



Alternative Curriculum Teaching Models

A Report to the Salisbury University Faculty Senate

Prepared by

The Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models

Dr. Harry Basehart
Dr. Memo Diriker, Chair
Dr. Mark Frana
Dr. Debbie Mathews

Salisbury University – April 2005

Alternative Curriculum Teaching Models

A Report to the Salisbury University Faculty Senate

Prepared by

The Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models

Executive Summary

The Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models has conducted background research, visited the College of New Jersey (TCNJ), and has deliberated further at a number of meetings, to study "Alternative Curriculum Teaching Models." TCNJ has transformed the curriculum from a credit-hour-based structure to a course-based system in order to provide increasingly powerful learning experiences for their students and to better allocate faculty teaching resources. In course-based systems, students take four courses per semester, complete 32 courses for graduation and faculty members teach up to three courses per semester. Such course-based systems are also in use at institutions such as Amherst, Brown, Bucknell, Colgate, and Pennsylvania. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee are unanimous in recommending that a similar "transformation" be considered for Salisbury University. As in TCNJ model, the general principle of such a transformation would be to enhance the intellectual experience of our students by guiding them into deeper and more intense conversation and reflection, both in class and outside of class. By taking four transformed courses, rather than five regular ones, faculty and students would be able to put more into each course and, thereby, students would have a greater mastery of key concepts and abilities. Another clear benefit of transformation would be the flexibility it would offer each school in allocating faculty teaching, service, and professional development resources. This would result in higher faculty satisfaction and would also yield a definite faculty recruiting and retention advantage. Finally, the members of the Ad Hoc Committee believe that the necessary campus dialogue to make such a "transformation" possible at Salisbury University should be owned by the Faculty and administered by the Faculty Senate. Parallel deliberations by the administration and the two other shared governance bodies as appropriate will be part of such a dialog. This process can begin immediately and a campus-wide consensus for or against implementation could be achieved as early as the end of calendar year 2005. It is understood that, if the decision at that time is positive, there would need to be an additional process to plan for the implementation of the transformation process.

The Charge

The President of the Salisbury University Faculty Senate has given the following charge to the Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models:

“The Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Delivery Models will review models for the delivery of the curriculum that are in place at universities and colleges comparable in reputation and size to Salisbury University, institutions that offer the curriculum in ways that enhance the quality of the educational experience. The intent is to creatively explore alternative models of curricular delivery that provide opportunities to promote faculty involvement as scholars and mentors, and that facilitate and improve University retention, graduation, and four-year completion rates.

As part of its mandate, the Committee would examine documents and explanations of various university programs as well as visit certain universities and colleges that have moved to such a program, including but not exclusively, the College of New Jersey.

The tasks for the Committee are twofold. First, after its review, the Committee would then recommend to the Senate and the Administration on the feasibility and, at least in a preliminary fashion, the advisability of moving to a different model. Second, the Committee would advise regarding the various steps necessary for changing to a new model and a rough assessment of the time table involved in such an undertaking.

The Senate requests a report from the Committee no later than April of 2005.”

Introduction

The catalyst for the creation and the subsequent deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models was the Middle States Accreditation visit by Salisbury University President Dr. Janet Dudley-Eshbach to the College of New Jersey (TCNJ), where a process of “Academic Transformation” is taking place. The TCNJ has transformed the curriculum from a credit-hour-based structure to a course-based system in order to provide increasingly powerful learning experiences for their students and to better allocate faculty teaching resources over six courses in an academic year. Such course-based systems are also in use at institutions such as Amherst, Brown, Bucknell, Colgate, and Pennsylvania.

The Approach

The approach taken by the Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models was to conduct background research on the TCNJ process, as well as on other “course-based” systems; conduct phone and on-site in-person interviews with faculty and administrators at TCNJ; hold several meetings to sift through the information; develop a recommendation, and propose a timetable for a campus-wide dialogue.

The Course-Based Curriculum Delivery System

The basic premise behind the “Academic Transformation” process at TCNJ is very simple. The undergraduate curriculum is designed around 32 courses rather than the more traditional 120 credit hours. As stated by various TCNJ documents, this approach enables them to offer their students “... *increasingly powerful learning experiences,*” and their faculty “... *more flexibility in offering enhanced course delivery options for achieving superior learning outcomes.*” In addition, TCNJ is able to better allocate faculty teaching resources over six courses in an academic year, instead of using the more traditional eight course structure.

More information about the Course-Based Curriculum Delivery System at the College of New Jersey, including hyperlinks to their relevant websites, is presented in an appendix to this report.

Potential for an “Academic Transformation” at Salisbury University

The Ad Hoc Committee has deliberated the potential for an “Academic Transformation” entailing a curriculum delivery shift from a credit-hour-based structure to a course-based system for Salisbury University:

1) Campus-Wide Analysis

While the overall concept is highly desirable, the following issues will need to be addressed if a course-based model is to be successful at Salisbury University:

- a) The presence of large number of transfer students;
- b) The on-going dialog on the future of General Education;
- c) The impact of “transformation” on graduate studies at SU;
- d) The definition of faculty roles, responsibilities, and rewards.

2) School-by-School Analysis

In terms of curriculum delivery and faculty resource allocation, each of the four schools at Salisbury University has a slightly different set of realities under which they operate. The school-specific issues that need to be addressed are presented below:

a) The Fulton School:

Faculty and students in the Fulton School of Liberal Arts could benefit greatly by the adoption of a 32 course graduation requirement for students (four courses per semester) and a three courses per semester teaching load for faculty (six courses per year). It would create a framework for faculty to achieve the following: (1) a truly student-centered educational experience that focuses on *both* classroom and non-classroom learning, and (2) to excel in scholarship and service activities.

However, by reducing the number of courses that students take and faculty members teach a question emerges that is of particular importance to the Fulton School: where will the reduction in course requirements occur? More specifically, how will General Education and major requirements be affected? General Education should not bear the burden of these reductions.

b) The Henson School:

For the Henson School, the overall advantages of the adoption of a 32 course graduation requirement for students (four courses per semester) and a three courses per semester teaching load for faculty (six courses per year) are similar to those of other Schools, e.g. more attractive workload policy for new hires and potentially more flexibility for faculty in terms of course delivery. But the overall reduction in teaching workload would probably be less dramatic as compared to some other disciplines.

If Salisbury University were to fully implement such a plan, the in-classroom time requirements for many (not necessarily all) Henson faculty would be reduced, with the amount of reduction depending upon the type/mixture of classes taught (lecture, lab, clinical supervision, etc.) Lecture workload would be restructured from 12 to 9 hours per week, but laboratory workload and clinical supervision credit would be very similar to the current situation. For lab based courses within the major, the format and time requirements would remain unchanged (3 hours lecture, 2-3 hours lab per week), but would be reduced for Gen Ed courses (2 hrs lecture, 2 hours lab per week).

Theoretically, the reduction of in-class contact time with students would be compensated for by increased expectations outside of the classroom.

c) The Perdue School:

For the Perdue School, the overall advantages of a shift to a course-based curriculum delivery system would be somewhat different than those envisaged by the other schools. While the adoption of a 32 course graduation requirement for students (four courses per semester) could enhance some of the courses being offered currently, the AACSB accreditation requirements regarding the number and scope of Lower and Upper Division core subjects would have to be factored in.

As for the three courses per semester teaching load for faculty (six courses per year), this is already the norm for a majority of the faculty members at the Perdue School. However, the shift to a

course-based system could make it feasible for the Perdue School to experiment with course-based teaching loads of 2-3 or 3-2 or in some cases 2-2. Such loads would be more in line with the Perdue School's aspirational peers, and would make the School more competitive in recruiting and retaining faculty.

d) The Seidel School:

From the perspective of the Seidel School there are a number of reasons that moving to a course-based curriculum delivery model such as the one used at TCNJ would be extremely attractive. For example, TCNJ defines faculty workload as 24 hours for the academic year. Six of those hours are for faculty to prepare for classroom instruction and scholarship; the remaining 18 are directed toward teaching. Defining workload in this manner is more reflective of the full range of demands made on faculty whereas the current Salisbury University model appears to define faculty workload as only focused on teaching in a system where faculty are assessed on service and scholarship as well. In addition a system such as this has the potential to increase the attraction of Salisbury University in the recruitment and retaining of new faculty.

In the Seidel School there has been an increasing problem in both recruiting and keeping new faculty. Potential candidates have highlighted Salisbury University's inability to be competitive in both salary and teaching load. Moving to a 3/3 system would make the Seidel School more competitive in the area of teaching load. Lastly, going to this model forced the College of New Jersey to critically look at faculty teaching and to acknowledge that not all teaching activities are created equal. They were able to develop a faculty weighting system which has made teaching across schools and departments more equitable.

The First Task of the Ad-Hoc Committee: The RECOMMENDATION

The first task of the Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models was to make a recommendation to the Senate and the Administration on the feasibility and, at least in a preliminary fashion, the advisability of moving to a different model.

The members of the Ad Hoc Committee are unanimous in recommending that **an “Academic Transformation” entailing a curriculum delivery shift from a credit-hour-based structure to a course-based system be considered for Salisbury University.** As in TCNJ model, the general principle of such a transformation would be to make it easier for students to concentrate on each course, and therefore to achieve a greater depth of understanding. By taking four transformed courses, rather than five regular ones, students would be able to put more into each course and, thereby, have a greater mastery of key concepts and abilities. Another clear benefit of transformation would be the flexibility it would offer each school in allocating faculty teaching, service, and professional development resources. This would result in higher faculty satisfaction and would also yield a definite faculty recruiting and retention advantage.

The Second Task of the Ad-Hoc Committee: The PROCESS

The second task of the Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models was to advise the Senate and the Administration regarding the various steps necessary for changing to a new model and a rough assessment of the time table involved in such an undertaking.

The members of the Ad Hoc Committee believe that the necessary campus dialogue to make such a “transformation” possible at Salisbury University should be owned by the Faculty and administered by the Faculty Senate. Parallel deliberations by the administration and the two other shared governance bodies as appropriate will be part of such a dialog. This process can begin immediately and a campus-wide consensus for or against implementation could be achieved as early as the end of calendar year 2005. It is understood that, if the decision at that time is positive, there would need to be an additional process to plan for the implementation of the transformation process.

To guide this process up to the point of a consensus for or against implementation, the following process and timetable is offered for consideration and action by the Salisbury University Faculty Senate:

The PROCESS Timetable

ACTION STEP	OWNERS	TIMELINE
A New Ad-Hoc Committee*	Faculty Senate	May 2005
Dean Level Discussion	Provost's Council	May 2005
Administrative Analysis by Department/Discipline	Department Chairs	Summer 2005
Non-Academic Administrative Analysis	VP of Finance & Administration and Director of Planning	Summer 2005
Faculty Impact Analysis	The New Ad Hoc Committee of the Faculty Senate	Summer and Fall 2005
Curriculum Impact Analysis	The Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate	Summer and Fall 2005
Student Impact Analysis	VP of Student Affairs (including SGA and Career Services)	Summer and Fall 2005
Campus Dialog 1 (One-Day Event)	The New Ad Hoc Committee of the Faculty Senate	Early Fall 2005
Campus Dialog 2 (One-Day Event)	The New Ad Hoc Committee of the Faculty Senate	Late Fall 2005
Leadership Dialog	Faculty Senate and the President's Advisory Team	Late Fall 2005
Implementation (Go/No Go) Recommendation	Faculty Senate	Late Fall 2005
Senior Leadership Decision	Senate Leadership with President and Vice Presidents	December 2005

* The New Ad-Hoc Committee should be appointed by the President of the Faculty Senate. It should be comprised of a representative from each of the four schools, a representative from the Long Range Academic Planning Committee, a representative from the Curriculum Committee, plus a representative from the Office of the Provost. Its central charge should be to **develop general principles and operational guidelines for a course-based curriculum model at Salisbury University**, coordinate the further collection of data regarding teaching models; host the campus dialogue on this matter; and bring to the Faculty Senate a detailed report and final recommendation regarding the advisability of change as early as late Fall 2005 but no later than the Spring Break of 2006. In this process, the Committee would coordinate its deliberations with the Long Range Academic Planning Committee and the Curriculum Committee, delegating to those Committees particular tasks relevant to this issue when necessary, **especially how a course-based system would affect the General Education Program.**

A Note on Pre-Decision Activities

As can be seen in the proposed Process Timetable, the proposed “New Ad-Hoc Committee” would host at least two public hearings on campus dialogues to explain and translate this model as it would apply to this university to the faculty, staff, and students. In this regard, over the course of the Summer of 2005, the Committee would **request that the deans of the four schools would “transform” the curriculum of at least one academic department** and bring these illustrations to the attention of the faculty and administration for discussion.

A parallel discussion would proceed within the administrative structure of the university at the dean’s level and the department level, as well as the non-academic administrative level.

A Note on Post-Decision Activities

It should be noted that the process timetable presented above is limited to the decision for or against proceeding with the Transformation Process. If the decision is positive, a different process will need to be initiated for the implementation of the transformation process. Some of the issues that will have to be tackled during this implementation phase would include: Board of Regents and Maryland Higher Education Commission permission, or maybe agreements; amendments to faculty workload policies which are currently written in terms of three credit-hour courses (comprehensive universities are 7-8 course units per year), and changes to the degree requirements for students which are currently are written in semester-based credit hours (120 credit-hour degrees, with a pre-set number of credits in Gen Ed.).

Our Thanks

As members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Curriculum Teaching Models we would like to take this opportunity to thank President Janet Dudley-Eshbach, the Deans of the Fulton, Henson, Perdue, and Seidel Schools, the numerous faculty members with whom we discussed the “Academic Transformation” process, the Salisbury University Faculty Senate, and all the faculty and administrators from TCNJ with whom we interacted (online, by phone, or in person), for their encouragement and support during the our deliberations.

APPENDIX

The Redesigned Curriculum at the College of New Jersey

TCNJ's redesigned curriculum means fewer, more intensive courses and more options for interdisciplinary study. This approach is central to the College's goal: to provide the best public undergraduate educational experience in the nation.

The College's Liberal Learning program helps ensure that students learn fundamentals of reasoning, communicating, and living in today's world.

The College of New Jersey aims to educate students for citizenship in a modern democracy. Proceeding from the College's mission and its "Guiding Principles for Academic Work," liberal learning has three interdependent structural elements:

Intellectual and Scholarly Growth

The first sparks intellectual and scholarly growth characterized by students' increasing ability to pose intellectually challenging questions, confront significant problems, and apply focused rigor in seeking promising resolutions. This element ensures that learners gain habits of mind necessary to study and understand human knowledge and how it applies to complex problems.

Civic Responsibility

The second element enables students to relate beliefs, values, and intellectual habits to their civic role in society. Such vision requires deep understandings of ways race, ethnicity, and gender have shaped local and global communities.

Human Inquiry

The third element fosters familiarity with essential knowledge about broad sectors of human inquiry. Such familiarity enables students to be conversant in the broad range of intellectual discourse.

SOURCE: <http://www.tcnj.edu/%7Eliberal/>

LINKS TO TCNJ DOCUMENTS ON “TRANSFORMATION”

Here is the URL for an internal website at the College of New Jersey:

<http://academic.intrasun.tcnj.edu/work/index.htm>

This website contains numerous links to internal documents that show the progress of the “Academic Transformation” process at TCNJ. Of particular interest are:

- Final Report of the Conference Committee: Implementing Faculty Work in the Transformed System;
- Transformation of Faculty Work: Overview and Schedule of Major Projects;
- Transformation of Student Work: Overview and Schedule of Major Projects;

LINKS TO TCNJ F.A.Q. ON “TRANSFORMATION”

As part of the Fall 2004 Advising and Registration process, the College of New Jersey website offered students a link to frequently asked questions about the redesigned curriculum. These questions provide many of the answers sought by the ad hoc committee during its deliberations. The URL to this site is:

<http://www.tcnj.edu/~recreg/falladvisingfaqs.html>