

Report of the CAA ad hoc Committee on Integrative Learning Presented to CAA: April 29th, 2010

Composition and Charge of the Committee:

In light of President Perry's goal of making Eastern Illinois University a leader in Integrative Learning (IL), the CAA ad hoc Committee on Integrative Learning was charged with discovering what departments, curriculum committees, and colleges at EIU are currently doing with respect to integrative learning, and receiving feedback regarding their views on what role CAA should play in encouraging IL at Eastern. The Committee was chaired by Dr. Grant Sterling (College of Arts and Humanities), and consisted of Mr. Greg Aydt (Academic Advising), Dr. Darren Hendrickson (College of Sciences), Mr. Matt Pickham (student member), Ms. Stacey Ruholl (College of Education and Professional Studies), and Dr. Larry White (Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences).

Committee Procedures:

The colleges were contacted, with the assistance of Provost Blair Lord, through their Deans and College Curriculum Committee Chairs. They were invited to meet with us and discuss the IL projects with which they were currently engaged, their policies regarding IL as part of the curriculum, and any recommendations they might have for CAA's role in these matters. We held discussions in some form or other with all the Colleges, with the unfortunate exception of the Honors College. After considering their ideas and suggestions, as well as information and ideas gleaned from workshops and other meetings, we have reached a consensus on a set of findings.

Findings:

- 1) We reaffirm the value of Integrative Learning as part of the curriculum at EIU. We were impressed by the number and variety of innovative ways in which IL is currently being undertaken in the various departments—portfolios, capstone courses, partnerships with external agencies and RSOs, internships, Study Abroad programs in a variety of countries, team-taught courses, etc. This variety and quality is especially gratifying considering that EIU is still in the early stages of discovering what IL really means and what opportunities it presents.
- 2) We find that the EIU curriculum as a whole does not display clear integration, though several departments and specific programs are integrated vertically within their programs and in some cases with other departments and programs as well. The integration that does exist, unfortunately, is rarely clearly explained to students—students often do not know why various courses are required as part of a major or minor, why one course is a prerequisite for another, etc.
- 3) However, we find that the best model of IL is not a top-down model where faculty members or departments are compelled to incorporate IL elements in their courses, but rather one where IL ideas are developed by departments and individual faculty members on their own initiative. College Curriculum Committees, and CAA, can certainly encourage submissions to include IL elements, and can discuss with faculty and Chairs ways in which courses and

- programs might add integrative features, but the colleges that met with us were unanimous that CAA should not make IL elements mandatory.
- 4) An argument can and has been made that General Education is the ideal setting for IL, and that the current GenEd curriculum does not make good use of this opportunity. However, we as a committee felt that we were in no position to undertake the massive and controversial project of reviewing and overhauling GenEd. We are not convinced that the time is right for CAA as a whole to undertake this project. Perhaps later, when the campus community better understands and accepts IL this could be a worthy project (especially if it can be done while avoiding the pitfalls that led to the collapse of the old Integrated Core), but we are not recommending it at this time.

With this report the committee considers its mission to be fulfilled. We are not making any recommendations that require CAA action.