

MINUTES

Meeting of the Hunter College Senate
13 May 1992

	The 277th meeting of the Hunter College Senate was convened at 4:25 P.M. in Room W714.	1 2
Presiding:	Elizabeth K. Beaujour, Chair	3
Attendance:	The elected members of the Senate with the exception of those listed in Appendix A.	4 5
	The Agenda was adopted as distributed.	6
Minutes:	The Minutes of April 15th were approved as distributed.	7
Report by the President:	A summary statement of President LeClerc's report to the Senate is as follows:	8
	He said: "I would like to depart from the custom I have followed for the past four years in not commenting, in an unsolicited way, on the business before the Senate at one of its meetings. Since the Senate is today debating the outcome of a curricular reform whose origins I played some role in, I decided to use my time with you to share a few thoughts on the matter of diversity in Hunter's curricula and the significance of today's discussion and action. The hats that I am wearing in making these comments are those of a member of this college's faculty and of, in the words of the Board of Trustees' statement on presidential responsibility, the principal academic officer of the College.	9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
	In my first address to the Hunter College Senate, in October of 1988, I listed among my priorities for the College, the need for students at Hunter to be exposed in their years at Hunter to the study of the cultural accomplishments of women and men from throughout the world. From that statement of principal there ensued a series of actions that culminate in today's agenda item on a curriculum of inclusion. These actions included the creation of a Task Force on Pluralism and Diversity whose recommendations on the matter eventually took the form of a suggested 9-credit addition to the College's undergraduate distribution requirement. After debate and some revisions, this suggestion went to the Undergraduate Course of Study Committee and that Committee's own recommendations are slated for action by the Senate this afternoon. Another action created a \$250,000 faculty and staff development fund in the area of pluralism and diversity, permitting faculty and staff to engage in the revision of course syllabi, in the creation of new courses, and in providing students and staff with experiences that would enhance their appreciation of that contribution that all people have made to our civilization. A third action was a commitment to add \$50,000 to the college library's budget to expand and enrich our collections of materials relating to women, minorities, and other typically excluded groups.	19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37
	It is not the proper business of college presidents in this society to write curricula. This, by tradition and by University statute, is the prerogative of faculty and, in Hunter's case, is entrusted to committees of the governing body that include students as well.	38 39 40 41
	The proper business of a president is, however, to call an institution's attention to the significant educational issues that relate to curricular change and to seek the engagement of appropriate individuals in responding creatively to the need for change.	42 43 44 45
	There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that Hunter's curricula have to be responsive to the educational and personal needs and aspirations of our students, have to encompass the products of new fields of inquiry and study, and have to provide the best intellectual experiences for women who now live, and will always live, in a country and world that is characterized by diversity. To fail to do so is unthinkable. I therefore strongly endorse the recommendations before you this afternoon. However, I never really believed in the dictum that less is more. I think that more is more and would be pleased to see a full 9-credit requirement passed.	46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54

of the requirement, including the exact catalogue language and list of courses, will again return to the Senate. It would really be unfair to ask that all of this be done without some indication that the Senate is seriously considering imposing the requirement.

3. The third procedural point is one of timing: there will be no effect of any requirement on the present student body. Requirements of this nature only affect students who enter the College after the requirement has been approved.

I would also like to focus your attention on two points of substance. They are controversial and difficult ones, and it is important that we be convinced about them. As a preface I want to say that as with any curricular matter of substance, there are good arguments both pro and contra; and in the end it is one's personal judgment that determines which arguments are more convincing.

1. The first point is the academic justification for the proposal. It is a strong one and it stands on at least two legs. One is that the material with which the proposal is concerned is academically sound material, and that it is not getting into the curriculum, especially our 100-level courses, as fast as it ought to. A second leg supporting the proposal is less direct, but I find it more convincing. We have all heard that the retention rate at Hunter is low. It is impossible to ignore the testimony of counselors and faculty that an important and widespread complaint that many minority students have, is their feeling that Hunter is not concerned with, or does not find important, things that are of interest or importance to them; that they are outsiders here.

It is clear from the response at the open hearings held by the Committee, that many in the college think that the material covered by the requirement is both important academically and of relevance to our student body. Therefore, the proposed requirement will act as an important affirmation by Hunter of that importance, and by giving more of our students the sense that their cultures are important it will have a positive academic impact.

2. The second point is the definition of the groups in category 2 of the proposal. A couple of points need to be made here. First, the wording clearly does not exclude groups not mentioned as examples as long as they meet the criteria stated: "traditionally disadvantaged and underrepresented in the curriculum." The criteria are critical. They focus the requirement on groups whose cultures and writings have been, until recently, systematically excluded from academic consideration in a way that the cultures of western and eastern Europe have not been.

Finally I wish to give the reasons for the change in the number of credits between the Task Force's proposal and the one reported out by the Course of Study Committee. The Committee was concerned about a couple of issues:

the burden that an added requirement will put on students, particularly those in certain programs, such as the long science majors and some of the professional programs. Here the problem is that these students already have nearly their whole program required, with very little slack for extra courses, and they are in areas in which it is not likely that they will take the courses they need to satisfy the requirement as part of their major.

the extra time that may be needed by a student to fulfill the requirement. Here we worried about how many extra courses a student would have to take. This is practically impossible to determine accurately without knowing what courses can satisfy the requirement. But this impacts retention, an issue about which we are sensitive, particularly if the college resources are stretched too thin to be able to give sufficient sections to satisfy student demand.

APPENDIX I

The following members were noted as absent from the meeting:

FACULTY:

Academic Skills: Janice Montague
Jo-Ann Morgan "E"

Anthropology: Josh DeWind

Art: Joel Carrera
Ulka Bates
Andrea Blum

Communications: Alonzo Speight

Curriculum & Teaching: Tony Picciano

Economics: Eric Seeley
David Elkin

Geology & Geography: Richard Liebling
Sara McLafferty

Health Sciences: Carol Silverman
Ida Susser
Nora Baker

Library: Vera Conant

Music: Jana Feinman
Paul Mueller
Susan Kagan

Nursing: Nancy Jones
Eileen Lahey "E"

Philosophy: Sue Weinberg "E"

Psychology: Peter Moller
Michele Paludi "E"

Romance Languages: Jeanine Plottel "E"

Social Work: Marsha Martin
Irwin Epstein
Jayne Silberman

Sociology: Naomi Kroeger
John Cuddihy

Theatre & Film: Daniel Koetting

Urban Affairs: Hilda Blanco

STUDENTS:

Stacey Smith
Helen PoulIASIS
Sigrid Cotto
Scott Lessard "E"
Sandra Goodridge
Arthur Peeples
Ian Yeager
Robert Nisonoff
Michael Luciano
Hui-Chiung Tseng "E"
Maryanne Giordani
Simon Kamara "E"
Sabrina Segal
Winston Brewster "E"
Jennifer Suarez
Tim Rutgers
Alex Blangiardo
Dorothy Waters
Dynnah Barthold
James Painter
Michael Muyot
Pauline Herrmann
Victoria Kern
Arlene King
Alicen Willis

Dean Evelyn Gioiella
Dean Carlos Hortas "E"

APPENDIX III

Report by the Undergraduate Course of Study Committee

PROPOSAL FOR A PLURALISM & DIVERSITY REQUIREMENT

Many academic disciplines, especially as they have been developed over the past hundred years, have conceptualized the world and identified subjects of inquiry in terms of the traditions of Western Europe. As we affirm the importance of understanding the Western roots of our knowledge, we also believe that students should learn about what constitutes knowledge from a wide variety of cultural and social perspectives, some of which challenge the Western tradition. Put another way, we want students at Hunter to learn to think critically, to distinguish between "objective fact" and subjective opinion, to know how to evaluate long-held assumptions about people belonging to different cultures, races, genders and social classes.

Over the last twenty years, scholars have moved beyond the traditional limits of their disciplines, developing new theoretical and analytical approaches that include the perspectives and cultures of often marginalized groups. By now, much of this work has entered the mainstream of the intellectual and cultural life of Western universities. Given Hunter's commitment to providing students with a high quality education, and given the ethnic and social diversity of Hunter's student body as well as of its faculty, it is appropriate that we formally incorporate aspects of the new scholarship into the required curriculum.

We therefore propose that before graduating from Hunter, every student be required to complete six credits in courses that address issues of pluralism and diversity. Students will choose one three-credit course from two of three categories:

1. a course that focuses on the cultures of Africa, Asia, or those cultures indigenous to the Americas;
2. a course that considers the contributions of diversity to the United States of America, with a focus on the perspectives and contributions of one or more ethnic groups in the U.S. which have traditionally been disadvantaged and underrepresented in the curriculum: (e.g., Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans);
3. a course that focuses on the perspectives and contributions of women.

Courses that satisfy this Pluralism and Diversity requirement may simultaneously meet a student's distribution requirement or the courses necessary for a major or minor area of study. The subject matter of the courses to be taken can lie within any of the academic disciplines and programs at the College.

The Undergraduate Course of Study Committee recommends that the Hunter College Senate approve the above proposal in principle. The proposal will then be sent to Departments and Divisions, so that they can designate courses which may be used to satisfy the requirement. After they have been approved by the Divisional Curriculum Committees in the normal way, the lists of courses will be forwarded for approval to the Undergraduate Course of Study Committee. The final wording of the Requirement, with the list of courses that may be used to satisfy it in each category, will then return to the Senate for its approval. Any additional courses which may be proposed subsequently, will be approved according to normal procedures.