

## **Diversity Curriculum Review Committee (DCRC) Report to the UVM Faculty Senate May 3, 2018**

*This report summarizes the work of the UVM Diversity Curriculum Review Committee (DCRC) during the 2017-2018 academic year.*

### **1. Participation and Representation**

The DCRC had a nearly full-complement of representatives in 2017-2018, with most degree-granting undergraduate colleges or schools, in addition to the College of Medicine, the Honors College and the UVM Libraries formally represented. We had some issues with a lack of appearance by representatives from some units; the representative from RSENR did not attend a single meeting of the DCRC in the 2017-2018 calendar year. The DCRC would appreciate all deans ensuring that their representatives do attend meetings or find a suitable alternate (or replacement). The Chair also worked with student organizations to include a fully-voting student member for the first time on the DCRC, elected by the SGA.

Monthly meetings were held to fulfill our functions. Most of the DCRC's in-person meeting time was devoted to consideration of courses submitted for the D1 (race and racism in the US) and D2 (cultural diversity) designations, though we also worked on policy and planning issues for at least part of most meetings. Minutes of meetings are posted on the Faculty Senate's webpages. Between September 28, 2017 and May 10, 2018, the DCRC met a total of 8 times (our April 19 meeting was cancelled due to a number of absences and a lack of any proposals on the agenda).

### **2. New Proposals for Diversity Courses**

The DCRC reviewed, discussed and evaluated proposed diversity courses on a regular basis. We continued our norm of evaluating such courses in in-person meetings though we continued the past practice of inviting electronic comments and judgements regarding proposals from members if they are unable to make a specific meeting. However, only votes from members present during a meeting are counted within the official tally on the formal decision on each proposal. The volume of new course submissions was higher than in 2016-2017 despite the committee not putting out a formal call for new courses this year (a total of 31 course submissions this year versus 17 the previous year). Please note that in several cases the faculty members in question worked extensively with the Chair prior to submission to ensure that the courses would meet the DCRC's criteria.

Because of the ongoing process of setting up a review and review schedule, the Committee did not issue its usual call for proposals in Fall 2017. However, the DCRC Chair worked with a number of individual faculty and colleges and schools to help develop proposals for submission and the number of submissions is testament to the continued interest in diversity courses on campus.

#### **New Course submissions and decisions**

Year	Category	Approved	Rejected
2016-2017	D1	3	0
2016-2017	D2	11	3
2017-2018	D1	9	1
2017-2018	D2	20	1

### **3. Transfer Credits for Diversity Courses**

The DCRC received 13 petitions for transfer-credit equivalent courses for the diversity designation (8 x D2 and 4 x D1). Petitioners must demonstrate through a short essay and submission of syllabi and other supporting materials that the courses they wish to have considered are at least 75% similar to a parallel course at UVM. A sub-committee of the DCRC considers each case and makes a recommendation to the full committee. In 2017-2018 6 x D2 and 3 x D1 petitions were approved and 2 x D2 and 2 x D1 requests were denied. Several students asked whether the requirement could be waived; as per university regulations we informed them that it could not be. No alternative activity requests were received. The Registrar's Office has helped to create an online form for all general education requirements including the D1/D2 which has great potential for reducing our administration of such transfer requests.

### **4. Assessment of Diversity Requirement Outcomes**

As part of our ongoing charge to review and assess the D1 and D2 courses, the DCRC has been working with the General Education Diversity Assessment Committee (GEDAC) headed by Cynthia Reyes and Katie Shepherd to understand and align with the work they are doing (part of the NEASC accreditation process). The GEDAC co-chairs presented to the DCRC at the start of our September 28, 2017 meeting and have spoken several times to the Chair to seek input and aid in undertaking some of their extensive assessment projects that are focused for the current year on D1 outcomes. We look forward to continuing our work with the GEDAC and incorporating some of their assessments into our own ongoing reviews of the diversity curriculum.

### **5. Review Process and Schedule**

One of our main tasks in 2017-2018 has been to develop and implement a schedule to review all of the courses currently listed under the D1 and D2 designations. There has been for several years both confusion and some level of dissatisfaction over the absence of a review mechanism and process for these courses, as expressed by faculty, students and administrators alike. The reasons for there not being a review – something that was envisioned and incorporated into the language of the diversity requirement when it was first passed by Faculty Senate – are several.

We should recognize first and foremost that there are competing visions as to what the diversity requirement is expected to actually achieve at UVM. For some constituencies the desire is to change behavior and norms for students, while for others the goal is more to create awareness and education on topics of diversity. And unlike some other institutions where general education objectives are achieved by offering a standardized course or courses (e.g. a single English comprehension course or exam that all students must successfully pass), at UVM we have a distributed mechanism whereby students can fulfill the requirement by taking one of a range of courses that address a broader set of objectives and competencies. In the case of the diversity requirement at UVM, this takes the form of 14 competencies organized within four broader areas.

Furthermore, when the requirement was originally launched, it was done so by drawing on the existence of approximately 80 courses that were already being taught on campus in the areas of race/racism in the US (D1) and general diversity (D2). These courses were essentially 'grandfathered' into the system – they were not designed to be taught for this purpose but rather

for fulfilling requirements in different disciplines and departments. They were thus never initially reviewed. As the requirement grew, the nature of the D1/D2 curriculum changed. Many new courses were added, either as regular offerings or as special topics courses (the latter especially as new faculty joined the university and especially in CAS added a large number of D1 and D2 courses). The diversity requirement came online in 2006 and by 2018 had been joined by three other general education requirements as UVM's offerings university-wide began to become more consolidated and consistent. Yet while the general education offerings and D1/D2 in particular have flourished, a parallel infrastructure for maintaining and reviewing courses has lagged behind. A number of important steps have been taken over the 2016-2018 period to improve the support for general education initiatives on campus and to standardize the approval and review process for courses. These include:

- The creation of a General Education Coordinating Committee, a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate's Curricular Affairs Committee and now charged with overseeing consistency of processes and offerings for the Sustainability, Diversity, Quantitative Reasoning, and First Year Writing and Information Literacy requirements. The DCRC voted unanimously in its February 15, 2018 meeting to endorse membership in the GECC. This body which includes representatives from the Provost's Office and the chairs of each of the general education areas is designed to increase communication and consistency between all concerned stakeholders on campus.
- The improvement of the General Education website, especially in terms of making clearer to both students and faculty what the standards and processes for fulfilling the diversity requirement might be. Of particular note is the work that the Registrar's Office has undertaken to create a clear form for students to fill out online to assist with the transfer credit process.
- Dedication of additional staff resources (mainly by the Faculty Senate and the Provost's office) to help assist the various general education committees to

In terms of a review schedule and process for the DCRC, developing this has been one of the main goals for the committee this year. Building on the draft schedules developed by past chairs Kasser and Ewald, the current DCRC Chair worked with the Registrar in November 2017 to review all of the courses currently approved as D1 and D2 courses. This yielded an initial total of 147 x D1 and 394 x D2 courses on the books. The Chair then contacted all 51 units, programs and departments offering these courses and inquired as to which courses still remained active and which ones were legacies. This review yielded the following still active diversity courses:

- 86 x D1 (regular)
- 20 x D1 (special topics)
- 20 x D1 (topics in)
- 215 x D2 (regular)
- 20 x D2 (special topics)
- 35 x D2 (topics in)

The DCRC recommends the following steps in order to begin a review schedule initiated in AY2018-2019:

- Remove special topics courses (which are by their very nature temporary and meant to last for a maximum of three offerings) from the list of D1 and D2 designated courses. We will continue to review and approve special topics courses in the future, recognizing that these play an important role in helping to push curricular innovation as well as create space for new teaching methods and content, especially for newer faculty. However, we will approve these on a case-by-case basis for a one-year period each.
- Work with the HCOL to develop a separate mechanism for their courses which consist of the bulk of “topics-in” classes approved for the D1 and D2 designation. 52 out of 55 courses currently listed as “topics-in” classes are either HCOL 085/086 or HCOL 185/186 classes and are already for the most part only granted approval on an annual basis (depending on what courses are offered by the HCOL that year).
- Institute a review schedule based on the remaining total of 301 courses over a period of five years. The DCRC meets on average 8 times during each academic year. We propose therefore to review approximately 60 courses per year, or approximately 7 per meeting. Given that the past two academic years have seen course proposals totaling between 17 and 31 new submissions, the maximum workload that the DCRC should see in terms of course reviews is approximately eleven submissions per meeting.
- Work with departments to ensure that no one program is over-burdened with too many reviews in any given year.
- Our plan is to begin our review with the first set of 60 courses which would be approved for a five-year period; at the end of year 5 they would be up for renewal and the cycle would begin again. Please see attached schedule for more details.
- Approvals would be completed on a course-by-course basis, with an instructor of record for each submission. Course approvals would be tied to a specific instructor, not the course number (as is the current practice). If a course is taught by only 1 instructor, only they need work through the approval process. If other instructors are added to the teaching of the course, each must go through their own approval. In multi-section courses, each instructor must have their own syllabus and submission approved.

The DCRC notes that in order to maintain rigor, consistency and clarity for faculty and students, adequate staff support and infrastructure need to be a part of the review process. We take this to mean the following:

- Continued (and greater) staff support for communicating with departments, faculty and students. The DCRC would like to express our sincere gratitude to Tiera Porter and Laurie Eddy of the Faculty Senate offices for their excellent work with the committee this year. Tiera Porter in particular has been instrumental in making the DCRC work and supporting the chair.

- Institutional support for a database and repository of all submissions so that we can keep better records of all courses designated D1 and D2. Having such records should also make future reviews less cumbersome or time-consuming for all involved as faculty can consult and update their previous submissions including answers to all questions regarding how courses achieve competencies, rather than starting them from scratch.

## **6. Diversity Faculty Fellows Program**

The DCRC would like to strongly support the creation of a Diversity Faculty Fellows Program to function as a ‘community of practice’ for instructors teaching the D1 and D2 courses. This program could be modeled on successful existing faculty fellows programs (e.g. the Sustainability Faculty Fellows Program and the Service Learning Faculty Fellows Program) which are semester- or year-long professional development programs in which a small group of faculty gather to work over a long period on syllabi, teaching strategies, and problem-solving. A new group of fellows could be recruited each year and help to build up pedagogical capacity as a result. It should be noted that the DCRC has made a similar recommendation in every year-end report to the Faculty Senate since the 2010-2011 academic year.

## **7. Outreach to Campus Groups**

The past few years have been witness to a range of campus activism on issues of racism, diversity, marginalization, oppression, and a number of others besides. The chair, and in some cases the committee as a whole, worked with students, faculty, staff, and administration colleagues across campus on a variety of other business related to the committee’s charge to “monitor...experiences in the Diversity Curriculum” and to “support and develop the faculty’s capacity to offer diversity courses.” Of particular note was the student protests led by the NoNames for Justice group in both fall and spring semesters, culminating in a walkout and mediated negotiations with the administration that focused on a number of issues but included teaching and learning outcomes in the D1 and D2 courses in particular. Over the course of AY2017-2018, the DCRC Chair conducted the following outreach:

- Met with the University President and Provost (September 2017 and March 2018)
- Met with representatives from NoNames for Justice on multiple occasions in September-December 2017 and helped to provide feedback on their and the SGA’s proposals to include a student member on the DCRC; this proposal was voted on and unanimously approved in our December 2017 meeting and a student member was added to the committee for Spring 2018.
- Met with student representatives from CAS speaking about the college-specific issues regarding D1 and D2 courses on multiple occasions between March-May 2018
- Met with the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs to provide input into the discussions with student organizers
- Participated in GECC planning meetings on a monthly basis
- Met with members of the Civil Rights Committee of United Academics in February 2018 to provide feedback on their proposed changes to the D1 and D2 teaching experience
- Met with reporters from the *Vermont Cynic* and the *Burlington Free Press* to discuss the diversity requirement at UVM in March 2018

- Presented to the Chairs and Directors of the College of Arts and Sciences on proposed changes to special topics courses and D1/D2 designations in February 2018

A number of other DCRC members have also been involved in outreach to the broader campus community; in particular, a panel of members presented on D1/D2 issues at the BlackBoard Jungle Symposium in March 2018.

*Report submitted by Pablo Bose, 2017-2018 Chair, DCRC, on behalf of 2017-2018 Committee members: Thomas Macias (CAS; Chair's appointee); Amani Whitfield (CAS)<sup>1</sup>; Yolanda Flores (CAS)<sup>2</sup>; Starr Cobb (SGA); Holly Busier (HCOL); Shana Haines (CESS); Sue Kasser (CNHS); Scott Schaffer (Libraries); Tao Sun (CALs); Joanne Pencak (GSB); Jonathan Sands (CEMS); Evan Eyer (COM); Wanda Heading-Grant, Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs (ex officio, non-voting member); Brian Reed, Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning (ex officio, non-voting member).*

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<sup>1</sup> On sabbatical Spring 2018

<sup>2</sup> 1 semester replacement Spring 2018