Proposal Date: Nov. 7, 2013

**University College**

**Interdisciplinary Studies**

**Proposal to Make Multiple Revisions to a Course**

**(Action Item)**

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**1. Identification of course:**

* 1. Current course prefix (subject area) and number: UC/UCC 175
  2. Course title: University Experience

**2. Revise course title:**

* 1. Current course title:
  2. Proposed course title:
  3. Proposed abbreviated title:
  4. Rationale for revision of course title:

**3. Revise course number:**

* 1. Current course number:
  2. Proposed course number:
  3. Rationale for revision of course number:

**4. Revise course prerequisites/corequisites/special requirements:**

4.1 Special requirements: For first year students or transfer students with fewer than 23 semester hours of credit.

4.2 Special requirements: For students with fewer than 36 semester hours or permission of instructor.

4.3 Rationale for revision of special requirements: UC/UCC 175 serves exploratory students and a diverse student population. An increase within the special requirements from 23 to 36 semester hours of credit will allow second year students to enroll in UC/UCC 175 if they are academically in need of the content.

4.4 Effect on completion of major/minor sequence: N/A

**5. Revise course catalog listing:**

* 1. Current course catalog listing:

UC 175/UCC 175. University Experience. (2-3) Special Requirements: For first year students or transfer students with fewer than 23 semester hours of credit. Introduction to university life. Topics include: Study skills, critical, reading and thinking skills, library education, exploration of majors and careers, of campus resources and personal development. Individual departments may offer sections for their majors addressing additional topics relevant to their field of study (e.g. PSY 175, BIOL 175). Some department specific sections are offered for three credit hours.

* 1. Proposed course catalog listing:

UC 175/UCC 175. University Experience. (3) Special Requirements: For students with fewer than 36 semester hours or permission of instructor. Topics include: Critical thinking, information and technology literacy, exploration of majors and careers, study skills, personal development and campus resources information.

* 1. Rationale for revision of course catalog listing:

Although no substantial changes to course content, objectives, or student expectations exist, a more cohesive and detailed course catalog description for the University Experience course is needed. In addition, upon approval of the included changes on this form, the course credit hours will increase from 2 to 3 and the Special Requirements will be revised as well.

**6. Revise course credit hours:**

* 1. Current course credit hours: 2
  2. Proposed course credit hours: 3
  3. Rationale for revision of course credit hours:

The University Experience course prepares students for the challenges of university academic and social life, increases likelihood of retention and ultimate success as has been demonstrated by extensive data. We are proposing to increase the course from two to three credit hours though this change is not reflective of revised course content, learning outcomes, or student expectations. It will provide 15 additional class meetings (15 x 50 minutes = 750 minutes as per policy 1.4032) for faculty to explore existing curriculum more deeply. Course content areas that will benefit from this amplification include:

* + - Critical Thinking and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) (3-4 class meetings)
    - Information and Technology Literacy (2-3 class meetings)
    - Retention and Student Success at WKU (2-3 class meetings)
    - Major and career planning (2-3 class meetings)
    - Advising and course schedules (1-2 class meetings)

Other reasons behind the proposed credit hour increase are the mitigation of current time constraints and current practices of our benchmark institutions.

**Critical Thinking and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)**

Students in the University Experience course are challenged to develop their critical thinking and reading skills throughout the entire semester and instructors are specially trained to teach WKU’s adopted Critical Thinking Model established by The Center for Critical Thinking ([www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org)). As one of the major Learning Outcomes, critical thinking and reading skills are at the forefront of every UE class. Employers are searching for individuals who can think, communicate, and solve problems. These skills are introduced and developed in the UC 175 course.

WKU will soon present a new Quality Enhancement Plan to the university community. The Provost and the QEP Concept Committee have agreed that the plan will center on the concepts of ‘evidence’ and ‘argument.’

The new QEP Student Learning Outcomes have been articulated as follows:

1. Demonstrate the ability to gather sound and relevant evidence to address an issue
2. Demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize the assembled evidence
3. Demonstrate the ability to articulate a logical and supported argument based on this analysis.

UC 175 is one of only three 100-level courses identified to introduce the foundational concepts, activities and assessments related to the new QEP:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Evidence-Gathering** | **Sense-Making** | **Argumentation** |
| UC 175 | Introduced | Introduced | Introduced |
| ENG 100 | Introduced | Introduced | Introduced |
| COMM 145/HC Course | Introduced | Introduced | Introduced |
|  |  |  |  |
| ENG 300/WID Course | Developed | Developed | Developed |
| In-Major Course(s) | Developed | Developed | Developed |
|  |  |  |  |
| Connections Courses | Mastered | Mastered | Mastered |

Given the magnitude and importance of successfully implementing and assessing the QEP more class time will be required. Foundational QEP concepts will be integrated into the course through teaching and applying the Critical Thinking model.

**Information and Technology Literacy**

An essential component of the UC 175 course is Information Literacy and Library Instruction. Current time constraints only allow for one class period to introduce University Libraries and the college-level research process. Increasing the credit hours from two to three will have a direct impact on the incorporation and application of these vital skills.

In 2010, a detailed University Libraries report, “Preparing Information Literate Students at WKU” (<http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/ulstats/9/>) made the following recommendations, “WKU Libraries recommends that University Experience be expanded to three credit hours. Some students are hurt by the lack of a 3-credit class, and instructors are not given enough time to meet the learning outcomes of the course.” and “WKU Libraries recommends that each University Experience course include three class periods of information literacy instruction.” (Executive Summary, 2011)

In addition to Information Literacy, University Experience connects students with the necessary technology skills to be successful at WKU. The course introduces students to Blackboard, iCAP, SEAT, TopNet and other software that all students must understand and use in order to be successful.

**Retention and Student Success**

The University Experience course is an excellent retention tool for the university. This course targets first-time, full-time students and plays a major role in acclimating them to the university environment. Data show that students who succeed well in UC 175 are retained at a higher rate after their first semester than those who choose not to take the course. WKU recently made a significant investment in the Map-Works software that relies on student data input to aid in retention. The proposed credit hour increase would allow UE instructors the class time needed to effectively introduce Map-Works functionality, explain its purpose, and encourage students to complete the surveys. Instructors also would have the time to explore their students’ survey responses and provide an extra level of support for those in jeopardy of leaving the University. Specifically, UE students will complete a Map-Works Reflection Exercise that is essential to retention efforts at WKU.

UE instructors stress the importance of Academic Advising and course scheduling throughout the semester. During registration times, for example, class sessions are dedicated to introducing students to iCAP, General Education requirements and effective course scheduling strategies. These are valuable retention efforts in that they help students take charge of their academic programs. UE instructors frequently express concern that class time for these topics need to be increased and the requested additional credit-hour will accommodate that.

**Major and Career Planning**

University Experience serves many students who are not yet committed to a college or major at WKU. These students are exploring their options and rely on their UE instructor and their Academic Advisor to aid in their search. Statistics from the Academic Advising and Retention Center show that 14,445 students completed a ‘Change of Major/Minor/Concentration/Advisor Form’ in one year, from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. The course dedicates significant class time to help students ‘explore potential career options and develop an effective academic plan.’ Students also learn how to ‘apply strategies for their academic and personal success that will culminate in graduation.’ These are two of the principal learning outcomes of the course.

Additional class periods would allow instructors to better connect with their students and help them apply the necessary self-examination activities currently offered within the course. For example, students would have more time to explore learning styles, engage in personality indicators, and connect with the services offered through the Center for Career and Professional Development. They would benefit from more in-depth discussions about programs of study within the University and have time to explore and evaluate their options. Students who see a prosperous future beyond college will actively pursue that future and become WKU graduates.

**Advising and Course Schedules**

A three-hour credit course will be more attractive to students who are thinking of adding UE to their first semester course schedule. The current two credit hour course makes for a less than desirable credit hour total (typically 14) for first semester students (four 3-hour courses plus 2 hours of UE). Students are advised to begin with fifteen credit hours, and told that eight semesters of 15 hours each is the pathway to graduation. The proposed credit hour increase will help advance the university’s ‘Commitment to Commencement’ concept which has been presented to all incoming freshmen since 2011.

**Time Constraints**

The breadth and quantity of UE course material often leaves little time for students to adequately explore or apply the new information. In addition, more class meetings would provide students opportunities to connect with important campus resources such as the Academic Advising and Retention Center, the ALIVE Center, Well-U, Study Abroad and others. Instructors receive numerous requests for in-class presentations and must turn down many more of these than they can honor.

**Benchmark Institutions**

Six of the WKU Benchmark Institutions offer a three credit hour, first-year course similar to University Experience. These institutions are:

UNC – Greensboro

UNC – Charlotte

Towson University

Middle Tennessee State University

Appalachian State University

Ohio University

**7.** **Revise grade type:**

7.1 Current grade type:

7.2 Proposed grade type:

7.3 Rationale for revision of grade type:

**8. Proposed term for implementation: Fall 2014**

**9. Dates of prior committee approvals:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Department/ Unit Interdisciplinary Studies | **Oct. 21, 2013** |
| University College Curriculum Committee | November 11, 2013 |
| Professional Education Council (if applicable) |  |
| General Education Committee (if applicable) |  |
| Undergraduate Curriculum Committee |  |
| University Senate |  |