

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

**AGENDA ITEM: 3.A.2**

**DATE: June 9, 2005**

\*\*\*\*\*

**SUBJECT: General Education – Personal Finance Class**

During the May 2005 BOR meeting, the Student Federation presented the following resolution and the BOR referred it to AAC for consideration and response.

**Resolution 05-01-R**

**WHEREAS** a knowledge of personal finance gives students a strong foundation to achieve better financial wellness; and,

**WHEREAS** students are graduating from colleges and universities with increasingly high levels of overall debt; and,

**WHEREAS** sound financial management is important to students' futures; and,

**WHEREAS** Personal Finance meets the concept of System General Education Requirement number three (Social Sciences/Diversity); now,

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the South Dakota Student Federation respectfully requests that the Board of Regents add Personal Finance to System General Education Requirement Goal number three (Social Sciences/Diversity).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the South Dakota Student Federation does not recommend increasing the number of System General Education Requirement credits required for graduation from a regental university.

Attachment I includes information that Jim Shekleton received from Clark Wold at EAC. Attachment II is the AAC item on the USD study of quantitative literacy.

\*\*\*\*\*

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

**Discussion**

**From:** Shekleton, Jim  
**Sent:** Sun 5/22/2005 5:26 PM  
**To:** Bartel, Steve; Decker, Kay; Haislett, Judith; Lorenz, David; Mahon, Patricia G.; Rames, Marysz; Shirley, Steve; Smith, Rhoda  
**Cc:** Perry, Tad; Turchen, Lesta  
**Subject:** FW: Personal Finance Class

It appears that we may have another resource that could contribute to our efforts focus student attention on basic personal financial responsibility. I take it that the Education Assistance Corporation may already have relationships with your financial aid offices. It appears as though there should be some opportunity to incorporate some of the EAC representatives' efforts into your programming. Why shouldn't there be some manner of financial responsibility seminar required of people who take financial aid? We know that thirty to forty percent of them will stop out after the first year, but the debt will remain. Should we not make sure that we help them to avoid digging deeper holes?

---

**From:** Clark Wold [mailto:Clark.Wold@eac-easci.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 17, 2005 4:24 PM  
**To:** Jewett, Harvey C; Perry, Tad  
**Subject:** Personal Finance Class



Harvey & Tad: I was interested to read the article in the American News recently about students asking the Regents for a personal finance class. We're usually on the other end of the process when our collectors are talking with borrowers about staying out of default on their student loans, or actually collecting from them when they've already defaulted.

We have a staff person whose primary responsibility is default prevention, which in our eyes does include personal finance training. You might be interested to know that we contract with Lutheran Social Services Credit Counseling Service to offer personal finance assistance on your campuses. Financial aid offices can refer students to the service, and we pick up the tab. I'd be happy to provide more detail on the program and information on usage, etc, should you be interested.

We believe an ideal spot for personal finance instruction may be your Freshman Success classes, which I understand is a class required of freshmen, and that it covers several important issues. Unfortunately, we are told that the curriculum for that class is full, leaving no room for personal finance instruction.

These two issues are but the tip of the iceberg in personal finance. The purpose of this e-mail is to offer our assistance. I don't know how we might fit in, but we're willing to visit with your folks that are working on this project. I note that a committee will soon tackle the proposal. We'd be happy to spend time with them to let them know what we and others in our industry have available, and to start a process to learn how we might help move the project along.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if we can be of assistance.

Clark

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM: 3.A.4

DATE: February 10, 2005

\*\*\*\*\*

SUBJECT: Quantitative Literacy (Prepared by R. Engstrom, 2/1/05)

Background

The assigned task was actually to report on the status of "financial literacy," in the context of the Board's interest in that topic. However, a survey of what is available around the country on this general topic is usually talked about in terms of "quantitative literacy," which, in most examples, includes financial literacy as a subset.

As a place to begin, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has recently dedicated an issue of their periodical, *Peer Review*, to the topic of quantitative literacy. (*Peer Review*, Vol 6(4), 2004). This issue provides insight both into the nature of quantitative literacy and examples of specific courses from around the country.

The opening editorial from that issue, by David Tritelli, provides several helpful comments. First, in terms of defining what is meant by quantitative literacy, Tritelli states that quantitative literacy is....

"One's ability to understand quantitative information and to make informed decisions based upon it."

He continues to provide a context for quantitative literacy:

"Citizens are regularly confronted with a dizzying array of numerical information. On a given day, for example, the media may report changes in the consumer price index or federal interest rates, results of clinical trials, statistics from an educational assessment of local schools, findings from a study of the long-term health effects of a wisely used product; the list could on almost endlessly. Moreover, near-omnipresent computers generate- and the Internet makes available- a staggering amount of information, much of it quantitative."

Finally, Tritelli makes the distinction between quantitative literacy and traditional mathematics:

"Quantitative literacy is not a watered-down version of mathematics, and neither is it a replacement for mathematics; *students need both*. [emphasis added]. And as with writing or critical thinking skills, responsibility for helping students to develop quantitative literacy must be shared broadly across the curriculum."

\*\*\*\*\*

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Discussion.

In an *Analysis* article in the same issue of *Peer Review*, Bernard Madison, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Arkansas, points out the irony of policy-makers actually using quantitative literacy skills, while they continue to emphasize in policy the traditional GATC (geometry, algebra, trigonometry, calculus) sequence, and are largely silent on quantitative literacy. (My own sense is that while the skills and concepts necessary to address societal issues are, indeed, embedded in the traditional GATC sequence, the contexts in which those skills and concepts are applied are either lacking or not explicit enough to provide what we think of as quantitative literacy for many college students.)

The teaching of quantitative literacy has struggled to gain momentum for a variety of reasons, according to Madison. In his analysis, although quantitative literacy relies upon relatively elementary mathematics, it is nonetheless a difficult subject because of the challenge of identifying and applying the correct mathematical principle to the contextual problem at hand. Second, quantitative literacy is difficult to teach because it is as much a "habit of mind" than it is a skill set. Madison asserts, though, that it is no more a habit of mind than is creative writing, reasoning, problem solving, or critical thinking, all of which we purport to teach. He further recognizes the inertia against change in a field as well-established as traditional mathematics, and finally, he suggests that the notion persists that teaching quantitative literacy will harm the teaching of mathematics and that far fewer students would go on to learn formal mathematics.

### **Some Examples**

*Peer Review* contains several examples of specific courses or curricula that address quantitative literacy. Hollins University, (Diefenderfer et al) introduced into their revised General Education curriculum a Quantitative Reasoning requirement that calls for student projects involving data collection, interpretation, and communication. Students prepare a written report that defines the problem, methods used to analyze the problem, and a summary of results. They have introduced a faculty development initiative related to their approach, and received an NSF grant to initiate the faculty development. They assess their work with a pre- and post-test in quantitative reasoning.

Augsburg College has an emphasis on what they call Statistical Literacy, as described by Milo Schield. They emphasize the connection between articulation of a problem and its quantitative aspects through clear syntax, and then to use statistical arguments to draw conclusions about a variety of topics such as birth and death rates, automobile accidents, family incomes, etc.

### **Recommendations**

1. There exists a good deal of literature on the necessity of quantitative literacy and its role in society. For example, a recently published book, *Mathematics and Democracy- The Case for Quantitative Literacy*, (The National Council on Education and the Disciplines, Lyn Arthur Steen, Editor, 2001) is a compilation of essays on why and how quantitative literacy should be introduced. The Mathematical Association of America has published a thorough report, *Quantitative Reasoning for College Graduates: A Complement to the Standards*, on-line at: [http://www.maa.org/past/ql/ql\\_toc.html#summary](http://www.maa.org/past/ql/ql_toc.html#summary). A study group should be formed, distinct from the Math Discipline Council but with overlapping membership, to do a detailed study of the status of quantitative literacy. The group should report back to AAC.
2. Given the distinct missions of our institutions, we should probably not impose quantitative literacy as a system general education requirement. Rather, each institution should be able to decide if it is appropriate to their mission.