



Revised ASC Clusters Pilot Program Proposal

November 16, 2006

Rationale: In order to offer a more substantial sense of coherence to students' General Education Curriculum and allow alternate means for students to satisfy general education requirements, the McHale Report recommends that the university implement Clusters as a new delivery system. Because the five colleges of the Arts and Sciences are key players in helping students across the university fulfill general education requirements, the ASC Faculty Senate saw the urgency of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences conducting a pilot program to rigorously test how we might implement a Cluster program for our general education courses.

This pilot program proposes to focus, in the first year, solely on Clusters aimed at freshmen and sophomores. While the ASC Faculty Senate approved a resolution exploring cluster models at the freshman, sophomore, and senior levels, there are several reasons to initially limit the program to early rank students, and particularly to freshmen: 1) Because all NFQF must register for their Autumn classes with advisors during Orientation, we can most easily disseminate information about the Clusters to this class, and 2) Having taken few or no classes, NFQF and sophomores will possess the most flexibility in filling general education requirements. In years two and three of the pilot, we would seek to add Clusters targeted at more advanced students.

The Clusters will be a series of integrated, interdisciplinary courses that satisfy General Education Curriculum requirements and are built around a broad theme. Faculty from multiple academic units will jointly develop and execute the cluster in order to give the courses a coherence unavailable in distinct classes.

The goals of the pilot program are to: 1) identify workable models to develop Clusters and appropriate mechanisms to deliver them, informed by the learning outcomes assessment of the pilot program, and, 2) to determine the financial impact of the Clusters Pilot Program on both delivery costs and sustainability. Departing from the recommendations of the McHale committee, the ASC CCI and Faculty Senate did not approve the use of clusters for more than a credit-for-credit basis.

While we recognize that there has not been a university-wide definition of what the goals of a Cluster are and what constitutes a Cluster, we define the goals and the structure as outlined below. These may be further delineated as discussion ensues in the next several months.

Goals for the Clusters

- Enhance the cohesiveness of General Education Curriculum learning outcomes through an extended interdisciplinary learning experience.
- Continue the process of curricular reform and redesign of the general education experience in a manner that will strengthen core abilities of analytic reasoning, effective communication, and critical thinking.
- Help students explore new fields, critically examine interconnections among disciplines, and synthesize more holistic views of the function of those fields in the world.

Structure of the ASC Clusters Pilot Program

The ASC Clusters Pilot Program will begin in Autumn 2007, with five or six Clusters (perhaps including a Cluster designed for Honors students). For the first year, as we gauge student interest and determine the effectiveness of various Cluster models, each Cluster cohort should be limited to a manageable number of students (for example, 120 students).

To encourage innovation, the pilot Program will explore various models of delivery, requiring only that the Cluster include:

- 1) A multiple (two or three) course sequence;
- 2) A broader, interdisciplinary theme;
- 3) Content that spans at least two GEC categories, and;
- 4) Involvement of faculty from at least two academic units.

Possible models might include:

- The Cluster could take the form of a “three-quarter course sequence,” two lecture courses and a seminar, with at least three faculty members from varied departments, as envisioned by the McHale Committee.
- Alternatively, faculty may propose models in which the multiple course sequence is taught within one or across two quarters.
- Rather than three faculty members, perhaps two faculty will offer a Cluster consisting of a two course sequence of five-credit lecture/breakout classes.

It is expected that Cluster courses will be offered through participating academic units or cross-listed by units, rather than by the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences. For the long-term stability of the Clusters, it is important that the courses become part of standard faculty teaching loads and the general education offerings of academic units.

Cluster Approval Process

Proposals will be reviewed according to the following process:

1. Proposals will first be reviewed by Subcommittee D of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences Committee on Curriculum and Instruction (CCI). Subcommittee D will evaluate the proposed Cluster's potential to successfully achieve the goals of the Cluster Program.
2. If the accepted Cluster contains newly created courses, the new courses will receive the appropriate review and approval within the proposed Cluster's academic unit and/or college.
3. The Proposal will then be reviewed by Subcommittee B and/or Subcommittee C, both of the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences CCI. These subcommittees will evaluate the Cluster courses for their compliance with GEC standards.

Membership of all three Subcommittees reflects colleges within the Arts and Sciences and the professional colleges.

ASC Clusters will be approved with the understanding that approval is attached to the Cluster theme and course syllabi of the proposal. Approval is also conditional on the proposing faculty members agreeing to offer the Cluster for the two year span of the pilot.

At the end of the Pilot (Spring 2009), all ASC Clusters will be reviewed to determine their success in meeting the original goals of the program.

The Arts and Sciences expects professional colleges may elect to run pilot Cluster offerings outside of the ASC pilot. The CCI and The Office of Interdisciplinary Programs will ensure that all university offerings will be presented to students as a unified set of opportunities. While it is anticipated that some of the ASC offerings will involve departments from outside the Arts and Sciences, the CCI will work to coordinate discussions of the development of its pilot program with discussions that take place in individual professional colleges, so that maximum opportunities for collaboration are pursued. The CCI will also ensure that the approval process for GEC credit for professional college clusters includes significant professional college participation.

Assessment of the ASC Clusters Pilot Program

As a pilot program, rigorous assessment will be crucial in determining if the ASC Clusters succeed in their initial goals. Additionally, assessment will help us evaluate which pilot models for the Clusters are most successful and feasible in accomplishing those goals. Toward the concern of feasibility, we will need to measure gains of students in a Cluster (versus in equivalent GEC courses) to determine if the Clusters are worth the greater administrative effort and expense. We anticipate this will be accomplished through multiple means, including:

- 1) Students should be included in the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) sample. This will allow us to compare Cluster students with non-Cluster students to determine if Clusters are more effective at achieving our initial goals than distinct GEC courses.
- 2) Student/Faculty/GTA evaluation forms (hopefully online) to be completed at the end of each course and the end of the Cluster.
- 3) Tracking of student demographics to determine enrollment trends among Cluster students.
- 4) Tracking students after their Cluster to determine academic success, possible enrollment in courses related to the Cluster, increased engagement with faculty, etc.

Administration of the ASC Clusters Pilot Program

For the sake of efficiency, it is proposed that a) proposals for new Clusters will be initially evaluated by Subcommittee D, and then approved proposals reviewed by Subcommittees B and C; and b) the Cluster Program will be administered either by or in conjunction with the Coordinator of the Freshman Seminar Program. The primary reasoning behind this is:

- 1) GEC approval and responsibility for assessment already lie with ASC. Since all Cluster courses will earn GEC credit, housing within ASC will smooth the approval process.
- 2) Subcommittee D has experience evaluating courses designed for first-year students.
- 3) Much of the work needed to ensure student and university community awareness of the Clusters is already being done by the Coordinator of the Freshman Seminar Program. This includes meeting with advisors, preparing promotional materials, maintaining websites, etc.
- 4) The Clusters Program can coordinate with the ASC Assessment Office to gather, analyze, and share student learning outcome and program evaluation data.
- 5) As courses will be offered under multiple academic units, the Program will be most successful if administered within one office.

ASC Clusters Pilot Coordinator

The Coordinator is expected to: advertise offerings to students and advisors; prepare promotional materials; maintain/oversee website; troubleshoot any issues with students; liaison with faculty departments for course scheduling; liaison between faculty – recruiting, connecting, etc.; perform Program assessment.

For the pilot, it seems most efficient to have these duties performed by the Coordinator of the Freshman Seminar Program. In order to allow the Seminar Coordinator time to assume the responsibilities of the Clusters pilot, it is requested that the university fund a 50% FTE GAA position. This GAA will work primarily on the assessment component, allowing the Coordinator more time to focus on curriculum development. Once the pilot has been successfully completed, it will be necessary to reassess staffing needs for a continuous Clusters program.

Timeline

Year 1 – 2006-2007

Summer	– Develop clear goals and guidelines
Early Autumn	– Issue Request for Proposals for pilot – Approval at first CCI meeting
Mid-November	– Draft proposals due to Subcommittee D
December	– Subcommittee D evaluates proposals
January-February	– Subcommittees B & C evaluate proposals for GEC content
Mid-February	– Request rooms/times for AU07 classes
Early Spring	– Faculty submit final proposals/syllabi
Spring	– Subcommittee D approves final proposals/syllabi
May	– Prepare promotional materials for NFQF – Meet with Advisors to discuss pilot Clusters

Year 2 – 2007-2008

Offer 5 – 6 Clusters in a pilot program. Each Cluster will have a maximum of 120 students.

Year 3 – 2008-2009

Offer 6 – 8 Clusters. Increase maximum seats of Clusters based on demand.

Funding

To increase faculty ability to commit the time and energy necessary to creating proposals for Clusters, it is proposed that the university provide funding to “seed” the development and initial offering of courses within the pilot of the ASC Clusters Program.

Proposed Faculty Expenditures

Though other models will be pursued, this proposed budget assumes a model of a three unit cluster (15 credit hours) with three faculty members involved:

- Year 1 (2006-07) – \$22,500 – course development funds

These funds would be split evenly among the academic colleges/schools of the three proposing faculty. The money would be awarded upon selection by Subcommittee D of the Cluster for the pilot Cluster Program.

- Year 2 (2007-08) – \$22,500 – teaching (faculty buy-out)

These funds would be split evenly among the academic colleges/schools of the three teaching faculty. The funds would be seen as a faculty buy-out, to compensate for the faculty’s efforts in teaching the Cluster courses.

- Year 3 (2008-09) – departmental funds – teaching

Beginning in Year 3, or the second year of a Cluster being taught, funding of all faculty will be handled by the faculty member’s home department.

Anticipating 5 – 6 Clusters in the pilot program (including one professional college-based Cluster and an Honors Cluster) and the involvement of 15-18 faculty, this would cost:

Table 1 – Pilot Expenditures for Faculty

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Course Development	\$112,500- \$135,000	\$45,000- \$67,500 (2-3 new Clusters)	\$45,000- \$67,500 (2-3 new Clusters)
Faculty Buy-out		\$112,500- \$135,000	\$45,000- \$67,500
Annual TOTAL	\$112,500- \$135,000	\$157,500- \$202,500	\$90,000- \$135,000
Cumulative TOTAL	\$112,500- \$135,000	\$270,000- \$337,500	\$360,000- \$472,500

After the first two years, the initially heavy costs will level off as more of the financial burden shifts to the faculty’s home departments. Faculty costs will become minimal once a stable number of Clusters has been reached, such that we can offer a desired number each year while being able to rotate Clusters in and out as faculty are able/willing to participate (e.g., UCLA aims to offer 10-12 per year, with a stable number of 15 potential Clusters).

Graduate Teaching Assistant Expenditures

Anticipating a model in which each course is five credit hours, we foresee a structure similar to Figure 1:

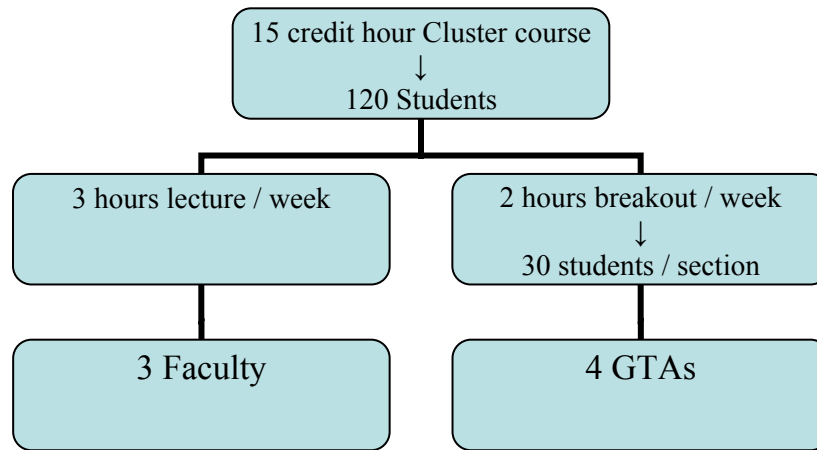


Figure 1 – Cluster Course/Instruction Breakdown

To employ four GTAs would cost approximately: $\$4,500 \times 4 \text{ GTAs} = \$18,000/\text{course} = \$54,000/\text{Cluster}$. The first year a Cluster is taught, it may be necessary for the university to provide one-time funding to cover the salaries of GTAs. After the first year, these expenses would be borne by the home departments of the GTAs.

ASC Clusters Pilot Administration Expenditures

For administration of the ASC Clusters pilot, it is proposed the university provide funding for a) a .5 FTE GAA to assist the Coordinator of the ASC Freshman Seminars/Clusters, and b) administrative costs for advertising and administering the Clusters (see Table 2). The GAA would help primarily with assessment tasks to determine if/how the Clusters are achieving the Program goals.

Table 2 – Annual Administrative Expenses for ASC Clusters Pilot

.5 FTE GAA	\$12,559
Brochure – Design & Printing	\$6,000
Other promotional materials	\$2,000
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> \$20,559

ASC Clusters Income

Income generated from the ASC Clusters would be divided equally among the academic colleges/schools of the teaching faculty (see Figure 2). This could prove especially beneficial for small academic units who have fewer large classes that produce large incomes.

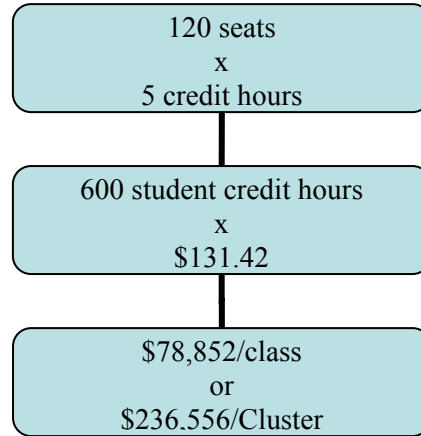


Figure 2 – Income Generated from Clusters

If the Cluster fully enrolls, with 120 students, each academic unit with associated faculty would garner, by 2006-2007 projected rates, \$78,852 in student fees. If two faculty were from the same department, that department would get \$157,704. This amount would grow larger after the pilot year, when enrollments in the Cluster may raise beyond 120 seats.

Total Funding for the ASC Clusters Pilot Program

Funding for the ASC Clusters would initially be expensive (see Table 3), especially in Year 2 when the Clusters are first offered. After that preliminary seeding, however, the approximate cost to the university would decrease (see Table 5). Once a stable number of 14-15 Clusters is achieved, costs to the university would drop to funding only the administrative expenses and occasional seed funding for a promising new Cluster proposal.

Table 3 – Expenses for University (Initial Cluster Cohort of Six Clusters)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Faculty	\$135,000	\$135,000	\$0
GTAsⁱ	\$0	\$324,000	\$0
Administration	\$20,559	\$20,559	\$20,559
TOTAL	\$155,559	\$479,559	\$20,559
CUM. TOTAL	\$155,559	\$635,118	\$655,677

ⁱ Assuming University support for GTAs in the first teaching year.

Table 4 – Expenses for University (Two new Clusters in Year 2 and 3)

	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Faculty	\$45,000	\$90,000	\$45,000
GTAsⁱⁱ	\$0	\$108,000	\$108,000
TOTAL	\$45,000	\$198,000	\$153,000
CUM. TOTAL	\$45,000	\$243,000	\$396,000

¹ Assuming University support for GTAs in the first teaching year.

Table 5 – Cumulative Expenses for University (Six Initial Clusters and Two New Clusters In Year Two and Three)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Faculty & Administration	\$155,559	\$200,559	\$110,559	\$65,559
GTAsⁱⁱⁱ	\$0	\$324,000	\$108,000	\$108,000
TOTAL	\$155,559	\$524,559	\$218,559	\$173,559
CUM. TOTAL	\$155,559	\$680,118	\$898,677	\$1,072,236

¹ Assuming University support for GTAs in the first teaching year.

Number of Students Served

Assuming a Cluster of 120 students and the offering of six Clusters in Year 2, eight Clusters in Year 3, and ten Clusters in Year 4, the following number of students will be served: Year 2: 720 students, Year 3: 960 students, and Year 4: 1,200 students. By Year 4, therefore, we will enroll 20 percent of the incoming NFQF class.

We expect some variation in enrollment size for each Cluster cohort – for example, with fewer students in the Honors Cluster, and greater or fewer students in each cohort as we assess the success of the various models in the pilot program. Ultimately, the pilot program should also address the potential scale, both how many Clusters we can offer and how large each Cluster can grow to, of a long-term Clusters Program.
