April 1, 2014

TO: Twin Cities Deans

FROM: Karen Hanson, Provost and Senior Vice President
       Robert B. McMaster, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education

RE: Teaching in the Liberal Education Curriculum

After conversations with both the Campus Curriculum Committee and the Council for Liberal Education, we have decided to place a “pause” on professional schools offering new courses in the liberal education curriculum. This pause will not affect existing classes. The attachment to this memo documents some of the concerns that were discussed by the Campus Curriculum Committee. We plan to discuss this further at Twin Cities Deans Council on April 14th.

Several of the reasons include:

1. As defined by their mission, it is the primary responsibility of the undergraduate colleges to teach the core liberal education curriculum.
2. The undergraduate colleges provide the basic infrastructure needed for undergraduate education, including advising, career counseling, advice on the student learning outcomes (a required part of liberal education classes) and other forms of basic support.
3. The undergraduate colleges pay the undergraduate cost pool charges.
4. The Liberal Education Curriculum has been “saturated” for several years now. There is no need for additional courses to be added.

This is considered a pause and, as we progress with the myriad University-wide discussions around the undergraduate curriculum, we will plan to continue conversations with the deans.

cc: Peter Hudleston, Chair, Council on Liberal Education
    Leslie Schiff, Associate Dean for the University Curriculum
    Paul Siliciano, Chair, Campus Curriculum Committee
Issues related to graduate/professional schools offering undergraduate courses

Graduate/professional schools and undergraduate schools have distinct missions and are held accountable for different outcomes.

- Courses for undergraduates should be developed for specific purposes and designed to support institutional goals, with the overarching goal of timely progress toward a baccalaureate degree. Undergraduate colleges are responsible for developing curricula appropriate to undergraduate-level students and applicable to well-designed degree programs, and for providing advising to support student degree progress. Grad/professional schools that teach undergraduates are not accountable for the broader undergraduate outcomes (graduation rates, student satisfaction) that the undergraduate colleges are.
- Grad/professional schools are responsible for post-baccalaureate education in specific fields, but are increasingly interested in developing undergraduate courses. Although their reasons for wanting to offer undergraduate courses may be related to the undergraduate mission (for example, to develop a new interdisciplinary undergraduate minor, or give exposure to undergraduates who might pursue directed research), grad/professional schools may also develop large-enrollment classes or multiple smaller enrollment classes for the purpose of generating tuition revenue for the grad/professional school. The current budget model is a significant driver of this behavior.

Grad/prof schools receive undergraduate tuition, but don’t contribute to funding the undergraduate cost pools like the undergraduate schools do.

- Undergraduate units argue that the current 75/25 tuition split, which automatically attributes 75% of the tuition revenue based on the course designator, does not cover all the costs associated with supporting undergraduates in their unit. The undergraduate experience encompasses a vast ensemble of support activities, including academic advising, career and major exploration, leadership opportunities, collegiate life, internships, co-ops, undergraduate research, community service/outreach, engagement in student organizations, mentoring by peers and professionals, tutoring, creating living and learning communities, first-year and second-year experience courses, and study abroad. Costs for these support services are borne by each of the undergraduate-admitting colleges.
- Grad/Professional schools do not have student support services that are geared towards the issues of undergraduates.

Graduate and professional schools are less familiar with the nuts and bolts of administering undergraduate classes and supporting them.

- Class scheduling and class information is handled differently in grad/professional schools than in undergraduate units. Professional programs’ class times may not line up with the standard class start times.
- Full course guide information is very important to undergraduate students, while some professional programs typically list only their course titles.
- Grad/Professional schools are less likely to be familiar with specific policies surrounding undergraduate courses (exam scheduling, excused absences for athletes and others, mid-term alerts in 1xxx level courses, incompletes), and the support mechanisms in place to help undergraduates (Student Conflict Resolution Center, Center For Writing, etc.).
• Grad/Professional schools have less experience with undergraduate student preparation and this can impact prerequisite expectations and appropriate choices for course levels (2xxx, 3xxx, etc.). Courses at the 4xxx, 5xxx and 6xxx level that enroll undergraduates and grad/prof students should have different expectations of the two cohorts (classroom/grading equity issues arise).
• Best teaching practices may differ when the audience is undergraduate vs. grad/prof students.

Potential benefits of interactions between professional schools and undergraduate students:
• Undergraduates get exposed to new fields of knowledge to which they may not otherwise have had access.
• Undergraduates could make connections with faculty who can provide advice and context for professional careers and graduate study in fields beyond those covered in the undergraduate colleges.
• Undergraduates could make connections that would lead to employment/internship opportunities, or potential undergraduate research opportunities.
• Grad/professional schools would become more knowledgeable and attentive to undergraduate trends and issues and could build better connections with colleagues in the undergraduate-admitting colleges.

Potential solutions and parameters for teaching beyond your mission [grad/prof schools teaching undergraduates or undergraduate admitting colleges teaching grad level courses]:
• Given the saturation of the LE curriculum, the CLE has asked Vice Provost McMaster to put a temporary moratorium on grad/prof schools teaching undergraduate courses in the LE curriculum until more research has been done to determine what effect this has on student degree progress and on the LE curriculum.
• Explicit partnerships could be developed between undergraduate and grad/prof departments based on mutually compatible goals and the best interests of students. Faculty who teach undergraduates should be collectively willing to embrace the undergraduate education experience and the concomitant responsibilities that come along with it (grad-retention rates, SERU responses, etc.)
  o Courses and interdisciplinary minors for undergraduates should have an undergraduate-based administrative home (e.g., undergraduate minor in Public Health is administered by CLA; several undergraduate majors are coordinated in Medical School departments but administered by CBS). This ensures that the staff and systems are in place to manage advising and degree clearance, and to answer questions about policies and requirements.
  o Courses could be taught with an undergraduate-unit-based designator, and require undergraduate collegiate curriculum committee approval.
For such partnerships to work, leadership needs to promote campus-wide (dean/department head) buy-in, and fiscal agreements need to be developed/re-developed between undergraduate and grad/prof departments to manage the distribution of instructional and student support costs and tuition revenue. These agreements would be expected to differ from the current 75-25 budget model that was developed with cost-sharing between undergraduate admitting colleges in mind.