

Thurgood Marshall College  
Curriculum Review Committee

**REPORT ON THE DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE PROGRAM**

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Brief History of the Dimensions of Culture (DOC) Program
- III. Methodology of the Review Committee
- IV. Recurring Issues in the DOC Program
- V. Recommendations of the Review Committee
- VI. Recommended Timeline for Implementation
- VII. Conclusion

**I. Executive Summary**

The Dimensions of Culture (DOC) course sequence has been the foundational curriculum for students entering Thurgood Marshall College (TMC) for nearly two decades. Designed to be an intensive collaborative experience bringing together UCSD faculty, college writing and administrative staff, and a large cohort of graduate teaching assistants, the three-quarter sequence has been one of TMC's focal points and has given many thousands of UCSD undergraduate students a sustained opportunity to explore the sources, significance, and controversies surrounding the issue of social diversity and the pursuit of social justice and equality in American life.

Much of TMC's activity in these areas stems from UCSD's ongoing commitment to promoting a significant part of undergraduate education within the college system. Since its founding in 1964, the University of California, San Diego has organized undergraduate education around a college system inspired, at least in part, by the unique organization into smaller colleges and halls of Oxford University. An attempt to provide students an educational experience that combines the benefits of a large world-class research institution with elements of a smaller and more intimate liberal arts college environment, UCSD's six colleges are designed to foster a sense of academic community, to train students to be broadly informed and actively engaged citizens, and most important, to provide each student with foundational tools in university-level critical thinking and writing.

In many respects, the DOC Program at Marshall College has embodied this multi-tiered commitment quite well. However, as with any broad-based required general education undergraduate course or course sequence, there comes a time

when course design and objectives should be reviewed and revised. With this in mind, the TMC Curriculum Review Committee has concluded that the time is ripe for an extensive revision of the logic, content, organization, and pedagogical goals of the DOC sequence. While focus should remain on course content, logic and objectives, we believe that the review process also offers an opportunity for a serious rethinking of the relationship between teaching faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and students in the course sequence. Finally and importantly, given ongoing campus concern with the general state of UCSD writing programs, the review committee also believes that since we are recommending an extensive revision of course content and logic, a significant revamping of the writing component of the sequence will be required as well.

There are other equally compelling reasons for undertaking extensive revision of Marshall College's foundational undergraduate curriculum at this time. With California well on its way to becoming the nation's first "majority minority" state, and with a larger ongoing demographic revolution transforming the population of the United States, it is now more important than ever that well educated student-citizens develop a comprehensive understanding of the full implications of the historical development and current ramifications of this period of intense social, political, and economic transformation. Indeed, given the social instability and uncertainty produced by the aging of a huge part of the native population of the United States, the acceleration of complex processes of economic and social "globalization," and the massive population movements and social dislocations that have been associated with these worldwide structural shifts, it is imperative that well-rounded university students be given every opportunity to critically engage with the many issues raised by the growing racial, ethno-cultural, class, and gender diversity of their own society—and of the wider world.

The Dimensions of Culture Program in Thurgood Marshall College was originally designed to expose students to the abiding importance of such issues. Thus, at this time, we feel it even more critical that the course sequence be revamped and reinvigorated in a manner that will provide future generations of Marshall College students the opportunity to understand these vital dimensions of the modern world while also sharpening their skills in critical thinking and expository writing. What follows are some specific recommendations as to how best to effect positive revision of the core undergraduate curriculum in Thurgood Marshall College.

## **II. Brief History of the DOC Program**

The Dimensions of Culture Program was originally implemented in 1990 after a long period of review and deliberation by a number of committees within Thurgood Marshall College (TMC) and the larger UCSD campus. Prior to that time, the primary requirements for TMC (formerly Third College) students included a stand-alone writing program and a menu of introductory lower division

courses focusing on some aspect of “cultural diversity” and the “multicultural experience” in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The main impetus driving the review of the extant curriculum at the time was a desire to achieve four ambitious goals. The first of these was an attempt to design a core curriculum that more clearly reflected TMC’s stated commitment to exploring themes in diversity, community, and social justice, or, in the words of the original course proposal, to reaffirm TMC’s commitment “to the aims of respecting cultural diversity and keeping questions of social justice constantly in view.”<sup>2</sup> The second goal was to design a course sequence that would provide incoming TMC students with a common intellectual grounding and collaborative experience in the university classroom. Third, TMC’s academic affairs and curriculum committees sought to implement a new course sequence as the primary platform from which to provide focused training in college-level writing. Finally, in addition to this already ambitious agenda, early iterations of the revised TMC curriculum also included far-reaching public service and outreach components—although it should be noted that severe funding and other logistical constraints prevented implementation of this aspect of the program at anywhere near the scale originally envisioned.

Based on review of founding documents, early internal program reviews, and recent interviews with Communication Department Professor Michael Schudson, who played a central role in the deliberations of some of the most important TMC curriculum review committees, committee members learned that the primary model envisioned for the new curriculum was something similar in design and scope to the University of Chicago’s and Columbia University’s approach to general education for undergraduate students—and particularly the University of Chicago’s tracks in Humanities, Civilization Studies, and the Arts. Indeed, the similarities between the University of Chicago’s description of its core humanities and arts curriculum and early iterations of DOC’s mission statement are clear. For example, the University of Chicago’s current catalogue copy describes the mission of the humanities track as follows:

An essential component of general education is learning how to appreciate and analyze texts intellectually, historically, and aesthetically. Through this general education requirement, students at Chicago learn how to interpret literary, philosophical, and historical texts in depth; how to identify significant intellectual problems posed by those texts; and how to discuss and write about them perceptively and persuasively. They also learn how to study a visual or performing art form. Finally, students learn how to study texts and art forms within a specific cultural and chronological frame....<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Third College Academic Affairs and Curriculum Committee, “Proposal to Revise Third College General Education and Graduation Requirements” (rev. version), Nov. 15, 1990, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> University of Chicago General Education Humanities, Civilization Studies, and the Arts catalogue copy p. 2; <http://colleeadmissions.uchicago.edu.level3.asp?id=396> (accessed January 20, 2008).

While the missions of the University of Chicago's undergraduate program and the Dimensions of Culture sequence have strong similarities, it is equally clear that over time, the DOC Program at UCSD evolved into something quite different. While thematic emphases and a commitment to developing critical thinking and writing skills in an interdisciplinary context were common to both curricula, the primary difference between the University of Chicago's approach and the program that emerged at UCSD is that students at Chicago were offered *a broad menu of courses* taught by different instructors to fulfill the general education requirement *over a two-year period*, while the DOC program represented something of an intensive three-course synthesis that was compressed into one academic year.

In addition, a key difference between the Chicago sequence and what emerged at UCSD was that DOC was explicitly designed to have students confront complex and controversial issues regarding the social and political implications of inequality and asymmetries of power associated with historical and contemporary racial, ethnic, class, and gender hierarchies. Thus, whatever the merits of choosing this particular pedagogical path and course configuration, from the outset, the decision to combine an intensive and inherently complex and controversial content-driven course sequence with an equally intensive and ambitious writing component created significant tensions and chronic problems that have persisted to the current moment.

### **III. Methodology of the Review Committee**

The Thurgood Marshall Review Curriculum Committee was formed in May 2007 at the request of the Provost of the college. Although periodic assessment and revision of the curriculum are normal parts of the academic review process at UCSD, several controversies played a part in spurring this particular review. The most recent of these, which unfolded over the winter and spring terms of 2007, was initiated by a group of DOC TAs, TMC students, and other members of the UCSD community who issued a series of protests regarding the content, pedagogical approach, and administration of the DOC program. Coming together as the Lumumba-Zapata Coalition, this diverse group joined with other concerned members of the university community to press for an accelerated review of both the DOC Program and the larger TMC curricula. The current curriculum review committee was established soon thereafter.

Once formed, the TMC review committee, which includes a broad range of faculty members from the Division of Arts and Humanities and the Division of Social Sciences, the Provost Emeritus of Marshall College, and several teaching veterans of the DOC Program, took its charge very seriously. Beginning in the spring term of 2007, and continuing through the summer, fall, and winter terms of 2007-08, committee members undertook the task of conducting a comprehensive

review of early feasibility studies, founding documents and recommendations, and all previous curricular and program reviews. The committee also closely reviewed all current teaching and reading material in the sequence. In addition, committee members invested a great deal of time soliciting input from, and eventually interviewing, individuals and groups either currently or formerly associated with the program and a wide range of individuals and groups who simply expressed an interest in the review process.

Thus, over the months since the establishment of the review committee, committee members gathered information by meeting individually or as a group with the current and past provosts of the college, past and present members of the DOC staff (including the immediate past and current directors of the program); past and current members of the teaching faculty, and representatives of the office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. In addition, the full committee or smaller groups of committee members also conducted extensive meetings with past and present DOC graduate teaching assistants; current and past TMC students; members of the Lumumba Zapata Coalition; and others who expressed an interest in meeting with committee members, including faculty members who have taught in other writing programs on campus. The chair of the committee also had a series of very productive and mutually informative meetings with representatives of ACE (Academic Committee for Excellence), a committee of concerned TMC undergraduates formed to conduct its own review and to contribute to the current college curriculum review process. All told, committee members spoke in person or by telephone and/or email with more than a dozen current or former DOC Professors; and approximately one-half to two-thirds of TAs who taught in the sequence during the 2006-07 academic year. In addition, committee members communicated in person or by telephone and/or email with approximately 50 current or former UCSD undergraduate students, most of whom were or are affiliated with Thurgood Marshall College.

The full review committee met at least once a month over the entire review period (with the exception of August and September 2007, when many committee members were away from campus). Members of the review committee otherwise stayed in close contact with one another by email and telephone throughout the review process and met regularly to discuss findings, assess problem areas, exchange progress reports, and to begin to develop recommendations. After compiling and reviewing all the documentary and interview material, and generating periodic internal progress reports and memoranda, the committee developed an initial rough draft of this report in January 2008 and continued to revise it until its release in February 2008.

#### **IV. Recurring Issues in the DOC Program**

##### **Staffing**

Based on our extensive interviews with faculty, staff, members of the administration, TAs, and students, and a concomitant intensive review of the various internal and external assessments that have been conducted on the DOC program through the years, several persistent vexing issues were identified by this review committee.

Among the most obvious of these has been the perennial logistical problem of **staffing** a course sequence that has been required of 500 to 750 students each year since the 1991-92 academic year. Since the initial offering at that time, the sequence has been staffed at between 8 and 9 faculty per year. Of course, faculty efforts have been augmented by the support activities of writing staff, TMC academic advising and student services staff, and a large corps of teaching assistants as well.

In the first three to four years of the program, participation of tenure-line, permanent senate faculty was excellent. In the first year, for example, all sections of the sequence were taught by regular, tenure-track faculty. For the next several years, this pattern continued, with the majority of sections being taught by ladder-rank senate faculty and augmented either by the DOC Program Director or, in one instance, an advanced UCSD graduate student just short of completion of the Ph.D.

However, over the years, a troubling pattern emerged in which participation of permanent faculty declined and the ad hoc recruitment and use of either advanced graduate students, lecturers, and temporary faculty increased.

This process of senate faculty disengagement from the DOC Program has continued to the present moment. Thus, in the current (2007-08) academic year, ***no permanent ladder-rank UCSD senate faculty are teaching in the sequence.*** Given the importance of the DOC sequence as the introductory general education requirement and initial collective intellectual experience of approximately one-sixth of all entering first-year undergraduates and transfer students at UCSD, the committee believes that this is a deeply troubling, and ultimately untenable, circumstance. Indeed, we believe that staffing by senior ladder-rank faculty is essential for DOC's future.

### **Faculty/Staff/TA Coordination**

Another persistent problem—**coordination, communication, and cooperation between lecturers, staff, and TAs**—emerged almost immediately and has vexed the DOC program since its inception. As noted previously, the design of the DOC sequence has required the services of a large number of TAs (ranging in number from approximately 24 to as many as 32 in any given year). Of course, TAs in such large survey courses have always carried a heavy burden

at UCSD, but the work load and stress levels involved in the DOC sequence have been especially high. TAs not only have had responsibility for teaching and administrative tasks for large (and steadily increasing) numbers of students, but they also have had to serve as interpreters of what are often abstract and complex lectures and readings. TAs have also served as interlocutors between lecturers and students, and referees over pedagogical, ideological, and other kinds of disputes that inevitably arise in classes of this nature (more on this below). In addition, TAs have also carried most of the burden of attempting to teach college-level writing, regularly meeting with large numbers of students, and grading writing assignments and exams—all while juggling the rest of the many other course-related tasks.

Indeed, tensions over workload issues increased until they boiled over during the 1996-97 academic year, when DOC TAs were instrumental not only in mounting a job action against the TMC program but in spearheading a broader effort to unionize all TAs at UCSD. Although workload issues apparently have been ameliorated to a certain degree in recent years, DOC, along with the other writing programs, retain their reputation as being among the more onerous TA assignments in the university.

### **Balance between Course Content and Writing Instruction**

Another issue—the question of the difficulty in **maintaining an appropriate balance between challenging and complex course content and the writing mission of the sequence**—has also presented a continuing challenge over the years. Given the ambitious agenda DOC’s designers set for the sequence, that this friction exists is not surprising. Indeed, in the first years of the program, tensions between content-teaching faculty and writing staff were quite high. In addition, the issue of balance between time devoted to, and energy expended on, course content and time spent in teaching university-level writing has been raised as a significant problem in virtually every review of DOC done since the program’s inception. Although conflicts between those primarily concerned with course content and those more centrally involved in conveying the technical aspects of university-level writing have also been mediated over the years, significant tension continues to exist in this vital area. However, despite the persistence of these problem areas, after close consultation with DOC faculty, staff, TAs, and former students, the review committee concurs that *content-driven writing instruction provides the best strategy in teaching the essential components of critical thinking, good writing, analysis, and argumentation.*

### **Writing Instruction by TAs**

Beyond this, the committee is unanimous in its belief that one of the most persistent and most important flaws in the design and operation of the course is

that the lion's share of the actual **teaching of college-level writing continues to be done by TAs**, some of whom are first-year graduate students themselves. DOC staff, in conjunction with TMC administration, apparently attempted to correct this problem at various times through the years, most notably by offering one-on-one writing assistance to students who needed it (often in conjunction with other student support services such as those provided by OASIS). This has been an especially important issue for students for whom English is a second language. However, funding for this additional source of writing instruction has been sporadic at best, and this circumstance reinforces the impression among both students and faculty that writing instruction has often been given short-shrift when it comes to allocating sufficient college and university resources to writing instruction.

Given the importance of the writing programs to the identities and function of each of the university's six colleges and the high priority this area has been given by UCSD's Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in recent years, we believe that *inadequate funding remains a serious flaw in the overall design of the writing component of the DOC program.*

### **Controversial Subject Material**

While each of these areas of potential and actual tension and friction has dogged the DOC program from its inception, the most important source of tension in DOC derives from its **inherently controversial subject material**. This problem has vexed operation of the course sequence from day one, and if anything, the intensity of the issue has been compounded over the years by swings in political and social debate over the very nature of inequality and social justice in U.S. society at large.

Of course, in many respects, these sources of friction and controversy were anticipated by course designers. From the outset, TMC administrators and participating faculty were firmly committed to the proposition that Thurgood Marshall College had a special mission at UCSD. Born in the late 1960s in the crucible of intense political struggle over the meaning of citizenship, civil rights, political equality, and social justice, the college's mission has always been predicated on the idea that the basic curriculum required of incoming Third College/TMC students should reflect a commitment to that kind of engaged critical pedagogy.

Based on our close review of the history of both the college and the DOC program and its predecessors, it is apparent that, from the collective standpoint of TMC administration and the founding members of the faculty, it was imperative that TMC students be exposed to a rigorous, systematic, and inherently critical encounter with some of the most controversial historical and contemporary issues

in American social and political life. Thus, in the case of the DOC program, although specific reading assignments, lecture content, and indeed, teaching faculty have changed significantly from year to year and even term to term, the course sequence has remained fairly consistent in its commitment to continue grappling with the history and contemporary implications of various forms of social stratification and asymmetries of power, whether based on “race,” national origin, cultural difference, class position, gender, and/or sexual preference. That engagement with these deeply controversial issues continues to spark controversy is to be expected, and even welcomed. After all, this was much of the point of establishing the DOC Program in the first place.

Again, while much of the heat generated by almost daily engagement with such issues (in both the classroom and in the residence halls) was anticipated, several critical issues have dogged the course sequence from its inception—as already noted elsewhere in this report.

One of the most crucial questions has to do with the perennial issue of adequately *staffing the various sections with subject-area competent faculty and TAs*. In other words, the review committee feels it critical to emphasize here that the issue of who teaches in the sequence is not simply one of recruiting faculty in sufficient numbers to staff the course. Teaching this kind of volatile subject matter taxes even the most skilled and experienced professors and is, quite simply, often beyond the ken of instructors who have not been trained and do not conduct research in the subject areas in question. Grappling with these issues in a university setting in what has become an increasingly politically divided and polarized society—especially with impressionable first-year students—requires extensive grounding in cognizant fields and expert familiarity with primary and secondary source material, intellectual trends and disputes, and various methodological and pedagogical approaches and debates. It also requires pedagogical acumen, sensitivity to issues of student diversity and student reception, and perhaps above all, flexibility. Members of this review committee who have taught in the DOC program also concur that a light touch and good sense of humor are indispensable in dealing with the tensions inherent in the course sequence.

Teaching expertise in the subject areas addressed in the DOC sequence is also of vital importance in dealing with one of the thorniest issues facing the course—the perception among a significant number of students that DOC represents an exercise in “compulsory chapel” and/or “political correctness.” Referring specifically to what some students have seen as a deeply-rooted “liberal” or “leftist” bias among teaching faculty and some TAs, the compulsory chapel charge is a not unexpected outcome of a course sequence fundamentally concerned with addressing the troubled history of inequality and asymmetries of power in the U.S. national context.

The review committee is mindful of the need to maintain a balanced intellectual and pedagogical approach to exploring with students the potentially explosive issues at the heart of the DOC curriculum. At the same time the review committee is unanimous in its view that teaching faculty should not be pressured to shy away from dealing forthrightly with these issues, however off-putting they may be to some students. In the end, one of the primary objectives of the course is to get students to grapple critically with issues many would prefer not to think about. The key to meeting this objective, in our view, is to build teaching teams with the intellectual and pedagogical capacity to do this in a balanced, respectful, and constructive manner.

## **V. Recommendations**

Given the chronic, structural issues that have faced the DOC program over the years—and that are clearly in evidence now—the TMC Curriculum Review Committee is unanimous in its assessment that it is time to rethink and revamp the course sequence in a manner that is likely to produce positive outcomes in the problem areas identified in this and previous reviews of the DOC program. We should note that the recommended revision of the sequence includes *possible reconsideration of both the unit credit hours currently allocated to each segment of the sequence and the number of quarters devoted to the DOC Program overall* (more on this below). What follows are the committee's specific recommendations.

### **1) Appointing an Implementation Committee**

The review committee believes that the first order of business should be the immediate appointment of an implementation committee to explore the best ways to implement the recommendations developed in this report. Ideally, committee membership would include at least some faculty who are interested in eventually teaching in the revamped course sequence; faculty members who have expertise in the subject areas involved; DOC writing staff; at least some members of the TMC Curriculum Review Committee and the TMC Executive Committee; and perhaps some current or past DOC TAs and TMC undergraduate students. We believe that at least one member should be nominated by the Senate Committee on Committees with the advice of CEP. We also feel that it is crucial that the implementation committee include a member or members with a proven track record in developing successful grants, since we believe that, at minimum, solicitation of one or more internal and/or external instructional improvement grants will be a prerequisite for successful course re-design. We envision that this working group will gradually grow over time to include new faculty recruits and any internal and/or external consultants that may be required.

### **2) Rethinking both the rubric and content of the sequence**

As we have suggested in several places in this report, the committee believes that at the most basic level, it is time to rethink the fundamental intellectual approach and underlying rubric of TMC's introductory course sequence. The committee is unanimous in its view that issues of social stratification, critical engagement with liberal systems of law and political philosophy, and exploration of various forms of expressive culture that articulate alternative political and social thinking in historical and contemporary contexts should remain central organizing themes. However, we also feel it imperative that new teams of ladder-rank faculty should be recruited to come together to rethink the internal logic and goals of both the three individual components of the course and how the individual components fit together. In other words, after nearly eighteen years, we believe that a committed, qualified group of ladder-rank faculty should come together to redesign the DOC Program in a manner that reflects TMC's mission, reestablishes a strong internal logic for the both the individual courses and the sequence, and then develops appropriate classroom materials that support these basic objectives.

One way to do this might be to adjust and tighten the organizing themes of each of the individual courses in a more logical and forceful manner. We find that while the current organizing rubric for the individual courses ("Diversity," "Justice," and "Imagination") are fine as far as they go, after nearly two decades, these original categories of organization and analysis may have become overly vague and ambiguous. Since the thrust of the sequence has always been to explore dimensions of *civic culture* (as opposed to "culture" in more broadly construed anthropological terms), the review committee believes that DOC might be fruitfully reframed and reorganized to focus on issues of "Diversity, Citizenship, and Culture" or the like. The idea is to come up with a new rubric or rubrics that allow more focus and logic to the sequence in keeping with the broad mission of the college. This move would have the added benefit of reasserting intellectual control over the sequence by explicitly designing a curriculum that is centrally refocused on: 1) the historical sources and the contemporary social significance of diversity in the U.S. context; 2) the institutions of liberal democracies (and limitations inherent in these institutional arrangements); and 3) the social significance of alternative worldviews and epistemologies that often are embedded in various forms of expressive culture at the grassroots level.

Thus, we envision the first course in the sequence, "Diversity," to be a basic introduction to the evolution of different forms of stratification—and to divergent systems of thought that emerged along with that process. In this course, students would build an initial conceptual vocabulary that explores the historical evolution of key terms, social categories, and sources of both human diversity and the entrenched social hierarchies that have emerged over time.

While the emphasis of the second course, "Citizenship," would largely remain, as it is now, on questions of institutional responses in liberal democracies

to issues of inequality and social justice, we believe that this exploration should be reframed in a manner that also actively interrogates the limitations of those very institutions and the generation of the various kinds social movements that have contested them over time.

Finally, we believe that the most drastic rethinking needs to be done with the third course in the sequence, DOC III. This course, organized around the theme “Imagination,” has always been acknowledged as the most problematic of the sequence. Consistently plagued by what appeared to be faculty disagreements about the best way to approach cultural history and interdisciplinary cultural studies in the context of the existing logic of the sequence, in the past, DOC III often had the appearance of a forced marriage of approaches that imperfectly and unevenly melded old-style American Studies, cultural history, and the latest innovations in cultural studies.

Given recent rapid advances in interdisciplinary cultural studies that have evolved in the humanities and social sciences in the aftermath of the so-called “cultural turn” of the 1980s and 1990s, we believe that this is a propitious time to completely rebuild DOC III. There are any number of ways to rethink the internal logic of this important final segment of the program, but we believe that a teaching focus on the political and social underpinnings of various forms of both “high” and popular culture would greatly strengthen the organization and impact of this course. Indeed, by paying close attention to the social and political implications of popular expression in film, literature, and music in both historical and contemporary contexts, we believe that with focused effort by faculty experts, this course could be turned into the most popular segment in the sequence. Indeed, given the recent addition to the UCSD faculty of scholars whose research interests lie squarely within these areas, there is no reason to believe that DOC III could not be turned into one of the most popular classes on campus.

In terms of revamping the overall structure of the sequence, we believe that by fine-tuning DOC’s thematic structure and bringing this fresh approach to teaching of course themes, new teaching teams can also lend new structure and internal logic to the DOC reading and writing assignments. In our view, this is a sorely needed reform. Although a great deal of good material can be found in current versions of the individual DOC syllabi, in general, we view the current DOC reading lists more as a haphazard accretion over nearly 18 years of different intellectual and pedagogical approaches to the issues at hand than as a cohesive and internally logical course design. Therefore, it is our view that one of the primary goals of the current round of course revision should be an effort to *strip down, streamline, and ultimately bring reading and writing assignments in all three courses to a level appropriate to the skill sets common among first-year and transfer students entering UCSD.*

### **3) Recruiting senate faculty**

When DOC was first designed, the intention from the outset was not only to have senate faculty teaching most of the course, but actually to have *senior faculty* doing much of the teaching. In keeping with Michael Schudson's ambitious original vision to attempt a small-scale version of the University of Chicago's undergrad core curricula in the humanities and social sciences, DOC was considered important enough to staff with senior senate faculty. The fact that ***the 2007-08 version of the sequence has NO senate faculty participation*** is a sad commentary on the current state of the DOC program—and, at a larger level, a sad commentary on the university's unconscionably weak commitment to this vital area of foundational undergraduate education.

So, as has been true in the past, one of the primary challenges facing us as we think through ways of revamping the program is the need to recruit a number of senate faculty to commit: 1) to rethinking and redesigning the course; and 2) to teach it for a number of years. In our view, at minimum, this will also require a recommitment among faculty who take on the task to work collaboratively with one another (and, in an issue addressed in more detail below) also to collaborate actively with the corps of TAs recruited to participate in the sequence.

In addition, we follow previous DOC program reviews in suggesting that ***it may well be necessary to appoint a senior member of the ladder-rank faculty*** to facilitate these changes. We feel that in light of the chronic lack of participation in the sequence by senate faculty, the unwieldiness of current course material, and the general lack of a strong intellectual focus in the program, a respected and subject-qualified senior member of the permanent faculty is needed to ensure a successful revision of the TMC undergraduate core curriculum.

In our view, the faculty director should have the following responsibilities: 1) general intellectual and pedagogical coordination and direction of the course sequence overhaul; 2) coordination of the development of both internal and external instructional improvement resources; 3) development of appropriate new material for all the segments of the program; and 4) recruitment of other senate faculty to teach in the sequence. As we currently envision the position, the faculty director will also be charged to be the chief academic liaison to the Provost, the DOC writing staff, and the TAs, and generally will help coordinate a smooth transition from the current version of the program to the revised curriculum. If this option is pursued, it is likely that course relief, curriculum development funds, and other inducements would be prerequisites for the successful recruitment of a faculty director.

Another chronic problem with the DOC program recently and in the more distant past is that many members of the faculty have found it difficult to teach from a common syllabus. Therefore, we believe that it is now time to rethink precisely how a revamped course can be taught in a manner that continues to

provide TMC students with a common foundational educational experience while allowing more flexibility to teaching faculty.

One option to facilitate this change that the committee has discussed at length is to *develop a menu of readings for each term* that allows individual faculty members to pick and choose specific readings while remaining focused on themes common across the sections. Another approach might be to *experiment with some form of team-teaching* across different sections of the course.

But whatever specific scheme of reorganization is adopted, we believe it imperative that every effort be made to *recruit three new three-person teams of ladder-rank faculty* with strong backgrounds in appropriate fields to help redesign and teach the revamped DOC program—and to commit to doing so for three-year stints. We believe that this option might help alleviate the staffing issue by building in a certain kind of “term limit” for participating faculty, while also providing a mechanism for recruiting and rotating in future faculty teams for delimited terms. We believe that this approach might have the added benefit of building in a natural review-and-revision provision for the sequence as new interdisciplinary teams of faculty rotate into the sequence with new ideas about how best to approach the issues at hand, while also bringing new materials to bear to help achieve that goal.

The review committee is aware of and sensitive to the difficulties DOC staff and TMC administrators have encountered in the past in recruiting a consistent cadre of ladder-rank faculty to teach the sequence. Course material is difficult to tailor to lower-division students, the sequence requires a great deal of personnel coordination, there is an inherent difficulty in melding course content to writing requirements and the entire issue of effectively teaching writing, and there has been little financial or career incentive to either departments or individual faculty to engage with DOC—or for that matter, with the other UCSD writing programs.

However, taking these real constraints into account, the review committee believes that the administration and TMC Executive Committee might consider a number of innovative ways to encourage participation of ladder-rank faculty and the best TAs in a revamped DOC program. By offering interdisciplinary faculty teams new opportunities for course design, possibilities for team teaching, and intellectual and pedagogical incentives to deal with the challenges associated with the sequence, ladder-rank faculty might well find the opportunity to teach in DOC much more appealing than they have in years past. In addition to such purely intellectual incentives, the review committee suggests that some combination of the following recommendations might assist in the recruitment of faculty and graduate student TAs:

--Participation might be made more attractive to departments by guaranteeing *graduate student TAs teaching fellowship slots* in the DOC

program for a number of years (and the opportunity to work closely with departmentally based faculty in a challenging teaching environment) and perhaps offering small *summer graduate research stipends* to first-year participants.

--TMC might also develop a revolving fund for former senior DOC TAs that would provide a limited number of *competitive full- or augmented dissertation-writing support grants* for students reaching that stage in their graduate training.

As to faculty recruitment, we suggest that the following options be explored:

--Individual ladder-rank faculty members might find participation in the DOC Program more attractive if the college can provide a package of incentives for first-time instructors. For example, in lieu of (or perhaps in addition to) contributions to faculty research accounts, *TMC might also explore the possibility of offering “summer ninths” to first-time course participants* who commit to three-year stints.

--Another incentive worthy of consideration is having faculty earn some form of *accelerated leave time or course relief* in exchange for multi-year commitments to teaching in the program.

--Along the same lines, TMC might attain greater success in recruiting new teams of ladder-rank faculty by assisting in the submission of one or more internal or external *instructional improvement grants* in the re-design stage of the DOC curriculum review process.

--The review committee also strongly recommends that the TMC Provost and Executive Committee emphasize the extent to which faculty participation in *the DOC Program is an active contribution to diversity efforts at UCSD* and thus comports with recent requirements that this aspect be included in routine faculty merit reviews conducted by the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP).

--Along these lines, the review committee also believes that the TMC Provost and Executive Committee also emphasize to CAP both the extraordinary challenges faced by, and the extraordinary effort required of, faculty who participate in DOC and similar lower-division programs on campus. The review committee believes that *CAPE evaluations and other assessments of teaching effectiveness should be calibrated and acknowledged in a manner that takes these exigencies into account during routine faculty merit reviews.*

#### 4) Recruitment/Training/Mentoring Teaching Assistants

Although TAs have always been a central design component of the DOC program, they have occupied an ambiguous and difficult position between teaching faculty, the DOC and TMC administration, members of the writing program, and, of course, students enrolled in the course. This problem has been compounded by the fact that TAs come from many different disciplines and sometimes have had to “stretch” to become competent in the subject material. They have also have been expected (unfairly, we think) to do the lion’s share of whatever writing instruction that actually occurs in the course.

Obviously, over the years, TA disaffection with the workload associated with DOC; conflicts with teaching and writing staff over working conditions, the structure of the course; heavy-handed administration of the program; and simmering ideological tensions with undergraduate students in discussion sections led to instances of TA walkouts; contributed to the formation of a TA union—and most recently, led to the explosion of dissent expressed by the formation and ultimate actions of the Lumumba-Zapata Coalition in the spring of 2007.

When the DOC program was initially designed, teaching faculty members made a concerted effort to work collaboratively with TAs in what they knew to be a difficult and experimental situation. However, like other elements of the original design plan, commitment to the idea of *DOC as a collaborative venture* appears to have fallen to the wayside. The review committee finds this to be a regrettable, counterproductive, and completely unnecessary development. On the other side of the equation, it is imperative that future TAs fully understand the need to be respectful of differences of opinion among DOC students and that they make every effort to keep lines of communication open between themselves and undergraduate students, faculty, administration, and staff.

On another plane, given the questions that have been raised by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), the Office of the SVCAA, and others on campus about the effectiveness of writing instruction in DOC and other writing programs (more on this below), at very least, it seems clear that the role of TAs in the TMC undergraduate core curriculum needs also to be reassessed at a basic level. Should the course be fundamentally redesigned, ***every effort should be made to provide TAs (particularly first-year TAs) with adequate training, support, and respectful mentorship.***

Again, issues of training, support, and mentorship can be approached from a variety of angles. For example, the review committee believes that one strategy might involve an ***annual intensive joint pro-seminar or series of workshops for faculty and TAs*** (perhaps conducted in late summer?) in which course content, pedagogical strategies, and writing instruction techniques are discussed in detail.

Another strategy might involve *increasing the DOC sequence by one quarter* to provide more time for TA training (perhaps along the lines currently followed by the Making of the Modern World Program or the Revelle Humanities sequence) and provide first-year and transfer TMC students with more time to learn and hone the craft of college-level writing. We might also suggest that the senate faculty who restructure the sequence think about bringing with them TAs from their own disciplines as part of this vital team-building venture—and as a means to provide graduate students with a unique teaching experience.

Whatever is done in this important area, the review committee feels it essential that the relationship between faculty, staff, and TAs be reconsidered in light of serious complaints about management style in DOC and the TMC administration that have been raised in the past several years. The committee is fully aware that faculty do and should have the final say in how courses are taught and, to a significant degree, how discussion sections are run. This said, we feel it just as important that DOC faculty and TMC administrators recommit to notions of collaboration and collegiality with the TAs that carry such a heavy and essential role in the actual teaching of all dimensions of the DOC program.

## 5) **Future of the Writing Program**

We all know that one of perennial problems facing the DOC program (and, to varying degrees, other UCSD writing programs) has been the difficulty in attempting to offer course content of the volume and complexity involved in the sequence while simultaneously trying to teach these same students university-level writing. The review committee discussed a number of options to address this basic issue. One possibility we believe should be explored is to restructure the DOC sequence in such a way as to “frontload” the first term to emphasize rhetoric and writing training while simultaneously diminishing content demands for that quarter. Using this first term as the foundation, we believe that teaching teams in subsequent quarters can gradually increase the volume and sophistication of content-related material as the academic year continues. Adoption of this recommendation may also require that the current unit-credit allocation of the individual courses in the sequence be reconsidered.

In any case, at this point, we believe that the improvement of writing instruction is one of most important issues facing this committee. We therefore lean strongly toward recommending that TMC (perhaps in conjunction with other colleges and the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) consider hiring a consulting team to explore the writing aspects of the DOC program and help us develop strategies to improve writing instruction, the use of TAs in this process, and the entire question of achieving “balance” between the content component and the writing component of the sequence. This will take time and cost money, but it seems to the review committee that this has to be a basic component of whatever action is ultimately taken to revise the course

sequence as a whole. Indeed, whatever is achieved through this process in Thurgood Marshall College may well serve as a model for the university's other writing programs.

## **VI. Recommended Timeline for Implementation**

Given the scope of the recommendations we have made here, the review committee believes that time is of the essence in establishing and following a timeline for implementation. We believe that TMC and the general campus should have time to discuss and respond to the report over the remainder of the 2007-08 academic year, but that TMC should commit to following a timeline for implementation of revisions to the DOC Program that allows instruction to begin in the 2009-10 academic year. In keeping with this proposed calendar, the review committee endorses the following (admittedly rough) timeline:

**--February 2008:** Submission of the TMC Curriculum Review Committee Report

**--March-June 2008:** TMC and campus input. Recruitment of implementation team of faculty, TAs, undergraduate students, and at least some members of the TMC Curriculum Review and Executive Committees; begin recruitment of DOC Faculty Director and ladder-rank faculty to staff revised sequence

**--Summer 2008:** Development of Instructional Improvement Grant to partially underwrite revision of the sequence; continue recruitment of ladder-rank faculty to staff revised sequence

**--Fall 2008:** Hire consultants to work with implementation team to explore best mechanism for integrating DOC content and writing instruction; explore revised pedagogical strategies for implementation; continue recruitment (if necessary) of ladder-rank faculty to staff revised sequence

**--Winter 2009:** Develop revised syllabi; course material; training methods for revised sequence; continue recruitment (if necessary) of ladder-rank faculty to staff revised sequence

**--Spring 2009:** Continue to develop syllabi; course material; training methods for revised sequence; continue recruitment (if necessary) of ladder-rank faculty to staff revised sequence

**--Summer 2009:** finish revised syllabi and compilation of course material; convene first pro-seminar or series of workshops to train TAs and implement faculty/staff/TA team-building strategies

**--Fall 2010:** Begin instruction with revised DOC curriculum

## **VII. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the TMC Curriculum Review Committee believes that the DOC Program has reached a critical turning point in its historical development. At the current juncture the committee feels that the course sequence has lost focus and we collectively are quite concerned by the complete absence of meaningful participation in DOC by UCSD senate faculty. The review committee has no intention of casting aspersions on the ability or performance of lecturers who are currently teaching or have taught the course sequence in the past. But given the university's historical commitment to the college system—and to the critical foundational work that is done in the college writing programs—we believe it both contrary to the pedagogical goals of the university and ultimately untenable to run these vital general education program using DOC staff, lecturers, temporary faculty, and advanced graduate students. If the university intends to continue its commitment to the college system—and to the crucial intellectual, social, and community foundations the college curricula were designed to provide incoming first-year undergraduates and transfer students, then we feel it necessary that TMC and the larger university recommit the resources necessary to revamp the DOC sequence, adequately train and mentor TAs, and staff the course with ladder-rank faculty.

### **Thurgood Marshall College Curriculum Review Committee**

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