The December meeting of the Core Review Committee (CRC) was called to order by Committee Chair Brian Whitman at 11 a.m. in Breiseth 208. Present were: CRC members Andrew Miller, Gina Morrison, Marianne Rexer, Philip Simon, Brian Whitman (Chair), and Diane Wenger; non-voting ex officio members Ellen Flint (Office of the Provost), Susan Hritzak (Office of the Registrar), and Amy Patton (Office of Admissions); and guest, Barbara Loftus, Associate Provost and Chair, University Assessment Committee.

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 10, 2005

Minutes of the meeting of November 10, 2005 were approved as distributed (motion to approve: Philip Simon; seconded: Susan Hritzak).

II. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Update on the WAC Proposal

Dr. Whitman reported that six departments continue to discuss the WAC proposal and that the chairs of these departments have not yet signed the proposal coversheet. Dr. Whitman has stressed to each department chair that a signature is not an imprimatur; a chair’s signature indicates only knowledge and understanding of the proposal and of the possible effect(s) of the proposal on programs within each department. Dr. Whitman has noted that concerns expressed by faculty at the departmental level fall into two primary areas:

1) a general sense among departmental faculty of feeling unprepared for the task of teaching writing (“I’m not an expert in writing. . . .”); and

2) concern, especially with regard to the sophomore year, about transition to a Writing Across the Curriculum model from the Writing Intensive model currently practiced at Wilkes; department chairs have noted that existing Capstone and junior-level courses offer plentiful opportunities for writing, but that second-year courses are not as consistently imbued with opportunities for writing in the discipline as are the Capstone and junior-level courses. Writing opportunities in the curriculum for sophomores will need to be designed by the faculty in many programs.

It was noted that Dr. Agnes Cardoni has been appointed Coordinator of Writing and is charged with 1) helping departments and programs make the transition from WI to WAC and 2) advising departments and programs in the development of appropriate and meaningful writing curricula within the discipline. The question of transition from WI to WAC for sophomores should be resolved by S07, the date by which the current WI courses are set to expire, and, until that time, current sophomores and students who are sophomores during AY 2006-07 will continue to have WI opportunities available to them. Faculty will have AY 2006-07 in which to consult with Dr. Cardoni and design appropriate and meaningful writing components in major courses for sophomores (and freshmen).

Dr. Whitman will continue to work with departments and chairs to answer questions, address concerns, and facilitate moving the proposal forward to the next levels: Academic Planning Committee and the Curriculum Committee.

B. Report on Current Activities to Assess the Core

Dr. Whitman reported that he has been talking to members of the former (ad hoc) Core Review Committee to determine the extent to which the skill and distribution area [Student] Learning Goals ([S]LGs) established by this ad hoc committee (May 2005) have been addressed and assessed by each of the programs involved. The members of the current, elected CRC do not want to disregard or supersede any work already completed or processes implemented by departments and programs in the skill and distribution areas. To date, only COM 101, ENG 101, ENG 120, and HST 101 have assessment measures in place and are engaged in collecting assessment data. Dr. Whitman spoke with Will Terzaghi, point person for Area II, and Bob Tuttle, point person for Area III; both stated that no further action has been taken to articulate and refine [S]LGs or to collect assessment data in Areas II and III. Dr. Whitman has been unsuccessful in his attempts to make contact with Terry Zipay, point person in Area IV.

The general consensus was that while physical evidence has not been collected in many areas, such evidence most likely exists, particularly in the sciences and in mathematics and computer science; it remains for departments and programs to identify, collect, collate, and analyze the evidence. [Student] Learning Goals in several skill and
distribution areas need to be reviewed and revised and assessment criteria still need to be established for several areas.

Dr. Marianne Rexer suggested that the monthly General Faculty Meeting may be the appropriate venue in which to acknowledge and express gratitude for the work of the members of the former ad hoc Core Review Committee.

C. Communications with Assessment Committee

Dr. Barbara Loftus, Associate Provost and Chair of the University Assessment Committee, stated that there is strong support among the members of the University Assessment Committee (UAC) for the proposal that the UAC should serve to advise the CRC in matters concerning assessment and further that the UAC should remain separate from the CRC in order to ensure the integrity of the assessment process. The following proposal, submitted by Dr. Loftus and amended as shown in bold print, was adopted by internal agreement:

University Assessment Committee
Proposal to establish the working relationship with the Core Review Committee—2005-2006

Composition: 4 elected faculty members; 3 staff members (Academic Affairs, Office of Planning, Analysis & Research, Career Services)

2005-2006 Functions: (1) investigate assessment methods and instruments that address general education/core student learning outcomes at other peer academic institutions; (2) provide assessment methods/instruments recommendations to the Core Review Committee following the CRC’s establishment of general education/core student learning outcomes; and (3) review the Assessment Committee – Core Review Committee relationship at the end of the academic year to establish the functions of general education/core assessment measurement and evaluation for 2006-2007.

Brian Whitman will report to FAC the CRC’s acceptance of this proposal and request that the FAC report to the faculty that a working relationship between the University Assessment Committee and the Core Review Committee has been defined and that the work of both committees is moving forward.

Dr. Loftus stated that the UAC has begun reviewing assessment models:

1) Ms. Joan McDonald, Executive Director of Institutional Research, has presented to the UAC existing standardized tests that are used at many universities to assess the effectiveness of the core curriculum; and
2) Barbara Loftus has shared information about institutional portfolios as core assessment tools.

The UAC will continue to review current assessment materials and procedures throughout AY 2005-2006 and provide recommendations to the CRC per the newly established working relationship guidelines.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of other Core models

Dr. Gina Morrison presented to the CRC, in both PowerPoint and hard copy formats, summaries of core curricula from 12 universities: King’s College; Marywood University; University of Scranton; East Stroudsburg University; Lehigh University; Temple University; Columbia University; University of Chicago; University of New England; Farleigh Dickenson University; Case Western Reserve University; and Milliken University. She also presented a detailed summary of the Temple University Core Task Force Report, Appendix 5 (available online at www.temple.edu). After reviewing the summaries of various core curricula, Dr. Morrison then noted differences and commonalities among the core curricula at the various universities:

Differences

♦ Some Cores are extensive; some are skeletal
♦ Smaller universities do campus-wide Cores; larger schools move Core into colleges
♦ Catholic schools require much more philosophy/ethics/theology

1 Since the proposal does not effect any changes to the charge of either the UAC or the CRC but rather clarifies the working relationship between the committees, no official vote was needed for approval.
• Much disagreement on foreign language requirement

Commonalities
• Core is linked to mission
• Much work on Cores in recent years
• Writing & oral competencies, critical reading & thinking skills embedded
• Sequenced courses
• Campus-wide themes
• Traditional areas (math, sci, arts, social studies, ethics) not enough any more
• Recent additions: diversity, globalization

Dr. Morrison called the committee’s attention to the recent additions in the areas of diversity and globalization that appear in the majority of core curricula presented for review.

B. Document to restructure the Assessment Committee

Dr. Loftus noted that, at the recent Annual Assessment Conference of Middles States (Dec. 1, 2005), there was little support by Middle States for the use of standardized testing as an assessment tool for the acquisition of skills and knowledge in university core/general education curricula. She also stated that, according to Middle States, certain skill areas may not require specific course work as proof of coverage in the core/general education curriculum; rather, skill acquisition (e.g., in the area of Information Literacy) may be embedded in and throughout the general education curriculum (as in the case of WAC at Wilkes) and that a university need only be sure that courses and experiences in which skills are addressed can be identified and that the skills are being assessed in those courses and experiences.

Dr. Loftus further noted that the working relationship between the CRC and the UAC should be reviewed at the end of AY 2005-2006 specifically with regard to the analysis and assessment of data and the distribution of analyzed data. Under the current system of curriculum assessment, the department chair or area point person is responsible for collecting and analyzing all data related to assessment. Current procedure, then, represents an added and unwelcome workload for faculty and chairs. Although the original charge of the UAC was to review analyzed data only, it has been suggested that, in order to alleviate the burden on faculty and chairs, a UAC representative work with each area point person to help with collection and analysis of data. Dr. Whitman indicated that the CRC has a significant role to play in alleviating the burden of assessment now levied on faculty and chairs inasmuch as it is the CRC’s responsibility to draft a list of student outcomes/learning goals that are specific, clearly written, demonstrable, and easy to assess. The CRC should provide a mechanism by which departments and programs can establish realistic and demonstrable learning goals that serve as the foundation of an ongoing process of assessment of teaching and learning to include regular review, revision, and improvement of curricula and programs.

Concluding remarks:

Gina Morrison expressed concern that there is still no student representation on the CRC. CRC members agreed that student representation is critical as we move forward with review and revision of the core curriculum, and the student representative should be encouraged to share with Student Government the deliberations of the CRC. Amy Patton suggested that CRC send a representative to an upcoming Student Government meeting to seek nominations for a student representative to the CRC.

Discussion returned to issues of core revision and the components and objectives of a new core. In designing a new or revised core curriculum, committee members were urged to avoid trends and to consider carefully what our students need to succeed at Wilkes and beyond, to consider the desirability of a balance of western and non-Western studies and of a clear context for diversity studies and perspective from which diversity might be investigated.

Brian Whitman set an agenda for the January meeting of the CRC. He stated that we should
1) “look at the pieces” of our project and start to pull them together in relation to the Task Force Recommendations. (See attached “UGE Focus for 2005-2006”);
2) revisit the WAC proposal and discuss the possibility of extending the “across-the-curriculum” model to other skill areas;
3) review the Assessment Matrix generated by the former ad hoc CRC and determine next steps for reviewing, refining, and, in some cases, rewriting, student learning goals. Dr. Whitman suggested that the CRC focus its January discussion on Assessment in the Skill Areas of the core: technological
competency; written communication; oral communication; and quantitative reasoning. Per the Middle States Standards, Information Literacy will be added to the list of skills.

Dr. Whitman will redistribute the Assessment matrix and Ellen Flint will ask Anita Ruskey for another copy of the UGE Taskforce recommendations (“UGE Focus for 2005-2006”).

The next meeting of the CRC was set for 11 a.m., Thursday, January 31, 2006, place TBA.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Flint