

Senate Council
July 20, 2020

Discussion on Possibility of Diversity and Inclusivity Requirement for Undergraduates

Background:

In spring 2017, a number of UK students, staff, and faculty discussed the possibility of an “inclusive excellence” graduation requirement for all undergraduate students. The intent was to establish criteria by which courses could be described as meeting the definition of an inclusive excellence course. Then, UK’s existing courses would be evaluated to determine which ones already included the required content. (Faculty would have been welcome to propose new inclusive excellence courses, too.) The intention was that students would be able to fulfill the inclusive excellence graduation requirement by virtue of the content in one of their UK Core courses, major core courses, or electives.

Unfortunately, due to a variety of factors, including changes in leadership, the proposal did not move far beyond the developmental stage. The Undergraduate Council reviewed the proposal and offered comments on an early draft, but no other Senate-related vetting occurred.

The report follows.

Inclusive Excellence (IE) at the University of Kentucky University Graduation Requirement

As a public land-grant and research institution, the University is obligated to help the Commonwealth and the nation confront the profound challenges we face as a people. Recent events suggest that we struggle to engage in discussion and dialogue in a civil and constructive fashion when disagreements are profound. They also suggest that many citizens on all sides of the political spectrum have a poor understanding of how their fellow citizens experience life as citizens at local, state, and national levels. Moreover, an academic institution whose mission is to prepare future citizens of the commonwealth and nation will best educate students in a context where they are learning and growing with fellow citizens. It is not possible to achieve such growth in either a mono-cultural or a balkanized educational setting.

The demands of engaged citizenship require students to strive for cultural competency, cultural humility, and an appreciation of the value of human diversity. It is important that our graduates appreciate the role that culture plays in influencing individual behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. The first community to harness diversity as a resource and an opportunity will reap the greatest future rewards. A review of information from our benchmarks and other institutions similar to UK suggests this concept is not a new one. For example, the University of Wisconsin has had a university graduation requirement for academic focus on diversity and inclusion for more than 20 years. Other institutions, such as the University of Michigan also have a well-articulated and institutionalized plan to address these important issues. We also recognize, that our goal will not occur in isolation. There are a number of university and student organized activities and initiatives aimed at promoting these values and dispositions among UK students. The academic and curricular solution we are offering is aimed to help deepen and extend the other aspects of a broader initiative.

Therefore, we submit this *Inclusive Excellence (IE) Proposal* to cultivate a wide-ranging and dynamic dialogue that utilizes to full advantage all of our racial and ethnic backgrounds, gender experiences, socio-economic circumstances, and other key differences. At the broadest level, UK students will complete a 3-credit hour IE course from a menu of already existing courses that will be approved for inclusion in this program. They may select a course from a) within their major or b) within the CORE. Double-dipping between *Inclusive Excellence (IE)* courses and CORE will be allowed, common, and encouraged. *Inclusive Excellence (IE)* courses and faculty will be carefully selected and vetted by a specially appointed committee. Student learning outcomes will be assessed in concert with the instructors biannually. IE courses will be identified with a symbol (to be determined) and will be available to UK students within many majors (but not all) and disciplines or offered within UK Core. The majority of students will fulfill this requirement in our campus community, but a mechanism for determining exceptions will be implemented. We plan to communicate with the other schools from which the largest proportion of our transfers originate to determine whether they are in a position to implement relevant criteria in their required courses, so as to be able to identify specific courses at those schools that are reliably fulfilling the spirit and letter of the IE course requirement. In order to ease the period of implementation, we will devise a exemption policy that is initially more permissive and designed to insure that none of our students are in any way delayed on their path to graduation. We recognize that improving the quality of education in parallel with decreasing our time to graduation is of utmost importance to our institution.

We are recruiting interested faculty through an ongoing nomination process, and our list currently includes more than 50 names. A detailed set of criteria for approval as an IE course and student outcomes will be developed in conjunction with these faculty. Following this work, it is anticipated that faculty may respond to an RFP for submission of a course for vetting as an IE course and for training. For the courses that will be included in the program, we will be looking for faculty who are already highly trained and ready to begin as well as faculty who have interest in participating but will require training and guidance in developing the skills necessary for successful engagement with students around these sometimes difficult topics.

We have begun conversations with staff in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment regarding how to effectively assess the courses and overall program goals. Currently, we are envisioning a review of a signature artifact, determined by the instructor which will be scored by an external source.

Proposed General Criteria for approval as an IE course:

- Courses should engage students in interactive learning techniques, for example direct conversation, debate, guided discussions, simulations, etc.
- Assignments should include engaged learning, for example digital documentaries, service-learning projects, etc., as well as in developing students' information literacy.
- If possible and relevant, courses should include local (i.e., Lexington and Kentucky) issues relevant to the topic; however, this may not be a reasonable expectation of all such courses.
- Course content should focus on issues of power, justice, and identity systematically, precise guidelines will be developed
- Student learning outcomes should require that students demonstrate an understanding of the relevance of inclusive excellence within their profession, and must participate in assessable individual and group projects that focus on personal and professional issues related to the information learned in the course.
- Assignments in the IE courses should require students to identify and evaluate the significance of the information based on conflicts, compromises, and/or ethical dilemmas. These projects shall demonstrate a basic understanding of effective and responsible participation in a diverse society.

Other Options Considered: In thinking about these issues, we initially considered increasing the UK101 course beyond 1-credit; however, this option on its own, was not substantive enough to achieve the goal of developing skill sets. We may want to consider UK101 as a component of a campus-wide effort in this area. An additional 3-credit Core requirement also was considered and set aside due to the impossibility of adding credit-hour requirements while also maintaining the commitment to ensuring that students graduate in four years and to meet the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) interest in keeping degree program requirements close to 120 hours. We also considered limiting the IE courses to UK Core; however, to do so does not leverage the many courses available as resources outside of UK Core that should be included in this effort

As an initial step in achieving *Inclusive Excellence* course offerings, we will move forward in the following ways:

- Immediately identify the cohort of faculty teaching existing courses pertaining to diversity, prejudice, stereotypes, racism, sexism, bias, multiculturalism, social justice, and inequality with help from various sources, including the Associate Deans for Undergraduate Programs.
- Determine the frequency these courses are currently taught and how many seats are available in each of these. In so doing, we will have a baseline of courses currently available.

- Bring nominated faculty together (May 10) to develop criteria and determine learning outcomes.
- Develop a sense of community among these faculty and discuss ways of moving forward with course approval of targeted courses (with consultation with CESJ faculty and CELT staff).
- Begin pilot of these courses proposed for inclusion in IE.
- Faculty may propose courses that exist within their discipline as Inclusive Excellence courses and if approved will commit to making relevant changes to meet the Inclusive Excellence course objectives.
- Faculty may propose new courses for inclusion in IE either as a CORE course, or an elective course within their discipline.
- Some students may take IE courses within UK Core particularly when courses do not exist within their discipline. “Double-dipping” will be allowed.
- A two-day training for faculty who teach IE courses will be provided by CELT, members of the Center for Equality & Social Justice, and other campus experts. Information will be provided on how to have courageous conversations, syllabi development, relevant student learning outcomes, possible artifacts, and relevant course content. A stipend will be provided to faculty in attendance. A day for this training has not yet been determined.
- Courses approved as an IE course will be reviewed biannually or whenever taught by a new instructor to assess the extent to which they achieve the established student learning outcome.
- A communication network will be developed and maintained to provide ongoing and current information. This may be in the form of a blog or webpage.
- A separate oversight committee pertaining to the IE courses will be established. One possibility is a senate sub-committee of the CORE.
- A pilot of the IE course offerings will occur during the 2017/2018 Academic Year. Adjustments will be made based on lessons learned.
- Special considerations will be given to transfer students who were already enrolled in a two-year course plan at another institution when the IE requirement goes into effect (not to occur before the academic year 2018/2019).

As a long-term goal, students who complete 18-hours of IE courses would be eligible for an undergraduate certificate in areas such as *Social Justice*.

Needed Resources:

During the development of the proposal, campus units (i.e., Office of Institutional Diversity) committed resources for the training of faculty in May and potentially to stipends for faculty).

Timeline:

- April—invite faculty who have particular expertise in this area and have been nominated to attend an initial meeting to discuss student learning outcomes and other necessary component of the vetting process
- May 10th hold for potential meetings
- Fall 2017 – pilot a small number of courses and continue refinement of proposal for discussion with campus stakeholders and recommendation from Senate Councils and Committees
- Fall 2018 – potential IE university requirement in place