Update on the UCA Core (October 2017)

Below are selected recent accomplishments and on-going efforts of the UCA Core.

1. Advising and Public Relations
   1. Dr. Held continues to work with the Advising Center and Registrar’s Office to streamline the process by which transfer and new students are audited for LD and UD core requirements.
   2. Dr. Held is scheduled for Wordpress training in November and will look into managing the UCA Core website. The website is not as user friendly as it could be, and needs to be updated. Dr. Held plans to spend the summer of 2018 doing so.
   3. In consultation with the CTE, Dr. Held is working to develop on-line modules for the core website including modules on assessment, core competency training, and FYS resources and development for faculty and students.
2. First-Year Seminars (FYS)
   1. The FYS peer mentor program expanded this AY and under the guidance of Thomas Bruick is flourishing. We are beginning to think about recruiting for AY 18-19 and hope to expand the program further. Initial data indicates that FYS courses have a positive correlation with student retention and persistence as well as grade point, and the results for the peer mentor sections are even more positive.
   2. In consultation with the CTE Dr. Held developed the “Excellence in Teaching First Year Students” recognition track this AY. Originally the track was designed to be further faculty development for FYS instructors but was broadened out for any and all faculty interested in teaching first year students. The sessions to date have been well attended and very well received. The track includes lunch and learn sessions, workshops, blog opportunities, peer evaluation opportunities, and other development opportunities for faculty who teach first year students. Thanks to Amy Hawkins and the CTE for their help and support.
3. Core Council
   1. At the close of spring 17, the Core Council adopted the UCA Core Handbook. The handbook clearly articulates the process and standards by which courses are adjudicated for inclusion or removal from the UCA Core. The handbook is available on the Core website.
   2. The Handbook also includes the UCA Core assessment plan.
4. Assessment
   1. The Core council adopted an assessment plan that indicates the procedure and schedule by which the core will be assessed, as well as plans for improvement. The format treats the UCA Core as a coherent program of study akin to a major, thereby assessing Core offerings as part of a cohesive program with unified goals.
   2. In AY 16-17 we completed the first cycle of the new UCA Core assessment process. Artifacts were collected from Responsible Living courses, and faculty were recruited and trained as scorers. A report was delivered to the UCA Core Council October 3rd, 2017.
   3. The assessment sub-committee of the UCA Core Council will review the report, consult with relevant stakeholders and develop improvement strategies to be implemented AY 18-19.
   4. Training on the Core Diversity rubrics and assessment procedure was conducted early Fall 2017. Training was facilitated by Drs. Held and Combs as well as Dr. Angela Webster and Ms. Charlotte Strickland. Additional sessions will be held early spring 2018. These sessions were recorded and materials collected as part of Dr. Held’s plan to offer content modules through the UCA Core website in the future. See point 1c above.
   5. Diversity artifacts have begun to be collected. We are already at over 90% compliance. Scorers will be recruited and scoring will occur in summer 18.
   6. Training on the Core Communication rubrics will be offered spring 2018 in preparation for Communication assessment AY 18-19. Dr. Held is currently recruiting faculty content experts to facilitate this training, and the CTE in delivering and recording these sessions.

With a clear statement of purpose, complete curriculum, and articulate assessment plan the UCA Core is now a fully instantiated academic program at UCA. We can now focus on offering a meaningful, unified academic experience to all of our students at UCA, and by means of assessment make intentional decisions about how to continually improve our offerings and provide our students with the best possible educational experience.

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