

Arts & Humanities

2007-2008 Major Initiative Updates

Major Initiatives

- 1) Create courses and programs that meet the needs of students preparing for careers and citizenship in the 21st Century.

Summary:

As a department, we undertook a number of projects designed to enhance our academic and extra curricular offerings in order to better prepare students for their chosen academic fields and for their role as citizens. Within the curriculum we have added two new classes, *Social and Political Philosophy and Environmental Ethics*. We moved a number of our courses from Class I to Class II status via the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, including Understanding Cultures: Indigenous America, Philosophy of Human Nature, Western Music History, Play Analysis, Ceramics IV, Honors Project: Art, Glass I and Glass II. Photography revised its format to move from separate sections of lab and lecture to a combined course format to enhance retention and create a better sense of community leading to a better learning environment for students. In addition, new textbooks have been adopted and the curriculum significantly revised in our Spanish courses. The Music faculty investigated the possibility of a new track in Music Technology for its major. A number of faculty also began experiments with CE6 on adapting curriculum to fit online delivery. Other highlights of the year included a strong series of shows in the Iowa Hall Art Gallery, including a show by Latin American artist Leonardo Torcuato which was featured in a number of our Spanish classes, high quality high school workshops for theatre students and vocal music students, vocal and instrumental concerts featuring a variety of guest artists, and a strong theatre season, including an exceptional production of Stop Kiss. All of these additions, revisions, and activities strengthen the depth of our academic offerings in Arts and Humanities and better prepare students for transfer to four year institutions.

Arts and Humanities faculty have also taken on additional responsibility as club/organization advisors. We believe it is important for students to have educational opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. As such faculty from our department are now faculty advisors for the Philosophy Club, Phi Theta Kappa, and Kirkwood for Reason. In addition, a number of our faculty have served as faculty advisors for Honors Projects and are actively involved on the Honors Committee developing Honors Courses. Another highlight of our efforts is the annual Latin America Series, a month long series of events on Latin Culture. Because we believe valuable learning takes place outside the classroom and that exposure to the arts and humanities outside the classroom enriches the classroom experience, we've made strides in encouraging students to attend public events such as the college's fine and performing arts events, humanities

speakers, the Cedar Rapids Art Museum, and others both by distributing information about local opportunities and by basing regular or extra-credit class assignments on attendance.

The Arts and Humanities department is committed to the notion that teaching students about the intersections of academics is a vital part of helping prepare students for the complexities of academia and global citizenship. As a result collaboration among the disciplines has been a focus. Some examples of our collaborative projects include an activity hour Humanities Series lecture by a photographer focused on life in rural Iowa, a joint retreat with the English Department to discuss collaboration opportunities, and a partnership with the ELA program to work on curriculum for the Communication Five course for non-native speakers. Within the Arts and Humanities department, one of the highlights of the year was hosting our first week-long visiting artists. Fred *Onovwerosuoke*, African composer and director, was on Kirkwood's campus for a week in December working with the Concert Chorale students on their Africa Sings! concert. The concert highlights what we do best in the Arts and Humanities department – bringing together the disciplines. The concert not only featured vocal music; it started with a slide show of African art, included students who had participated in workshops on playing African drums, and featured dancers who worked with an African dancer and choreographer. Most importantly preparations for the concert involved exposing students to a great deal about African culture. We asked African students from the ELA program to come and share their stories about their country. FredO shared numerous stories with the students about the origins of the songs they were singing and the political, social, cultural, mythical, and historical references made within the songs. Steven Ramsey from the Savannah School of Design was on campus for a week during spring semester giving glass blowing demonstrations for art majors, Encounters in Humanities students, and others on campus. He also worked individually with students in the glass blowing classes to improve techniques and discuss and demonstrate new innovations.

Finally, the majority of our capital investments within the department over the last year have been for improved equipment for the fine and performing arts. It is crucial to give these students experience with quality equipment. As a result, the department has invested in items like a new sound system for Ballantyne Auditorium, new grinding and firing equipment for glass and ceramics, and new instruments for instrumental music. We believe these investments enhance the students training within the discipline.

- 2) Recruit and mentor quality faculty to advance teaching and learning in all instructional formats.

Summary:

Recruiting and mentoring quality faculty is a key factor in the success of the Arts and Humanities department. As a result we have increased our efforts to build strong relationships with surrounding four-year institutions to develop a network for locating and recruiting well-qualified adjuncts. We've worked to

improve the mentoring of adjunct faculty through such efforts as asking new adjunct faculty to participate in orientation training through KCELT, arranging for course meetings with adjunct faculty and full-time faculty, encouraging adjunct attendance at department retreats and monthly meetings, and setting up some informal mentoring between full-time and part-time faculty. We found this increased attention to communication is especially important with our adjunct faculty teaching on site at our area high schools.

We had one full-time new-hire in Spanish last year. To increase the effectiveness of the interviews we incorporated questions based on the Quality Faculty Plan into the interviews, and we included a teaching demonstration in our final round of interviews.

- 3) Improve information sharing and outcomes assessment by creating communication networks and data collection protocols.

Summary:

In order to further improve our assessment procedures and decision making, we continue to refine standardized assessment tools to measure learning outcomes in our courses. The Communication faculty and Spanish faculty are both in the process of significantly revising the assessment plans in their disciplines, focusing specifically on national standards identified by their national discipline organizations. One of the keys to assessment in our department is establishing protocols that ensure both full and part-time faculty participate in using these tools each semester. We found contact with adjunct faculty teaching at sites other than the Cedar Rapids campus was not optimal and have worked to begin addressing this issue with processes for identifying all adjunct faculty teaching in our disciplines and including all in department meetings and discipline discussions. We've also begun revising all generic syllabi to include a section dedicated to information for adjunct faculty about our assessment procedures.

KFI Improvement Plan:

At the Arts and Humanities Department Meeting at the start of Fall semester the faculty decided to change their focus for this year's goal. Rather than focus on the change in student understanding based on attendance at fine and performing arts events, they would like instead to focus on the issue of proper placement in foreign language courses. Currently Kirkwood does not have a procedure for placing students in the appropriate level of foreign language. Students self-select into courses based on their own estimation of their abilities. This system has not been entirely effective. As a result, the Spanish faculty have done an extensive search of available placement exams. They've settled on an

exam that is customizable. This semester they will be working to customize the exam and prepare it for electronic administration. At the end of the semester and again next semester they will pilot the exam to establish base-line data and to determine cut-off scores for placement in each of the four levels of courses. We believe implementation of a placement exam will result in improved student success as students will be placed in a section that best matches their abilities. The exam will also assist in our relationship with the growing number of high schools who are interested in offering our language courses at their location. The exam will help determine which course or courses are appropriate given the high school curriculum and resulting student performance on the placement exam. Our KFI Department Improvement Plan will be revised accordingly.