Chair’s Report  
Academic Senate General Meeting  
Thursday, 3 March, 2011  

ANNOUNCEMENTS  

Nominations for Director of the Core Curriculum  

Nominations for the first Director of the College’s undergraduate Core Curriculum closed on 18 February. The search committee mandated by Senate Action S-10/11-12—the Chair and Vice Chair Gomez-Arias, for the Academic Senate; Chair Zach Flanagin and Cynthia Ganote, for the CCIC; Vice Chair David Gentry-Akin and Ken Brown, for the UEPC—will convene during the week of March 7; the Senate may expect to conduct a vote of confirmation at the General Meeting of 24 March.  

REMARKS ON THE AGENDA FOR 3 MARCH, 2011  

In re: 4. REPORTS  

C. Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee (UEPC)  

UEPC met on Monday, 21 February. The committee elected representatives to the search committee, Core Curriculum Director, as noted above under ANNOUNCEMENTS. The committee then took up the Senate’s return for reconsideration of the Learning Outcomes and Rationale under Critical Thinking. The committee had in hand (as required by the Senate) a digest of Senate concerns (Appendix I to this Report) and language drafted by the Chair of the Senate, at the request of the UEPC and CCIC Chairs, purporting to address the Senate’s expressed concerns (see Appendix II to this Report).  

In the event, UEPC voted 10-0-0 to refer both the statement of Senate concerns and the revised draft of Critical Thinking Outcomes to the CCIC, with the instructions that CCIC:  

(1) explicitly address the inclusion of formal logic into a new set of learning outcomes and/or a new rationale; and (2) include language to make it more explicit that the first goal is developmental goal (cf. UEPC, “Minutes from meeting, February 21, 2011,” posted).  

UEPC also expressly requested that CCIC evaluate and report on whether the proposed Critical Thinking Outcomes would impose any additional course requirement on students. No date certain has been established for reconsideration/resubmission of Critical thinking language by the UEPC (UEPC’s next regularly scheduled meetings falls on 14 March, 2011).  

Returning to its ordinary calendar of business, UEPC approved without dissent the items which form the Senate’s Consent Agenda for 3 March, 2011.  

D. Academic Administrators Evaluation Committee (AAEC)  

Senators will have seen—and, it is hoped, completed—the AAEC Evaluation of the Provost, which has been sent by individual e-mail to eligible faculty, and re-sent to non-respondents. This survey will close Monday, March 7, whereupon AAEC will
commence digesting the results and drafting its report under the able leadership of Mary Kay Moskal, KSOE.

*In re: 5. OLD BUSINESS*

**A. Adoption of the Learning Outcomes for the New Core Curriculum**

The Senators have in hand the “Agenda and Procedure” document, which details the Chair’s intentions by way of conducting the faculty’s business in this matter (members of the faculty will find the document posted on the Senate webpage with the General Meeting Agenda). Consideration of the Agenda will resume with Agendum 5, “Whether to adopt the Shared Inquiry Rationale?” and proceed sequentially, unless a change to the orders of the day is moved.

*In re: NEW BUSINESS*

**A. Resolution of Commendation**

The Senators have in hand the text of a resolution in commendation of the distinguished speaker invited to address this year’s Academic Convocation (6 April), Brother Augustine Boquer, FSC, President, De La Salle University–Dasmariñas, Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Philippines. The Chair would hope that, however the consideration of Old Business may proceed, Senators will move the Commendation by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,

S. A. Cortright, Chair
Academic Senate
Appendix I

TO: Asbjorn Moseidjord, Chair
Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee

Cc: Zach Flanagin, Co-chair, CCIC

FROM: Steve Cortright, Chair
Academic Senate

DATE: February 16, 2011

RE: Adoption of Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes & Rationales

At the February 10, 2011 meeting of the Academic Senate, the adoption of the UEPC approved Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes & Rationales for the New Core Curriculum was discussed. The following actions were taken:

Learning Outcomes under Critical Thinking - A motion to adopt the learning outcomes was defeated by a Senate vote of 2-4 with 3 abstentions. Listed below are the Senate concerns or questions raised.

- What is the definition of critical thinking?
- Concern about the absence of formal logic
  - How would we implement a learning outcomes specifically related to formal logic?
  - What are the implications for departmental and core curricula?
- Five Senators indicated in a straw vote that attention to formal logic is a matter of concern.

  - Include language specifying that students develop the habit of recognizing and questioning their own assumptions (explicitly mentioned in the Learning Goal).
    - Include language stating whose assumptions are referred to in #2 of the Learning Outcomes.
  - Include language indicating that critical thinking skills are developed through stages of increasing mastery/sophistication.

Rationale under Critical Thinking - The Senate voted unanimously to recommit the Rationale to the Undergraduate Educational Policies Committee with instruction that Rationale be evaluated in light of the discussion of the rewording of Learning Outcomes. Listed below are concerns and/or questions raised by the Senate.

- Reconsider Rationale based on any possible amendments made to Learning Outcomes
- Encouraged a clear statement about development to be incorporated in the Rationale, making a clear marker to the Collegiate Seminar Committee.

Learning Outcomes under Shared Inquiry - The Senate adopted the Learning Outcomes under Shared Inquiry by a vote of 5-4 with 1 abstention.

Discussion of the remaining Learning Outcomes and Rationales will continue at the Senate’s next General Meeting, March 3, 2011.
Critical Thinking (a Habit of Mind)

Learning Goal: Critical thinking includes the processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation necessary to understand and acquire knowledge. In addition to the application of formal logic, critical thinking also incorporates careful observation, reflection and experience. Critical thinking is not only applied in investigations intended to result in a single, unambiguous conclusion, but also includes skills that allow for sound judgments to be made when multiple, competing viewpoints are possible. Throughout the core curriculum, students will practice the habits of critical thinking and move forward in their ability (and perhaps willingness) to question their assumptions. In short, students will be able to recognize, formulate and pursue meaningful questions about their own and others’ ideas.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Across their studies, students will develop habits of critical thinking; that is, they will, with increasing proficiency,
   a. identify and evaluate premises or theses, implicit or explicit, in others’ reasoning;
   b. originate plausible theses, assess their coherence and expose their (implicit) assumptions;
   c. evaluate their own and others’ theses in the full light of opposing, as well as confirming, evidence;
   d. evaluate and synthesize evidence for the purpose of drawing valid conclusions.

2. Students will demonstrate conversance with formal principles and methods of discursive thought through course study (a) of the acts of the intellect (i.e., formal intentional logic), (b) of natural deduction (i.e. formal first-order logic), or (c) of the formal methodology of their major discipline.

Rationale: (i.e., the intention of the proposed outcomes): It is worth recalling, first, that “critical” derives from κριτικός—“capable of judgment.” Essentially, critical thinking is thinking capable of (and worthy of) eliciting judgment in the twofold sense of reasoned affirmation or denial on one’s own account, and of reasoned acceptance or rejection of others’ accounts. Well-reasoned acts of judgment depend on material conditions and respond to formal principles.

1. Materially, well-reasoned judgments depend on one’s formulating apposite questions or problems and assembling and evaluating the materials required to address them. Consistent fulfillment of the material conditions for judgment thus supposes sound habits of mind, signal among them: the grounds of judgment—whatever is laid down (theses) and whatever is implicit therein (assumptions)—must be well-explicated (1., a.–b.) and subjected to full, balanced scrutiny (1., c.); the grounds of judgment must be effectively ordered to valid inference (1., d). Such habits are established by sustained practice; principally, practitioners grow in proficiency under the guidance of teachers who are themselves sound, critical thinkers.

2. Formally, well-reasoned judgments result from well-ordered starting-points (principles), according to correct procedures (methods). Formal principles and methods may pertain to all discursive thinking, irrespective of subject [2., (a) – (b)], or they may pertain to specific subject matters [2., (c)]. In the first case, they may be approached as arts perfecting the discursive acts of the mind [2., (a)] or as rules governing evaluation of discursive artifacts, viz., propositions and inferences [2., (b)].