

## Diversity Curriculum Review Committee (DCRC) Report to the UVM Faculty Senate

May 30, 2017

This report summarizes the work of the UVM Diversity Curriculum Review Committee (DCRC) during the 2016-2017 academic year.

- I. The Committee was fully staffed through the academic year, with each degree-granting undergraduate college or school, in addition to the College of Medicine and the Honors College, formally represented. (The addition of a representative from the College of Medicine – and, in the 2017-2018 academic year, of a representative from the UVM Libraries – aligns the DCRC’s membership with that of all Faculty Senate standing committees, and the other General Education curriculum committees.)  
The DCRC appreciates the work of Deans and Associate Deans in making sure their school or college is represented on the DCRC.
- II. Monthly meetings were held to fulfill the functions of the DCRC. Most of the Committee’s in-person meeting time was devoted to consideration of courses submitted for the D1 (race and racism in the U.S.) and D2 (cultural diversity) designations, though the Committee 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.
- III. The Committee called for course proposals to fulfill the two-part diversity requirement in a letter sent to all faculty, dated October 5, 2016.
- IV. The Committee reviewed, discussed and evaluated proposed diversity courses. The Committee has a strong norm of evaluating such courses in its in-person meetings. (During this academic year, the Committee experimented with encouraging absent members to submit votes on course proposals, and counted those votes. The Committee decided to move away from this practice. Members unable to attend meetings are now invited to submit their comments and judgments about proposals via e-mail, but their votes are not counted in tallying the Committee’s formal decision on a proposal. Absent members regularly participate via phone.)
  - A. Three new courses were approved for the D1 designation; none were rejected.
  - B. Eleven courses were approved for the D2 designation; three were rejected.  
Note that approval of four of these courses came after initial submissions were revised at the Committee’s request and subsequently approved, usually after conversations between the Chair and the faculty member in which the Chair relayed the Committee’s requests and suggestions.
  - C. Seven transfer-credit petitions were approved; four were denied, in most cases because less than half of the transferred course dealt with race and racism in the U.S. (for D1 petitions) or cultural diversity (for D2 submissions). (A sub-committee of the DCRC considers these petitions.) Two students also

inquired about whether part of the diversity requirement can be waived; it cannot.

D. No alternative-activity credit requests were received.

- V. The chair, and in some cases the committee as a whole, worked with 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." Particularly critical support came from the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, Brian Reed, and the Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs, Wanda Heading-Grant, both of whom serve on the DCRC as non-voting *ex officio* members; from the staff of the Faculty Senate offices; from the Registrar's office (with regard to transfer applications, retroactive approvals, and other business); from the Provost's office (with regard to Courseleaf, among other matters); from the student-services staff of several UVM colleges and schools (on individual student matters and policy clarifications); from the Office of Institutional Research; and from students serving in the Student Government Association and other organizations (interested in discussing the diversity requirements and the student experience).

Among other work undertaken in fulfillment of this broad charge, the Chair and then the full committee met with Cynthia Reyes and Katie Shepherd, Co-chairs of the General Education Assessment Committee for Diversity, who provided an overview of the charge of their committee, and sought the DCRC's input. The General Education Assessment Committee has begun an indirect assessment pilot this year, while the DCRC plans to begin its review of existing D1 courses early next year. There is potential for overlap between these two tasks, and the two groups are collaborating in the interest of avoiding unnecessary work for faculty, while generating valuable results for our two committees. Katie Shepherd returned to our May 2017 year-end meeting to brief the committee on the Assessment Committee's work.

The staff of the Faculty Senate office has begun a full revision of the DCRC's several webpages, as part of migrating their content to the Faculty Senate's domain (from the Provost's pages, where they are currently hosted). The committee continues to collaborate with staff in this effort.

The committee chair met several times with the co-chairs of the Sustainability Curriculum Review Committee, the Director of First Year Writing and Information Literacy, the chair of the Curricular Affairs Committee, the Faculty Senate President, and the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning to discuss and then to form a new General Education Committee. This Committee's core purpose is to improve efficiency and consistency in areas such as course approvals, transfer credit requests, and other common business.

- VI. The Committee expresses its sincere gratitude to Laurie Eddy and Tiera Porter of the Faculty Senate offices for their excellent work with the committee this year.
- VII. The Committee continues work on ongoing projects.

1. It is the Committee's strong view that the University should continue to devote resources to sustaining, evaluating, and improving diversity education at UVM. The Committee notes that such requests and recommendations have featured in DCRC annual reports for some time.

For example, the Committee's 2013-2014 report noted that among the DCRC's responsibilities was to "support and develop the faculty's capacity to offer diversity courses," and "develop and oversee a mechanism for assessing outcomes of the diversity requirement." In that May 2014 report, the Committee respectfully requested that in support of such outcomes, "the Provost (1) form and fund a pilot project to assess the ways in which Diversity Outcomes are being addressed and met through D1/D2 courses, identify faculty development needs and better understand students' experiences within D1/D2 courses; and (2) create and fill a new faculty position similar to that of the new Director of Foundational Writing and Information Literacy, and charge this faculty member with the task of continuing to monitor, assess, and support teaching and learning towards achievement of the agreed upon diversity outcomes as part of students' general education at UVM."

The 2014-2015 report, meanwhile, noted that the DCRC "continues to suggest the development of a Diversity Fellows program, modeled along the lines of the existing and very successful Sustainability Fellows program," to "offer collegial support to faculty teaching the uniquely challenging D1 courses."

The Committee continues to believe that increased institutional resources should be dedicated to helping us better understand the experiences of minority faculty teaching diversity-designated courses; to developing and implementing effective assessment of the effectiveness of D1 and D2 courses, including learning more about students' varying expectations, and the student classroom experience; to curriculum development; and coordination of the responses of multiple committees, staff and programs working on these issues.

Indeed, the DCRC appreciates that several offices and units across campus are engaged in different elements of this work, including offering occasional professional-development opportunities, assessing outcomes, and improving evaluation of the experiences of students and faculty in diversity-designated courses, and our Committee looks forward to continued collaboration.

2. In a few different ways, institutional complexity presents challenges for the Committee.

First, as noted on last year's DCRC report, continued attention to making sure faculty and other student advisors understand the actual content of the University's diversity requirement is necessary. In our experience, it is common for faculty to describe the diversity requirement as "a D1 course and a D2 course." In fact, the University requirement can

be summed as “a D1 course and *either* a D2 course or a second D1 course.”

For students in the College of Arts & Sciences (our largest college), taking a D1 course and then a D2 course that *also* satisfies the CAS Non-European Cultures (NEC) requirement is strategic. But of course, the situation is different in colleges lacking the NEC requirement, so it is particularly important that faculty advising students in other colleges understand the University requirement accurately.

Meanwhile, sustained attention to the complications and occasional confusion brought on by the D2/CAS NEC situation will be necessary. As of now, and thanks to the careful work of the CAS Curriculum Committee, all CAS NEC courses are also UVM D2 courses. But the reverse is *not* true, because courses about gender, religion, sexual orientation, and disability may be able to qualify for the UVM D2 requirement even if they are *not* based in non-European cultures – in which case they do *not* carry the CAS NEC designation.

Frequent conversations, presentations in the Faculty Senate and CAS faculty meetings and Deans’ meetings, continued collaboration with the CAS Curriculum Committee and CAS student-services staff, and at other gatherings will be necessary.

Another type of complexity (and a significant source of work for the Committee, particularly the chair) comes from changes to course names and numbers, varying conventions regarding numbering, naming and repeating “special topics” courses, questions about the Courseleaf system, course cross-listing, and requests for retroactive course designations. Resolving a single such problem might entail interactions with a course instructor, department chair, program director, student-services staff of a college, the Courseleaf database, and, ultimately and critically, with staff in the Registrar’s office.

Norms and procedures in these areas need to be flexible enough to allow faculty to try new things, to enable programs and departments to reconfigure their offerings as they deem necessary, and to make sure students get the credits they deserve. On the other hand, course numbering and titling needs to be clear and consistent enough for the Registrar’s office to do their work, and for students, faculty, and advisors to understand how things fit together, satisfy requirements, and so on. Time spent resolving these problems is time that DCRC members are unable to devote to tackling some of the more fundamental matters discussed above.

3. The DCRC needs to stay in a process of conversation and collaboration with our faculty colleagues. The members of the DCRC derive tremendous intellectual reward from reading our colleagues’ syllabi and pedagogical reflections – yet at the same time, we must implement the standards of the University’s requirements. Some faculty regard DCRC review of their syllabi not only as intrusive and heavy-handed but as an

assault on fundamental norms of academic autonomy. This is a continued challenge in our work. Meanwhile, the pending implementation of outcome-assessment procedures and the review of existing diversity courses both have the potential to exacerbate tension. To the extent that IBB enrollment pressures lead budget-conscious deans and department chairs to push faculty to offer courses that fulfill General Education requirements, the DCRC and its Gen Ed peers could become sites of conflict over scarce University resources.

4. Members of the Committee regularly field inquiries from students who wish that diversity courses generally, and D1 courses in particular, were focused on contemporary issues in American society. Committee members appreciate the interventions of these engaged students, and will continue to work with them to hear their concerns and support them – while also trying to communicate that the University’s current diversity requirement is based on a decentralized structure and a broad set of criteria. Courses in a wide variety of academic disciplines can engage diversity-related problems and fulfill the University’s diversity requirements, pursuing disciplinary objectives that may or may not include attention to present-day social and political issues.

Report submitted by Alec Ewald, 2016-2017 Chair, DCRC, on behalf of 2016-2017 Committee members: Thomas Macias (CAS; Chair’s appointee); Harvey Amani Whitfield (CAS); Holly Busier (CESS; sitting as designated representative from the Honors College); Jacqueline Weinstock (CESS; CAC Chair’s designate); Sue Kasser (CNHS); Tao Sun (CAL); Joanne Pencak (GSB); Jonathan Sands (CEMS); Shana Haines (CESS); Katharine Anderson (RSENR); Evan Eyler (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).