would have been able to properly care for our students and be given the needed time for departments to discern the best course for change. Instead the decision simply shifts the confusion you mention. The solution the Gen Ed committee came up is not at all clean for the affected departments and their students.

As mentioned in my previous memo, I do hope the Gen Ed committee will rectify the sudden and abrupt way in which this decision was rendered and allow a proper phasing out of this offering.

Many thanks