

REVISITING USG RESOLUTION R. 20-02 REGARDING SAGES UNIVERSITY SEMINARS

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee reviewed USG General Assembly Resolution R. 20-02: A Resolution to Adjust the SAGES Categorical Requirement. The Curriculum Subcommittee offered a three-part recommendation in response to the USG resolution that was presented at the FSCUE meeting of May 3, 2011, as described in the attached excerpt from the minutes of that meeting.

The FSCUE chose to adopt the first part of the recommendation (which was subsequently approved by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and has been implemented), but asked the Curriculum Subcommittee to do further consultation about the other parts. In particular, the Curriculum Subcommittee was asked (1) to consult with the Director of the SAGES Program about the feasibility of offering sufficient First and University Seminars in the Natural World thematic group to be able to require one of all students, and (2) to do further consultation with USG because the recommendation was different from what was originally proposed.

At its meeting on November 22, 2011, the FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee met with Dean Peter Whiting, the Director of the SAGES Program. Dean Whiting indicated that, with sufficient lead time, he believes that it is feasible to offer sufficient seminars in the Natural World area to require that students complete their First and University Seminars across the three thematic areas: Natural World, Social World, and Symbolic World. The Case School of Engineering is planning an initiative that will boost its participation in First Seminars, increasing the offerings in the Natural World area by perhaps 15 seminars. In addition, Dean Whiting believes that it is possible to shift the hiring of SAGES Fellows who teach University Seminars in the direction of the Natural World area.

The discussion did, however, take a turn in a direction that had not been considered last year. It was noted that some students are assigned to special sections of First Seminar designed either for international students needing help with English as a second language or for developmental writers for which the expectation is that students will be enrolled in First Seminar for two semesters. Given the nature of these special sections, it seemed appropriate that the Common Curriculum thematic group be maintained for these sections (these sections actually follow common curricula). Moreover, it was felt that the constraint placed on these students in their choice of First Seminar be offset by greater flexibility in their choices of University Seminars in that they simply be required to take two University Seminars for two of the three thematic areas. This provision will also reduce some of the strain on producing sufficient Natural World seminars.

At the same meeting, Steve Cummins, Vice President for Academics of the USG and a member of the Curriculum Subcommittee, reported that the Curriculum Subcommittee had done its due diligence in terms of consultation with the USG through the student participation on the subcommittee.

The FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee adopted the following recommendation, very similar to the one put forward last spring:

1. That the recommendation of USG Resolution R. 20-02 be implemented for students who matriculate prior to August 2013 (it has already been implemented for students currently enrolled or matriculating prior to August 2012), but that this not become a permanent policy;

2. That the SAGES Program be modified to eliminate the Common Curriculum (CC) thematic group of First Seminars beginning August 2013, with the exception of the sections designed for ESL students and developmental writers;
3. That students who matriculate in August 2013 or later be expected to take a First Seminar and two University Seminars, one from each of the three thematic groups: Natural World (NA), Social World (SO), and Symbolic World (SY), with the exception that students assigned to a section of First Seminar for ESL students or for developmental writers be permitted to take two University Seminars from any two of the three thematic groups.
4. That the FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee review with the Director of the SAGES Program no later than February 2013 that it is feasible to implement these revised requirements for students matriculating in August 2013 or that the interim accommodation regarding University Seminars be extended until a later date.

FROM FSCUE MINUTES, MAY 3, 2011

**Recommendation from the FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee Regarding
USG General Assembly Resolution R. 20-02: A Resolution to Adjust the SAGES Categorical Requirement**

The Faculty Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education (FSCUE) received from the Undergraduate Student Government a resolution asking "[t]hat the SAGES program allow students to take two University Seminars of different categories regardless of the category students were placed in for their first seminar." FSCUE referred this resolution to its Curriculum Subcommittee for review, appropriate consultation with the constituent undergraduate-degree-granting schools, and recommendation.

The FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee had an initial discussion of the resolution with Shengbo Wang, its author, and Professor Peter Whiting, Director of the SAGES Program. Following that discussion, the Associate Deans and curriculum committee chairs of the four undergraduate-degree-granting schools were asked to take the resolution back to their schools for whatever they determined to be the appropriate consultation and then report back to the FSCUE Subcommittee. The FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee then developed and approved the following recommendation:

That the recommendation of USG Resolution R. 20-02 be implemented for students who have already matriculated and are subject to SAGES requirements and for students who matriculate prior to August 2012, but that this not become a permanent policy;

That the SAGES Program be modified to eliminate the Common Curriculum (CC) thematic group of First Seminars, beginning August 2012; and

That students who matriculate in August 2012 or later be expected to take a First Seminar and two University Seminars, one from each of the three thematic groups: Natural World (NA), Social World (SO), and Symbolic World (SY).

Discussion

Under our current SAGES requirements, undergraduates must take a First Seminar from one of four thematic groups (CC, NA, SO, SY) and two University Seminars from two of three thematic groups (NA, SO, SY) that are also different from the thematic group of the First Seminar. While the FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee does not believe that the configuration of the requirement is too difficult for students to understand, the group recognizes that students are constrained differentially in their choices of University Seminars depending on whether their First Seminar was in the CC category or another thematic group, and that students may not fully appreciate the implications of their First Seminar choices when expressing their seminar preferences prior to the start of their first year.

However, discussions within the constituent faculties revealed a strong reluctance to abandon the breadth aspect of the SAGES Program, leading to a preference to have the same three thematic areas for First and University Seminars (NA, SO, SY) and to require that students take one SAGES seminar in each of the three areas. Moreover, several faculty members expressed the view that many of the seminar topics that are currently offered in the CC thematic group could be reassigned to one of the other areas.

The FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee recognizes that its recommendation will require an equal number of seminars in each of the three thematic areas, combining First and University Seminars, and that it will take time to develop these. [In 2010-2011, 34 NA seminars were offered, 58 SO seminars were offered, and 61 SY seminars were offered; there were 36 First Seminars in the CC area.] Also, First Seminars in the CC area are already scheduled to be offered in Fall 2011. For these reasons, the Subcommittee recommends reconfiguring the requirement for Fall 2012.

The Subcommittee will request a report from the Director of the SAGES Program at the start of the spring semester 2012 on progress generating sufficient seminars in the three thematic areas for 2012-2013, and will determine at that time whether to recommend that the current structure of SAGES and the interim accommodation regarding University Seminars be extended until a later date.

5/3/2011

The FSCUE voted to approve the following resolution:

The FSCUE approves the recommendation of USG Resolution R. 20-02 which is to be implemented for students who have already matriculated and are subject to SAGES requirements and for students who matriculate prior to August 2012, but that this is not to become a permanent policy.

In regard to the other recommendation drafted by the FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee on May 3, 2011, the FSCUE recommends that the FSCUE Curriculum Subcommittee consult with USG and others for the purpose of developing a permanent policy.

The FSCUE will forward this resolution to the chair of the Faculty Senate for immediate consideration by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee so that it might be implemented starting in fall 2011.