

Teaching Working Group

Themes:

- In our discussions of what is a **liberal arts** education and needing to define **teaching excellence**, it's clear to our group that CAS must focus on undergraduate education, particularly **core education**. Core education is one of the central spaces where CAS-related departments provide teaching opportunities and offer students some of the key transferable skills they will need and deploy in their professional schools and in their other degrees outside the college. Too often core courses are structured as an assembly line, and as a result, we continually lose the perspectives of students, who wish to be fully immersed in and passionate about their coursework and future jobs.
 - **Suggestion #1:** Similar to the Research group's idea, perhaps CAS needs an administrative position dedicated to *teaching*. This person would work with the Provost's office on improving and promoting teaching excellence and supporting ALL faculty.
 - Different ranks are held to different standards of excellence in teaching. ALL faculty must be incentivized and held accountable to high standards of teaching. We need to bring research and teaching excellence *together*.
 - Professional development, particular towards improving teaching, is not supported.
 - Faculty equals both career and tenure-line instructors, although this is not always reflected in university rhetoric.
 - **Suggestion #2:** Create a Core Education unit, similar to UCLA, with faculty in residence. By creating this unit, CAS would focus and direct resources to the courses most/all students encounter. This unit would provide supervision by those who study and understand *teaching*, not narrow research and scholarly interests.
 - The goals of UCLA model for life science core education (<https://www.lscore.ucla.edu/>) appear similar to those of the proposed "flightpath" or "meta-major" model in which UO students within broad plans of study (e.g. health sciences, humanities and communication, industry and commerce) take a standardized set of courses in their early undergraduate careers. Having faculty dedicated to the curricular and pedagogical goals of these courses shepherding students through their introduction to the university could have a profound impact on student success.
 - If CAS implemented administrative position(s) dedicated to oversight of quality education, it would provide a logical position of oversight for CAS-residing meta-majors.

Benefits include:

1. Allowing faculty to mentor each other as well as students.

2. Facilitating better engagement with students.
 3. Refocusing resources on student success and support. (This is what the Oregon state legislature wants to see the UO doing.)
 4. Providing a better mechanism to interact and work with the surrounding **community**.
- **Innovation in teaching:** Faculty departmental homes versus teaching across different departments.

Departmental and budget structures disallow for the circulation of faculty across campus to teach in interdisciplinary programs but also to innovate in cross-disciplinary collaborations and forms of teaching that defy or perhaps challenge the boundaries of disciplines.

- An example of this is “Spanish across the curriculum”: while students at the UO could be offered classes in Spanish (or in other languages) in many more disciplines other than literary, cultural, or linguistic studies. This would benefit our rapidly changing multicultural population, but also all students seeking to develop linguistic skills for participating in a more global and international academic and professional environment.

Thinking broadly about CAS Structure: Might a division, then, be more appropriate not between disciplines (as this stifles innovation and collaboration) but between two Areas within the College? One might be called General Studies and would be devoted to the core-mission, lower division training, and advancing core values and core educational experiences across disciplines. The other would be a College of Arts and Sciences where, instead of departments, we would explore areas of issues or problems. In other words, rather than English, RL, Comp Lit, Folklore, etc., we could have an area of Literary and Cultural Studies; instead of Geography, Environmental Studies, Volcanology, etc, we could have an area of Earth Studies, and so on.

There are great examples for this kind of more flexible and innovative arrangement in new places like UC Merced and in older universities, too, that have challenged the closeness of departmental structures to collaboration and innovation, in both teaching as well as research.