

Overview of Proposal for South Mountain College

The attached documents contain the description of a new program proposed for the College of Arts & Sciences. Conversations about such a program began during the 2004-05 academic year. It was one of the curricular initiatives highlighted for discussion at the first CAS faculty retreat held on the Mountaintop Campus in May, 2005. Subsequently, a faculty working group chaired by Gordon Bearn developed a white paper in a series of meetings convened during the 2005-06 academic year. The white paper describing South Mountain College was posted on the CAS (portal) web page in December of 2005 and incorporated into the CAS Strategic Plan. Gordon Bearn made a presentation about South Mountain College to the college faculty at a general faculty meeting in the Spring of 2006. During that same semester, the CAS policy committee was briefed about the planning for this program.

Discussion has continued this Fall, incorporating feedback from faculty who have examined the white paper or participated in one of the meetings last Spring. The document attached here represents an edited and expanded version of the white paper including additional details concerning the proposed program. If approved by the college faculty, plans for South Mountain College can be brought to the university faculty later this semester for a vote. If approved this semester, a broad group of faculty and students will be engaged in a planning process this Spring, so that South Mountain College can become a reality in the Fall of 2007.

The proposal for South Mountain College is unlike most other proposed course and curriculum changes. It contains the sketch neither for a new major nor for changes in an existing one; indeed, the fact that South Mountain College students will pursue an existing, traditional major at Lehigh is one of the more orthodox features of the proposal. While the attached document offers a description of the goals of the program, its rationale, unique curriculum, requirements, etc., this overview is intended to identify precisely those issues that faculty are being invited to deliberate about and vote on. These are:

1. the general concept of a South Mountain College
2. the general requirements of the program (curriculum, minimum credits, residency, etc.)
3. the replacement of college distribution requirements with the broadly interdisciplinary South Mountain College curriculum
4. the replacement of English composition and junior year writing intensive requirements with a South Mountain College curriculum that will be essentially writing intensive for all four years of the college experience
5. the replacement of the Arts & Science 1 requirement with a program that dramatically emphasizes faculty advising and peer mentoring at all levels
6. the replacement of the first year college seminar requirement with the intensive, ongoing South Mountain College seminar experience
7. the replacement of standard letter grades with an evaluation system (for South Mountain College courses only), including rigorous faculty and peer evaluation of all coursework completed in the program
8. course numbers, titles and general descriptions for proposed new South Mountain College courses.