

CANISIUS COLLEGE

Memorandum

To: Blair Foster, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

From: Larry E. Jones and Patrick J. Lynch, S.J.
Co-Directors of the Core Curriculum

Date: April 21, 2014

Subject: Core Credit for AP and IB courses

The Core Curriculum Committee first discussed the proposal from Christine Ryan to award credit for the Diversity and Global Awareness attributes to students who had received scores of 4 or 5 on Advanced Placement tests in high school for American History, European History, World History, Comparative Politics, and Art History (as well as for a small number of students who had taken comparable courses in satisfying the requirements for the International Baccalaureate) on January 30, 2014, then briefly revisited the issue on April 10, 2014, and unanimously adopted the following resolution on April 24, 2014:

After a careful review and discussion of the administration's recommendation that students who had received grades of 4 or 5 on Advanced Placement tests for American History, European History, World History, Comparative Politics, and Art History or who have taken comparable courses for the International Baccalaureate may use those courses to satisfy requirements in the Canisius College Core Curriculum for the Diversity and Global Awareness attributes, the Core Curriculum Committee has determined that the adoption of this recommendation would severely compromise the integrity of the Core Curriculum and that it therefore should not be approved.

In arriving at this decision, the Core Curriculum Committee strived to balance the practical advantages to be gained by accepting the administration's proposal against the need to preserve the academic integrity of the Core Curriculum. The Core Curriculum Committee did not accept the administration's argument that, since transfer students were permitted to use comparable courses they had taken at other academic institutions to satisfy the Diversity and Global Awareness attributes, freshmen who had received scores of 4 or 5 on AP exams or who had taken comparable courses as part of an International Baccalaureate should also be permitted to do so. There are several reasons for not doing this. One could argue that the College – and the Core Curriculum Committee as part of the College – has a certain obligation to make it possible for transfer students who, for example, have studied at another institution for two years to complete their undergraduate education at Canisius in two years. To facilitate that, the Faculty Senate and Core Curriculum Committee agreed in March 2010 to allow transfer students to use courses they had taken at other academic institutions to satisfy not only field requirements in the Core Curriculum but also all attributes except for Ethics and Justice. The same obligation, however, does not hold for incoming freshmen students who have four years to satisfy their Core Curriculum requirements and are not under the same time pressure as transfer students. They are, however, allowed to use AP credit to satisfy field requirements provided they have received the score(s) that would permit them to do so.

The Core Curriculum Committee is responsible, among other things, for ensuring the academic integrity of the Core Curriculum. The Core Curriculum Committee was concerned that incoming freshmen would be allowed to use, for example, a score of 4 on the AP exam in American history to satisfy two core requirements, one in Field 4 and the other the Diversity attribute. Not only did that, in the opinion of the Core Curriculum Committee, constitute a serious erosion of core

integrity, but there was absolutely no guarantee that the freshmen in question had addressed, let alone mastered, the learning goals and objectives the Core Curriculum Committee has approved for the Diversity attribute. An even more egregious compromise of core integrity would be to allow a student who has received an AP score of 3 in Art History to use that to satisfy core requirements in both Field 3 and Global Awareness. Of the twenty-eight Jesuit institutions of higher learning in the United States, Canisius College has one of the smallest, if not the smallest, core curriculums. Through a judicious selection of core courses students can complete all core requirements with no more than twelve courses, some of which may also be used to satisfy major requirements. To make it possible for students to avoid core courses through the indiscriminate award of core credit for AP exams or for courses that they may have taken as part of the International Baccalaureate would constitute a serious erosion of core integrity. For incoming freshmen who have four years to complete their core requirements, expecting them to do this without double-counting the credits they already receive through Advanced Placement or the International Baccalaureate does not seem an imponderable burden.

A further concern is related to the assessment of student learning in the Core Curriculum. How would students who have not been exposed to the treatment of Diversity as part of a course that is specifically designed to teach diversity fare when it came to the assessment of what they have learned in the Core Curriculum? Having a large cohort of students who have satisfied their Diversity requirement in some other way than taking a course that carries the Diversity attribute could seriously compromise the integrity of the results of assessment of that attribute and would make it impossible to “close the loop” without requiring all of those students to take courses that carry the Diversity attribute. Preliminary evidence indicates that students who have not taken FYS 101 do not fare as well on the Iskills exam for information literacy as those who had received instruction in information literacy skills in FYS 101. The Core Curriculum Committee is in the process of developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy for the assessment of student learning in the Core Curriculum Committee and fears that the integrity of whatever it might learn from this process could be compromised if a significant cohort of students -- and that would certainly be the case if incoming freshmen with AP scores of 4 or 5 in American history were permitted to use those scores to satisfy the Diversity requirement in the Core Curriculum -- were exempted from taking courses that had been approved for the award of attribute credit.

The Canisius College Core Curriculum therefore regrets to inform you that it cannot, for the considerations outlined above, approve the request to award credit for the Diversity and Global Awareness attributes in the Core Curriculum to students who have received scores of 4 or 5 on Advanced Placement tests in high school for American History, European History, World History, Comparative Politics, and Art History or for comparable courses that students may have taken in satisfying the requirements for the International Baccalaureate.