DDP Report 2005-2006
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Over 10 years ago, students asked that the faculty examine a general education requirement called Dynamics of Difference and Power.

- What happened after that?
- Why are some students and faculty opposed to DDP?
  - Who is still fighting for DDP?
- Who would DDP affect, and how?
  - What kind of classes would DDP include?
- What do YOU think about DDP?

Let’s talk. DDP is on the table.

A dialogue supported by: Pomona Student Union, the Sponsor Program, Associated Students of Pomona College, Committee for Campus Life and Activities, Power Dynamics Awareness Committee, The Women’s Union, Students of Color Alliance, Queer Resource Center, Asian American Resource Center, Ujima Peer Mentor Program, Empowered Latinos in Action, Jewish Mentor Program, Asian American Mentor Program, and Queer Questioning Allied Mentor Program.
ASPC Resolution
Passed Feb 14, 2006

WHEREAS students and faculty have been advocating for a Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) general education requirement since 1995 and their demands have not been met; and

WHEREAS the Curriculum Committee was charged with addressing DDP during the 2003-2004 PAC review but failed to put forth a sufficient proposal; and

WHEREAS Pomona College is an institution whose mission statement includes a commitment to preparing its students for lives of social responsibility in a global context and an awareness of the balance of freedom and responsibility that lies at the foundations of civil society; and

WHEREAS an appreciation of diversity of race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other differences is necessary to the development of students and the College’s continued ability to attract outstanding students; and

WHEREAS a discussion of this subject will likely take more than one faculty meeting, and thus presenting a proposal at the last or second to last faculty meeting will not give the faculty enough time to give due consideration to the proposal;

THEREFORE be it resolved that The Senate of the Associated Students of Pomona College calls for the Curriculum Committee present a proposal for a Dynamics of Difference and Power general education requirement before the faculty no later than March 20, 2006.
To the Pomona College community,

The ASPC Senate recently passed a resolution calling for the Curriculum Committee to bring before the faculty a proposal for Dynamics of Difference and Power. While we realize that there are many different ways that the idea of DDP can be addressed, we would like to strongly support this proposal for a required overlay course that the Curriculum Committee has drafted:

Part of preparing students with a liberal arts education who are effectively able to contribute to our diverse societies is to provide them with a general education requirement that examines the dynamics of difference and power as they relate to race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and/or ability. This requirement can be fulfilled by enrolling in a course that:

1. Foregrounds historical and/or contemporary patterns of power and domination inside or outside of the U.S.
2. Explores historically and/or contemporarily how race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and/or ability have been structured in the U.S.;
3. Examines the historical and/or contemporary experiences of and responses to exclusion, marginalization and/or prejudice by a particular group in the U.S.; or
4. Provides a historical and/or contemporary analysis of the relationships of power and domination between the U.S. and other countries.

Sincerely,

The Senate of the Associated Students of Pomona College

The following organizations have submitted these statements of support for this proposal:

- The Power Dynamics Awareness Committee (PDAC) supports the following proposal for a Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) requirement as part of the general education requirements for Pomona College. We ask that the Curriculum Committee propose a general education requirement overlay which requires students to take one of a number of courses that would qualify as DDP. The overlay is a necessary aspect of this requirement because the Curriculum Committee would be able to ensure a similar standard for all students by evaluating as a group whether a course should fulfill the DDP requirement rather than leaving it to individual members of the faculty. Because power structures are not limited to the present day or the United States, we would like courses for DDP to include ones that have either a historical or a contemporary focus and have either an international or a domestic focus.

  Pomona College seeks to produce graduates “who are eager to contribute to their communities, thoughtful about why and how they do so, and not only reverent, but also a little irreverent, both respectful of the past and willing and able, when necessary, to challenge the status quo” (Course Catalog, p. 24). In order to fulfill this mission, it is necessary that students be required to examine issues of power and difference in an academic setting. In
facilitated discussions with first-year students about race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other differences, it has become increasingly clear that students not only need to engage in these conversations informally but also in the classroom. An academic setting will allow students to consider issues of difference and power using a variety of academic frameworks which can assist in producing students who continue to thoughtfully engage in and contribute to their diverse communities.

- The **Pomona Student Art Gallery**, while focused specifically in supporting students in the arts, feels that the inclusion of a DDP requirement would add to the integrity and potential of this campus. PoSA is in agreement that DDP is a beneficial addition the Pomona College curriculum.

- As members of **Symposium**, a women’s networking association, we are writing to express our organizational support of the Senate’s DDP proposal.

- The majority of the current Pomona College **Volunteer Center** staff believe that knowledge of the dynamics of difference and power at home and abroad is essential to our dedication of fostering social responsibility through volunteerism. Understanding the dynamics of difference and power will help to evoke in students an urgency and need to give back to their communities. Therefore, the Volunteer Center strongly urges the Curriculum Committee to implement Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) as an educational requirement for hopefully a more enlightened student body and future leaders.

- As members of the **Pomona Valley Low Income Services**, we would like to express our support for a DDP required course. In our experiences working with the larger community, we have found that an education in the topics that DDP addresses is invaluable. Not only would this requirement help us in our desire to understand communities outside of our own, but it will help other students to realize the importance of the work that we are able to do in affecting the lives of others.

- The **Vietnamese-American Student Association (VASA)** supports the establishment of a general requirement for Dynamics of Difference and Power. VASA views DDP as a key step in the long road of creating dialogue on campus about the topics of race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, etc. that are so inherent in our everyday lives. Pomona College should be at the forefront of engaging their students in critical analysis of what are considered some of the country's most contentious issues and in thoughtful examination of the historical foundation of these issues.

- After putting the matter to a vote, a majority of the **Mortar Board** members who voted have chosen to take a position regarding DDP. When asked what position to take, a majority of those who voted also chose to endorse the same overlay proposal that the ASPC Senate passed this last week.

- The **Women's Union** believes that the principles underlying the DDP overlay requirement adhere to our mission to "work toward deconstructing gender-based constraints" and to "exercise an active position against interlocking systems of oppression"
As an organization, the Women's Union has observed that the conversations and education on issues of power dynamics are lacking on campus. It has become clear that the Women's Union attracts a particular audience, thus limiting the possibilities for dialogue among the Pomona population. The DDP requirement offers the potential to change this stagnant situation and increase the possibilities for discussions by emphasizing issues of power dynamics in the academic sphere. The study of power dynamics should be part of each student's liberal arts education and deserves to be considered as a category in its own right, just as the five existing breadth requirements. Many students have already assumed the responsibility of informally educating their peers about issues of power dynamics, and it is important for Pomona as an institution to share that responsibility, not only to alleviate the pressure placed upon student educators, but to legitimize the education of dynamics of difference and power that has already been taking place.

- The Asian American Mentor Program supports the Senate resolution regarding a DDP proposal this semester. Although levels of confidence on how it will be implemented differ between individual current members, we collectively strongly feel that the theory behind DDP is in line with the mission statement of our program. As resources and a support network devoted to serving Pomona students, the Asian American Mentor Program calls for the institution's immediate attention to DDP, along with the Senate.

- The Jewish Mentor Program endorses the DDP overlay requirement and believes that such a requirement would aid our mission to "foster a sense of community for all students who self-identify as Jewish, including but not limited to interfaith and/or intercultural Jews, queer Jews, Jews of color, secular and/or cultural Jews, and religious Jews" (http://www.cuc.claremont.edu/jmp/). In addition to supporting the current DDP proposal for an overlay requirement, the Jewish Mentor Program voices its support for including religion within the categories studied. As an organization that was founded to create community for all Jewish students and to increase dialogue on the complexities of Jewish identity, the Jewish Mentor Program values education on power dynamics and hopes to see that these conversations extend beyond the informal sector of student programmed education. By implementing a DDP requirement, Pomona College would increase the quantity and quality of discussions on gender, race, sexuality, among other categories and would signal that it too sees education on such issues as fundamental to a liberal arts education.

- As the Committee for Campus Life and Activities (CCLA), we recognize that dynamics of difference and power as they relate to class, race/ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexuality, are undeniably issues that daily affect a great number of students at Pomona College, and substantially impact their experiences on campus. A majority of CCLA supports a formal Dynamics of Difference and Power general education requirement addressing these issues, and charges the Curriculum Committee with presenting a DDP proposal to the faculty this semester. We specifically support the Curriculum Committee’s proposed model 1: a course-based requirement.
The **Asian American Resource Center (AARC) student interns** support the Senate resolution passed on February 21, 2006 which asks the Curriculum Committee to address the issue of Dynamics of Difference and Power in the form of a course overlay requirement. We feel that it is important for Pomona College students to be equipped with the tools necessary to intelligently view and analyze the world, especially with respect to power dynamics. Although there are other ways that the goals of DDP could be met, we feel the course overlay requirement would be the most effective. We hope that the courses offered as fulfilling DDP will be selected with careful thought. We as interns at the AARC recognize that the Asian American community itself is becoming increasingly diverse. Therefore we feel that a DDP overlay will enable Pomona students to understand not only how people perceive Asian Americans, but also how Asian Americans perceive each other. Having DDP become part of the Pomona College student’s experience would help further strengthen our college community through increased understanding and communication.
ASPC Senate Meeting
Tuesday, February 14, 2006

Present: Lori DesRochers, Galen Benshoof, Justin Huang, Elspeth Hilton, Myles Durkee, Matt Goldstein, Dan Kleinman, Caleb Oken-Berg, Bowen Patterson, Alex Wakeman, Erin Noble, Chris Thompson, Dave Maas, Megan Cribbs

Not Present: All currently elected senators were present

Advisors: Neil Gerard, Joel Perez

Guests: Kindra Wilson (The Student Life reporter), 19 students

I. DDP

Noting the importance of student involvement in the DDP discussion, Lori thanks the students who have come to today’s Senate meeting.

i. Megan moves to approve the Senate resolution on DDP, which asks the Curriculum Committee to submit a proposal on DDP to the faculty by the second faculty meeting in March.

i. Justin seconds.

i. The debate over the contents of the resolution begins.

i. It is noted that the wording borrowed from other written materials should be placed in quotation marks. Dan moves to amend the proposal by placing quotation marks around the borrowed text.

1. All approve, with no abstentions. Lori notes that she will quote only the statement borrowed from the Pomona College Mission Statement.

i. Dan asserts that the Curriculum Committee did address the DDP issue in the past three semesters. Lori responds that the Budget Lecture Series was not sufficient in directly addressing DDP.

1. Bowen suggests that the proposal state that the committee failed to bring forth a “sufficient” product, not that it failed to address the issue.

1. Dan moves to amend the proposal to state that the committee failed to present a “sufficient” proposal.

1. All approve.

i. It is noted that it is the responsibility of the Curriculum Committee to word the proposal on DDP.

i. Student guest Mai Sato notes that she feels like there is “no true feeling” behind the Senate resolution.

i. Dan notes that the reason he supports the resolution as it is now is because it is representative of the student population – students are extremely divided on their support of DDP.

1. Student guest Liz Groothuis asks how recent the results of this opinion poll are. Dan responds that it was taken in 2001. He is currently working on a new poll.
1. Student guest Rochelle LeGrand Sawyer notes that the student body has since changed. Erin notes that the Senate is using the best information it has.

1. Student guest Caitlin Dwyer adds that the large representation of students at this Senate meeting reflects students’ concerns.

i. Caleb states that he strongly disagrees with the argument that the Senate cannot take a position on DDP, and he wishes the resolution was stronger in recognizing the importance of DDP.

i. Neil Gerard notes that student support (or lack of) concerning DDP has risen and fallen over the past ten years depending on the stated proposal. The proposal must state explicitly how DDP would affect the curriculum.

i. Student guest Sandhya Kishore notes that it is important that minorities be represented in Senate even if their numbers are not reflected in general student population polls.

i. Bowen states that as the Senate does not exactly know the extent of student support or opposition to DDP she would not feel comfortable supporting or opposing a stronger position in the Senate resolution.

i. Dan suggests that a new venue is needed for a fuller discussion of student opinion on DDP.

i. Student guest Zach Schenkkan notes the irony of asking the faculty to support a DDP proposal when the students themselves cannot even support the proposal. As a decisive body, he adds, the Senate has the power to state an opinion: “At some point someone has to make a decision.”

1. Dan notes that he has a different philosophy of government.

i. Galen moves to approve the Senate resolution on DDP.

1. All approve, with one abstention (Dan).

i. Caitlin Dwyer notes that members of Senate are elected to make decisions, and they should embrace their decision-making power.

1. Mai Sato adds that if the resolution remains without a strong supportive stance, it will reinforce the student perception of ASPC as “blah.”

1. Erin responds that the Senate has not yet taken a position on DDP because a specific proposal has not yet been made concerning the requirement.

i. Zach notes that this sentiment is not reflected in the Senate resolution.

i. Student guest Eamon Hoffman suggests that the Senate review the proposal made by the Curriculum Committee.

i. Mr. Gerard notes that the official position of ASPC has been supportive of DDP.

i. Lori asks Senate members to help her in drafting a DDP proposal. Dan, Caleb, Alex, Justin, Bowen, and Chris all agree to help.

1. Mai Sato notes states that this group should have non-seniors present, as DDP will directly affect them.

1. Lori notes that she will send an email out to all Senate members to coordinate an extra meeting time to discuss the DDP proposal.

xix. As the debate on the DDP resolution has ended, most of the student guests exit the meeting room.
ASPC Senate Meeting  
Tuesday, February 21, 2006  

Meeting called to order at 12:03 p.m.

Present: Lori DesRochers, Elspeth Hilton, Bowen Patterson, Alex Wakeman, Megan Cribbs, Erin Noble, Justin Huang, Kindra Wilson, Dan Kleinman, Dave Maas, Matt Goldstein, Galen Benshoof, Chris Thompson, Myles Durkee, Caleb Oken-Berg

Not Present: All currently elected representatives are present.

Advisors: Joel Perez, Neil Gerard

Guests: President Oxtoby, Jay Antenen and Amanda Shapiro (*The Student Life* reporters); 11 students-at-large (Drew Perraut, Ashley Berry, Ben Heidlage, Katie Beaton, Carey McDonald, Rhett Dornbach-Bender, Eamon Hoffman, Dave Smith, Buster Zalkind, Dan Golden, Logan Steiner)

I. President Oxtoby: Reaction to DDP

President Oxtoby speaks to the Senate about the Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) requirement, the renovations at the Farm, and the college’s strategic planning process.

i. He states that he understands students’ frustration concerning the length of time that the DDP issue has been remained unresolved. He is in favor of the resolution that progress action on the issue.

i. He asserts that if the issue is not resolved this semester, it can be discussed more next year: “This is not the last chance for DDP.”

i. He hopes that the Senate will represent the college in thinking about the “big issues.” He states that although it is important to poll students on school issues, ASPC representatives should not automatically vote according to poll results. As selected leaders they should make their best judgment in consultation with the student body.

I. President Oxtoby and the Farm

President Oxtoby discusses the decision to delay a proposal on relocating the Farm. He begins by providing background information on the sources of the miscommunication between the administration and student and faculty.

i. The Farm was not originally on the administration’s agenda at the beginning of the school year; it came to President Oxtoby’s attention in November when Professor Hazlett and Professor Worthington approached him to ask about offering a course for the spring semester at the Farm.

i. After the Curriculum Committee approved the course, discussion began about possibilities for additional space for land and where the Farm should be, particularly in relation to the oak trees. President Oxtoby asserts that he did not want to change the oak environment.
1. In consultation with professors, including Professor Hazlett, Professor Worthington, and Professor Perry, it was decided that the land south of the soccer fields was a good location (this decision was made after students had left campus for winter break).

i. To move forward with these plans, the academic program needed the approval of the Board of Trustees; the next such meeting was in late February.

i. Realizing the need for student involvement in this decision-making process, President Oxtoby held a meeting with students in late January.

i. As the deadline was fast approaching (i.e. the Board of Trustees meeting), it became clear that there was a misunderstanding, with many students thinking the Farm was going to be shut down.

i. At a meeting yesterday with students President Oxtoby agreed to postpone the farm relocation proposal until the next Board of Trustees meeting in May, in order to have a fuller discussion with students and faculty.

i. He notes that under his plans there would be a significant increase in the size of the Farm; he thinks the current location of the Farm is not the best place in the long term.

i. In response to student Dan Golden’s question about transplanting the oak trees, President Oxtoby asserts this process has been done before; he understands that some oaks may not survive the transfer.

i. Student Katie Beaton asserts the importance of students’ perspectives on the Farm, as it is ultimately a student-run organization.

1. She asserts that the administration was vague in its presentation of the Farm relocation. She states the misunderstanding between students/faculty and the administration arose from students’/faculty’s belief that the current farm would remain as is; they just found out last week about the proposal limiting the original farm area to 20 feet around the dome.

1. Katie feels as though the president was condescending towards the students supporting the Farm; the students were simply asking for the vote to be postponed so that a dialogue could begin between all parties involved.

1. She states that an alternative proposal can be reached.

i. President Oxtoby responds to Katie’s comments by saying that he had received many “nasty emails” about the destruction of nature; he asserts that he does consider the group of students he talked to yesterday to be knowledgeable.

i. Bowen states that students are not ungrateful for the new land; the major issue is the destruction of what is at the farm right now as a social and educational space.

1. She notes that students are concerned about the time it would take to rebuild the dome, which is an integral part of the farm. If the surrounding environment was dramatically altered, the dome would lose its original purpose.

i. Erin asks about when the communication breakdown occurred; Bowen answers that she understood that part of the farm would be destroyed with the new plans, but not the substantial amount that is being taken in the current proposal.

1. She heard about the proposal limiting the current farm to an area 20 feet around the dome last week.
i. President Oxtoby states that it was his impression that the 20 foot radius fit students’ desires to maintain the habitat surrounding the dome. What is isolated and what is not is a matter of discussion.

I. **President Oxtoby and the College’s Strategic Planning Process**
President Oxtoby asserts that faculty and student involvement is important in the college’s strategic planning process. He is meeting with the Board of Trustees this week to revise and analyze various papers; after this meeting he will want student and faculty input.

   i. The strategic planning process involves seven different areas, many of which deeply involve students (e.g. financial aid and diversity issues).
   
   i. Included in this process is a ten percent increase in the size of the college; before such a move could be implemented a new dormitory must first be built.
   
   1. He states that he is strongly in favor of this plan but wants to hear students’ opinions (through email, focus groups, or various other communication methods).
   
   i. Lori thanks the president for coming to speak with the Senate; he exits.

I. **DDP Letter of Support**
Lori gives the members of Senate two versions of a letter to be given to the Curriculum Committee showing the Senate’s endorsement of a DDP course requirement. She thinks the second letter is stronger, as it leaves it up to the Curriculum Committee to make the actual proposal. Lori asks for opinions on these letters.

   i. Myles suggests changing the term “course requirement” to “course overlay.”
   
   i. Student guest Ashley Berry states that she thinks it is presumptuous that the Senate is implying its support of DDP. As the student body is evenly split in its support of DDP, the Senate is overstepping its bounds and is conveying a false impression of student support.
   
   i. Student guest Ben Heidlage states that the Senate must justify its support of DDP in the face of “significant opposition.”
   
   i. Student guest Drew Perraut reinforces these sentiments, asserting that before the Senate talks about which model of DDP should be endorsed it should address whether any model should be endorsed at all.
   
   1. Based on his own participation in various committees, Drew states that he has a problem with Senators and others bringing their own ethical norms to resolutions.
   
   1. Lori reminds Ben that President Oxtoby said that the Senate has the decision-making power.
   
   i. Galen notes that everyone sees representative government differently, and the Senate is not a democracy. The DDP proposal is not “out of the blue” and is in fact a culmination of a lot of work.
   
   i. Justin states that the Senate should be clearer on its stance on the DDP issue; ideally he would like to hear every senator’s viewpoint.
   
   1. Lori responds that the reason for writing the proposal was to gauge Senate’s opinion on the issue.
   
   i. Erin notes that there is some resistance to Senate taking a stand on the issue.
i. Dan presents a series of reasons why model one on the second letter is not favorable. They include:
   1. Model one does not fit the newly passed education requirements.
   1. Some professors that teach courses that would fulfill the DDP requirement might not want students to feel compelled to take the course.

i. Student guest Logan Steiner asks about the domain of Senate to address the DDP issue, as it is ultimately the Curriculum Committee’s decision.
   1. Chris notes that the Senate just wants something to happen by the end of the school year.

i. Student guest Eamon Hoffman notes that the Senate is not imposing an ideology, but rather a discussion. He adds that DDP does mean a lot to a lot of people.

i. Student guest Dave Smith asks where in the college’s mission statement is Senate given the authority to make this proposal.
   1. Mr. Gerard asserts that such authority is granted in the preamble of the school’s constitution.

i. Kindra states that the Senate is speaking for the Senate with this letter, not the student body – she thinks it is legitimate that Senate is showing its support. However she thinks the Senate does need to prove why model one is favorable.

i. Student guest Carey McDonald states that anything adopted by Senate is important, and the DDP issue should not be taken lightly as it will effect staffing and faculty course loads, to name a few.

i. Ben Heidlage considers the Senate’s action arrogant; he asserts that the Senate must demonstrate its concern for those students not in favor of DDP.
   1. In response to Ben’s question as to how he is being represented, Galen states, “This is not the Ben Heidlage representative body.”

i. Matt states that the Senate must consider whether what is being proposed will actually work. He personally does not think the requirement will create a more dynamic and/or more diverse environment.

i. Justin presents his own personal reasons for supporting DDP. He attended a high school where sixty percent of the students were Asian-American. He had always heard about how “politically correct” Pomona’s campus was. But since coming here he has only felt different.
   1. He truly thinks DDP will benefit the student body. He asserts the knowledge promoted in DDP is a “necessary wisdom” just as much as science and math.
   1. He states that the feels the minority is never truly represented, evidenced in part by the fact that there are only three minority students on Senate.
   1. He emphasizes that the DDP requirement would be step in the right direction.

i. Megan states that a discussion on the role of Senate could be endless. She agrees with Oxtoby that it is the Senate’s responsibility to take a stand.

i. Galen moves to approve the first DDP letter of support.
   1. Myles seconds.
   1. In a roll call vote, Elspeth, Alex, Caleb, Megan, Justin, Myles, Kindra, Chris, and Galen approve the letter.
   1. Bowen, Erin, Dan, Dave, and Matt do not approve the letter.
1. Lori abstains; by a vote of nine to five the motion passes.
   i. Erin states that the vote may have been different with a better letter.
   i. Kindra notes even though she voted in favor of the motion, she doesn’t think the letter will really affect the Curriculum Committee.

*Meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Barnhill
DDP & Requirements

This past week, various campus organizations were asked to evaluate their stance on the proposed DDP (Dynamics of Difference and Power) course requirement. Amidst extensive dialogue about this pressing issue, I have heard many complaints about the burdens resulting from such a requirement. One standard line is that a vote for DDP is a vote for more requirements. However, the current DDP proposal is for an overlay course, which would mean that students would simply need to be more selective about the process by which they proceed with fulfilling the already existing breadth requirements.

This clarification does not assuage the fears of those who staunchly oppose the very concept of requirements and consider them to be pointless at best and indoctrinating at worst. Yet, given that the curriculum committee has continued to uphold the concept of requirements through the years, it seems absurd for students to contest DDP on such grounds. We should instead consider the implications of not having DDP when we already have five breadths in place. By not recognizing such disciplines as ethnic studies, women’s studies, and queer studies as disciplines in their own right, Pomona College signals that it values particular categories of knowledge over others. A similar double standard surfaces in conversations considering DDP’s ideological nature. Those opponents that dismiss DDP on the grounds that such courses would be ideological fail to consider that all courses are ideological in some way. By exposing the ideological nature of particular disciplines, but then presenting other equally ideological studies as neutral, these opponents advance a logic as to what modes of thought are and are not authentic. As DDP supporters present their case for this course proposal, I hope that opponents and those on the fence consider the consequences of their decision to safeguard the current canon.

~Melinda

posted by Melinda at 3:00 PM  

3 Comments:

Jadagul said...

Since "ethnic studies, women’s studies, and queer studies" are currently among the area 3 requirements, how are we not treating them as "disciplines in their own right"? It seems like we're currently treating them exactly the same way we treat every other discipline. A DDP requirement would instead elevate these favored disciplines over all the others by creating a double requirement, and thus signal that the College "values particular categories of knowledge over others"—that is, values the categories of knowledge contained in DDP classes over all other categories.

6:14 PM
This past week, various campus organizations were asked to evaluate their stance on the proposed DDP (Dynamics of Difference and Power) course requirement. Amidst extensive dialogue about this pressing issue, I have heard many complaints about the burdens resulting from such a requirement. One standard line is that a vote for DDP is a vote for more requirements. However, the current DDP proposal is for an overlay course, which would mean that students would simply need to be more selective about the process by which they proceed with fulfilling the already existing breadth requirements.

I admit I'm a bit hazy on what types of classes, specifically, fulfill the proposed DDP requirement, but if it is made up only of the various ethnic studies classes and Women's Studies, then all of those classes are currently lumped under "Area 3." In this case, it is pointless to even continue retain Philosophy, History, and Religious Studies (assuming that the last three would not fulfill the DDP requirement) as an Area requirement, since everyone would fulfill that area through their required DDP class. If the DDP requirement also constitutes classes like (say) Sociology, Politics, and International Relations (all from Area 2), then it makes some sense to continue with the breadth requirements, but may dilute the message that DDP proponents are advocating. If we go the route of assessing classes on a case-by-case basis, then we lose credibility in defining the areas only by department in the first place, since we have acknowledged intradepartmental differences large enough to alter what requirement a class fulfills. This could prove problematic in logically grounding the Breadth requirement system, which I personally believe makes too little distinction between classes offered within a department but which nonetheless forms the basis of the very graduation requirements that DDP seeks to modify.

Yet, given that the curriculum committee has continued to uphold the concept of requirements through the years, it seems absurd for students to contest DDP on [grounds that it presents another requirement for students].

Black-and-white fallacy. Just because someone supports the existence of some requirements does not make it "absurd" to oppose the creation of new requirements (or the related narrowing of what fulfills existing requirements). In fact, the new graduation requirements reflect a desire by the Curriculum Committee to allow for more student freedoms in selecting classes.

We should instead consider the implications of not having DDP when we already have five breadths in place. By not recognizing such disciplines as ethnic studies, women’s studies, and queer studies as disciplines in their own right, Pomona College signals that it values particular categories of knowledge over others.

1. Of course Pomona values some kinds of knowledge over others: I religiously watch The Simpsons, but my knowledge of Springfield and its denizens does not fulfill any requirements that I am currently aware of. This is not a bad thing--Pomona exists to provide us with a tertiary education. The College does not, nor should it, recognize clearly non-academic areas that do not provide skills for students to use in bearing their added riches in trust for mankind. Pomona's
breadth requirement does not currently completely dissociate Sociology from Economics, nor does it completely separate History from Women's Studies, but this does not betray a general College attitude that one of those classes is vastly more important than another.

2. Women's Studies and many forms of ethnic studies are already recognized as being important and legitimate academic fields by the College. They have their own departments and students can get degrees saying that they majored in such fields as Women's Studies, Latin American Studies, Sociology, and Black Studies, to name just a few. This is more than can be said of fields like Statistics or Journalism. The fact that Pomona does not currently recognize the DDP classes/departments with their own separate and distinct area requirement does not constitute any kind of discrimination against the knowledge that such classes impart. Does the fact that Chemistry and Physics are currently lumped in (in terms of the Areas) with the various biology sub-fields, Geology, and Astronomy somehow invalidate the forms of knowledge presented in those classes? Does it state that these fields are unimportant?

3. We should not exclusively focus on the consequences of either having DDP or no having DDP. I believe this to be a complex issue, and feel we need to consider both the costs and the benefits of making the proposed change(s) in the current system in order to make an informed decision.

A similar double standard surfaces in conversations considering DDP’s ideological nature. Those opponents that dismiss DDP on the grounds that such courses would be ideological fail to consider that all courses are ideological in some way. By exposing the ideological nature of particular disciplines, but then presenting other equally ideological studies as neutral, these opponents advance a logic as to what modes of thought are and are not authentic.

My linear algebra class was not ideological in the same way as a class in Black Studies (or Politics or even, perhaps, Cognitive Science) would have been. While you can argue that any class is ideological to some extent, it is not reasonable to claim that those who oppose DDP because they feel it promotes an ideology are using the term "ideology" in this broad definition of the word. Instead, they are pointing out a distinction between classes that promote a specific skill and ones that they feel promote a set of doctrines, often without giving students (they fear) a fair ability to evaluate and judge these doctrines. The prior they (at least for the most part) find to be a responsible use of a GE requirement, and the latter they do not. Whether you agree with them in drawing such a distinction is up to you, but their argument is not invalidated because math classes here use a base-ten scheme to present material or because some literature classes promote MLA formats and only present an instructor-selected sampling of texts that address the course. It is not academically reasonable to refute an argument by redefining the terms used by its advocates and then demonstrating that, with the terms redefined, their argument is nonsensical. You must remain consistent, and use their definition, in order to refute their reasoning. What's more, with the current breadth system there is choice in which ideologies we are exposed to because we can choose which classes to take (provided that you do not consider an entire Area to consist of a single ideology, anyway). Some opponents of DDP feel as if all of the classes within DDP promote similar values--a view espoused by many supporters of DDP. If you view all academic classes as being somehow ideological, then I would think there to be some problem in requiring all students to take a class that promotes a particular ideology. I'll grant that all
professors--even ones in the same department who teach the same classes, have slightly different ideologies by the broadest definition of the term, but if we may use the word to discuss categorical similarities as well as individual differences between professors and departments then (the critics' point holds) that the proposed DDP classes promote ideologies that are too similar to one another to be considered a reasonable requirement.

**As DDP supporters present their case for this course proposal, I hope that opponents and those on the fence consider the consequences of their decision to safeguard the current canon.**

~Melinda

For better or for worse, DDP is currently not a graduation requirement under the Breadth system. That means that the status quo does not include DDP, and thus that the onus lies on DDP supporters to show that the College has compelling interests to create a DDP requirement. That means, I'm afraid, that if you are a supporter of DDP then you have more work to do than to just point out flaws in your detractors' case: you actually have to show that we should add DDP.

12:10 AM

---Daniel said...

I'm not going to do a point-by-point analysis here, but I would like to add one thing. The reason why a course-based DDP requirement will never fly - and I use those adjectives because I see DDP more as a set of aspirations for how campus discourse about certain issues can be improved rather than as a particular implementation of those aspirations - is because the logistics are fundamentally flawed.

Here is the question that must be answered: Who would decide which courses would count toward the requirement, and how would they be decided? The Curriculum Committee is loath to vet them on an individual basis; we abandoned that approach after the death of the PACs because we were forced, time and time again, to decide if a particular course taught "enough" of a particular skill to earn one or another designation - a silly question at best.

If the CC groups them by department, we would inevitably end up with an overlay requirement that could be fulfilled by taking a course from a strict subset of Area 3 departments. This is undesirable as well because it undermines the integrity of the G.E. system and, as Mike said, creates double-dipping where there currently exists a system of perfect equality. (Note that I'm not calling the current system perfect; I'm just saying that they balanced territorial concerns among faculty by incorporating every course into G.E.)

We can't leave the course nomination process up to faculty members, since we know from experience with the PACs that they will continue to manipulate their course designations to balance their dual desires to have small classes but large overall departmental enrollments (for funding purposes). Furthermore, many faculty members who teach courses that would fulfill a course-based DDP requirement have explicitly stated that they would not want their courses to
count, either on principle or because they wouldn't want disinterested students to bog down conversation. And, of course, if it was totally left up to faculty, the CC would be powerless to stop a faculty member who wanted to nominate an un-DDP course.

Finally, I don't trust students to vet courses because (1) I think many DDP proponents treat some of the DDP categories (e.g., religion) as being of secondary importance (you'll note, for instance, that the Senate removed references to religion entirely from the resolution it passed); (2) it's too open to implicit abuse, or, at the very least, justifiable allegations of abuse; and (3) it's not their job, since curricular oversight is the job of the faculty (albeit with student input).

So before people argue that we should adopt the Call to Action DDP proposal in full, this question must be resolved. Until it is, I would be surprised if the CC even proposed a course-based requirement at all.

1:50 AM
Visitor ASPC President Lori DesRochers spoke with the committee about DDP. Adolfo began by recapping the history of DDP consideration in the CC: We considered overlay as well as other models; there were objections to overlay, especially in the context of the particular direction the committee took for its GE proposal. We also looked at a sophomore seminar, dedicated to DDP issues exclusively, and as well as a major-embedded DDP requirement, neither of which garnered sufficient support and/or had excessive problems associated. A main issue for an overlay requirement is that the Curriculum Committee no longer reviews courses for Gen Ed, and a system that requires us to vet courses is not consistent with that fact.

Some of the questions and opinions that were emphasized by Ms. DesRochers and/or members of the committee:
1) Student dissatisfaction with the lack of progress on DDP.
2) An acceptable lack of consensus among students as to whether DDP should be concerned with domestic-contemporary and/or global-historical. That is, among students there are those who favor the former, but they are willing to go along with the latter.
3) Probable student reaction to an “aspirational” statement versus hard requirement. Would there be any result from a “non-requirement” that could satisfy DDP backers? How to gauge that result?
4) Is there a problematic disconnect between requiring a content-based requirement in light of our current GE? Are the breadth requirements more content-based than we are admitting? Or would DDP imply legislation of an ideologically-based requirement, not really content after all?
5) Would an aspirational goal versus GE requirement be sufficiently comprehensible? Juxtaposing it w/ requirements could be confusing.
6) Does the existence of 200+ currently extant DDP-ish courses suggest that DDP issues are well (enough) prevalent in our curriculum?
7) Are the principles of fairness, equity, diversity, critical thinking, intellectual rigor, etc. not sufficiently threaded through the expressed/demonstrated ethos of the College to suffice to train students to appreciate the concerns of DDP?
8) Do hate incidents such as have happened even recently suggest that we need a DDP requirement? What a DDP requirement make any difference—either for the better or worse?
9) Is DDP an intellectually appropriate construct? E.g. new views on what constitutes “class”.
10) Importance of the extended deliberations that have gone on in CC over span of years, in various fora and focus groups—what is CC’s responsibility given its own concerns, ambivalence, and lack of consensus?

After Ms. DesRocher left at 2:50pm the committee continued discussing going forward with Model 3. It was noted that we have 3 pages of rationale, but need more than 3 bullet points about implementation. Brief discussion of the idea of using a different name for what we are proposing. While re-naming has virtues, it runs the risk of making the fact that we formulated a “DDP Proposal” too obscure. It was noted that the student Senate took “Religion” out of their definition of DDP; we should re-insert it. How should courses be certified—should faculty be allowed to decline to have their courses listed—and—what to do about courses that faculty inappropriately identify as DDP-related—who makes the call? Back to the problem of defining DDP: #2 from our document “The history and study of inequities”—let’s use that as a leader statement, and then flesh that out (Adolfo will work on this). On to advising: should
discussion about enrollment in DDP courses be made part of the advising process? How? Adolfo mentioned that he received an email from Jerry Irish an email encouraging us to bring something to the faculty soon.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Margaret Adorno
This document presents a motion for a new component of the College’s General Education Program dealing with the study of the dynamics of difference and power (DDP). The text of the motion is followed by a background section and a rationale.

The Motion

The Curriculum Committee moves that:

1. The College add a new component to its General Education Program dealing with the study of the dynamics of difference and power (DDP). This component is not required for students to graduate; it is an aspiration for general education that students will be encouraged to fulfill. A DDP course is one that uses class, ethnicity, gender, race, religion and/or sexuality as categories of analysis and that examines power at the interpersonal, local, national and/or international levels.

2. The College will describe the DDP general education component in the Pomona College Catalog, and publish a list of DDP courses on its website. The DDP list will be comprised of courses that are submitted by the faculty who teach them.

Background

For many years groups of students and faculty have been advocating for a general education requirement that deals with

1. racial, ethnic, socio-economic, national, religious, and gender diversity;

2. the history and study of inequities;

3. the dynamics of difference (racial, ethnic, socio-economic, national, religious, gender, sexuality) and power in contemporary US society.

In 2001, a group of students submitted to the faculty and Curriculum Committee a proposal for a “Dynamics of Difference and Power Overlay Requirement.” In this proposal, students argued for a general education requirement that would be structured as an “overlay” on the 10 Perception, Analysis and Communication Skills (PACS) component of the general education system in place at that time. This requirement would analyze the dynamics of difference and power (DDP) in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and/or religion in the United States, and it would work in the same manner as the Speaking Intensive and Writing Intensive requirements of the PACS; that is, the overlay requirement would not effectively add a new requirement to the 10 PACS, but any course fulfilling a PACS category could also fulfill the DDP requirement.

In April 2002, the Associated Students of Pomona College (ASPC) passed a resolution endorsing the DDP overlay proposal and urged the faculty to address the proposal in the 2003-2004 General Education
Review. The Curriculum Committee addressed the DDP issue during the review that year and during the redesign of the general education system the following school year (2004-2005). Various models for the incorporation of DDP into the new general education system were considered, including the students’ overlay proposal of 2001.

The 2004-2005 Curriculum Committee deliberated the feasibility of the DDP models within the framework of an emerging general education system that emphasized more curricular flexibility, students’ choice and an improved advising system. Given that the main thrust of the new GE system was to shift the decision as to what would count as general education courses from the Curriculum Committee as a vetting body, to advisors and students, the 2004-2005 Curriculum Committee decided that “requirement-type” models based on course work whose content were dictated by the Curriculum Committee-or some other vetting body-were inadequate. Models that proposed that all students take a common course (e.g., a seminar for sophomores dealing exclusively with DDP issues akin to the freshman seminar) were viewed as simply not practical, as we do not have enough faculty who would agree on a common syllabus and commit to teaching it. Proposals that leave such courses up to individuals to teach and simply require students to take one of them were also rejected, as it was not believed that all faculty will want to or be able to teach such a course and the ones who do so already would be overly burdened. Finally, the 2004-2005 Curriculum Committee believed that faculty should not be regulated from above, but should decide among themselves how to organize majors and programs and general education courses, including courses that address current topics of interest and the way power is manifested in the areas they study. Therefore, models that incorporated DDP into the major requirements were also rejected.

The 2004-2005 Curriculum Committee nevertheless felt a commitment to dealing with the DDP issue as was promised to the students in 2002. An alternative form of DDP requirement was therefore hatched in the form of a Lecture Series for sophomores in their first semester. The Bridges Lecture Series proposal was intended to address an issue in liberal arts education that is just as important as ensuring breadth of study and coverage of particular content areas is; namely, the cultivation of an intellectual discourse in our residential college setting that engages us in broader debates over the nature of justice and equity in our rapidly globalizing world. The main goal of the Bridges Lecture Series was to generate a campus-wide conversation about civic engagement, community activism, and how the dynamics of difference and power operate in our contemporary world. This proposal was brought forth to the faculty in conjunction with the new general education requirements in the spring of 2005. After considerable discussion by the faculty, the proposal was sent back to the Curriculum Committee for further refinement during the 2005-2006 school year.

The 2005-2006 Curriculum Committee deliberated on the lecture series proposal throughout the fall semester. Several committee members felt that the lecture series model had diverged considerably from the original intent of the DDP proponents and had turned into a lecture series on current affairs that might or might not deal with issues relating to DDP. Furthermore, the passive aspect of the required lecture attendance would not be conducive to students’ intellectually engaging with diversity and inequity issues and the analysis of those issues through the lens of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status in a substantive way over the course of a semester. Therefore, the Curriculum Committee is no longer pursuing the lecture series model for DDP.

Rationale for a New DDP Component for General Education

One of the purposes of general education at Pomona College is to provide an avenue for students to become broadly educated in the liberal arts as they delve more deeply into the scholarly pursuit of their majors. It is also hoped that a Pomona education will engender socially responsible individuals who are able to engage critically in a thoughtful and meaningful way with the important issues affecting our world.
We have said in the Goals and Aspirations for General Education document that, “in addition to being conversant with approaches in their own major discipline, students should also be exposed to methods of inquiry and learning that cross disciplinary boundaries; in particular those that use gender, class, and race as categories of analysis. At Pomona College our educational mission is to foster leadership in all students by developing their power to analyze conditions, past and present, and to creatively imagine new ones. Our success depends upon admitting a diverse student body and hiring a diverse faculty, because only through a robust exchange of ideas, to quote Justice Powell, generated out of a variety of backgrounds and experiences and types of knowledge, can we test ourselves, experiment, and generate new ideas. Accordingly, we want to encourage students to enroll in courses that deal with issues involving diversity, the history and study of inequities, and the dynamics of difference (racial, ethnic, socio-economic, national, religious, and gender) and power at the local, national and international levels, from various perspectives. In a world in which peoples and nations with sharply different ideals and experiences are increasingly coming into contact with one another, we also expect our students to be knowledgeable about issues related to the growing integration of economies and societies around the world, environmental sustainability, and demographic change, among others.”

We also embrace some of the principles behind the 2001 DDP-overlay proposal, namely: students should be encouraged to enroll in classes which

1) prepare them for responsible citizenship in a diverse world;
2) examine the causes and effects of power structures and power dynamics within or between groups of people;
3) contribute to self-awareness and understanding/forming one’s own identity;
4) aid students in gaining a better understanding of how the aforementioned areas (race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and/or religion) may or may not overlap and intersect.

These are indeed laudable goals and we hope that students, in consultation with their advisors, are considering them when choosing which courses to take for general education and for their majors. One way to ensure that these goals are met is to require that students enroll in courses that purport to fulfill the requirement. This is the essence of the DDP-overlay requirement proposal which has been debated a great deal since students brought it forth in 2001. Many members of the Curriculum Committee support this idea.

There are, however, several objections to the DDP-overlay model that have surfaced during Curriculum Committee deliberations. The most important one is that some committee members believe that prescribing a list of courses that satisfy the requirement goes against the spirit of the new general education system, in which specific courses for general education are not prescribed by the Curriculum Committee, as was the case under the PACS; rather, students can choose courses from broad areas of intellectual inquiry. Thus, the student-initiated proposal of 2001, which would rely on a list of courses vetted by the Curriculum Committee as satisfying a DDP requirement, does not mesh well with the new system. A major feature of the new system is the fact that courses for general education are no longer vetted by the committee. For some Curriculum Committee members, going back to a vetting scheme, as was the case with the PACS, therefore represents a major step backwards. Some also believe that there are inherent problems with a requirement system based on vetted lists of courses. Making the criteria for inclusion on the list of DDP courses too broad might well dilute the intended effects of the requirement. On the other hand, the criteria for inclusion in the list could be too narrow, and this would be too constraining to both students and faculty.

We therefore propose for consideration a new model for DDP that fits very well with the new general education in which flexibility, student choice and academic advising are emphasized.
March 5, 1999

**Diversity Requirement Is Both Vital and Overdue**

Joseph Jordan & Chi Ha

*Contributing Writers*

Misunderstanding and lack of communication is one of the first steps in starting a brawl. In order to circumvent such actions, we have taken it upon ourselves to list our own understanding and motives for supporting the proposed Dynamics of Difference and Power requirement. What we propose is not a PAC eleven, but rather an overlay requirement, akin to speaking and writing intensive requirements that already exists. Though nothing has been made concrete, it is our informed impression that this requirement, just as the speaking and writing intensive requirements, would essentially purport to teach some sort of skill. One might wonder: what are diversity "skills?"

In our minds, what is important in our admittedly jargon-istic name is the word "dynamics": what we hope will happen with this requirement is that Pomona students will learn to operate within the dynamics of difference. Interaction is, as always, key. This is how the proposed Dynamics of Difference and Power requirement differs from PAC 9: while PAC 9 asks that students "understand" another culture, DDP asks the cultures within our society to interact and relate on a human plane. DDP does not have lofty ideas of completely shaping an individual; what it attempts is a method by which the student population at Pomona College can go beyond simply comparing and contrasting various contemporary cultures, but to examine the interactions within a society.

The diversity requirement proposes that provisions be made that deal with dynamics of differences and power within a society in the broad areas of race, gender, religion, sexuality, and social class, to list a few. We feel that Pomona College and its existing programs provide inadequate training in interaction in a diverse environment, and that the DDP requirement will be a step toward remedying this problem. The suggested Differences in Dynamics and Power overlay requirement does not propose to teach values. Instead, it proposes to open a forum by which students will have the opportunity to develop an intellectual awareness of the causes and effects of structured inequalities and prejudicial exclusion within society. Despite Pomona’s claim that it has one of the most diverse student bodies for a liberal arts college in the United States, there have been complaints of a lack of understanding of diversity within the student body and the College as a whole for the past 15 years. We view the non-acknowledgment of differences in class, gender, sexuality, etc. as not keeping with Pomona’s goals to produce "men and women well educated in the arts and sciences who are capable of the appreciation, rational discrimination, and compassion that only knowledge can foster." Discussions such as those found at the Day of Dialogue do seem to bring about indication of awareness of the differences found within society, but it does not bring about a discussion on the whys and wherefores of the above-mentioned differences: mere acknowledgment of the differences found within a society is simply not enough. My acknowledgment that I prefer pistachio ice cream over bubble gum means next to nothing because it is only a statement of opinion that may not bring about the end result of re-examination of our preference of one over the other.

We agree that values must not be taught in the classroom. This is not a political issue nor is it an ideological one. This is both a basic human issue and a survival issue in the 21st Century. Mere tolerance is no longer enough: in order to exist in modern society, the average individual will have to learn to participate in interaction with people who are "different" from him/her. By the end of the millennium, non-Hispanic Caucasians will no longer be a majority in the State of California, and, in 25 years, will come to comprise only a third of the population in the United States. Is Pomona’s curriculum, where students can graduate without "admitting to their racism, sexism, homophobia," preparing well-rounded individuals capable of dealing with this social phenomenon? Is this what a liberal arts education represents now, at the rise of a new millennium?
We believe this requirement is necessary if Pomona wishes to prepare its students "for lives of personal fulfillment and social responsibility in a global context." It is neither redundant nor overburdening. It is necessary.
DDP Seeks Support for Cultural Requirement

By Aaron Kim
News Associate

After three years of debate and discussion with students and faculty, the Dynamics of Difference and Power Committee hopes to submit a proposal to the Curriculum Committee next fall to create a new cultural diversity requirement.

The committee held an open forum last Thursday with students and faculty to address concerns surrounding the proposal. At the meeting, students and faculty agreed that the new requirement should focus on present-day issues surrounding race, gender, class, sexual orientation and religion in the United States.

The goal of the requirement, the committee stated, will be to have students engage in open discussions of diversity issues in the classroom, rather than simply having facts and figures dictated to them. According to Instructor of English and Black Studies Valorie Thomas, University of California Berkeley already has a similar American Cultures breadth requirement in its curriculum.

"As much as we like to think that we are open-minded and progressive here at Pomona, we’ve been dealing with some serious problems, both in terms of tension in daily interactions and alarming hate crimes," said committee member Regan Douglass ’02. "We need to equip ourselves with the knowledge, facts, vocabulary, discursive skills, and a comfort level that allows us to risk discomfort."

The committee emphasized that the new requirement will not be an eleventh PAC. Instead, it will either revise an existing PAC or be added as an overlay, similar to the speaking and writing intensive requirements. Students will be able to take classes that simultaneously fulfill the overlay and an existing PAC. The proposal must be approved by both the Curriculum Committee and by the faculty before it can be implemented.

"I’m sure [the process] won’t be easy," Douglass said. "There are many professors who think that the requirement will be a pointless symbol of PC-ness or another ‘unnecessary and unwanted’ requirement for an already-overburdened faculty."

"The meeting was a very good first step," said Academic Affairs Commissioner Elect Richard Sun ’01. "The students were really motivated and involved in the process, and the faculty members were supportive."

According to Douglass, the Committee has attempted to work with the faculty on this proposal for the past two years. Although six faculty members attended Thursday’s meeting, Douglass says that the overall lack of faculty involvement has been "incredibly frustrating."

"We’ve been meeting one-on-one with professors, sending letters to all faculty, and going to their meetings," she said. "For two weeks before the meeting, I sent letters to all faculty members, practically begging them to come and give us their input. Six out of about 200 showed up."

"Still, from the glass-is-half-full viewpoint, that’s six more than we have ever had intimately involved in the process," said David Brown ’02, another committee member.

"The low turnout of faculty was in some ways expected, especially with the end of the semester rush," said Associate Professor of History and Chicano Studies Miguel Tinker Salas, who did attend the meeting. "But as long as there’s student interest, the faculty will have to respond and engage in discussion with the students next semester."
The major concern expressed at the meeting, however, was the feasibility of having another requirement in the curriculum, both in terms of the resources needed to fund additional courses, hire new faculty, and provide faculty-training workshops, as well as student academic constraints.

"Issues of power and ideology are at the heart of my work in media studies," said Assistant Professor of English Kathleen Fitzpatrick. "My primary reservation has to do with a perception among the faculty, and an accurate perception, mind you, that you [students] are already stretched to your limits, requirement-wise, and that this would be just one more burden on your limited time, not to mention our limited resources."

"We want to ensure that we have enough resources available at the college to make the requirement workable," Brown said. "We need to investigate some intermediate steps, such as securing grant money for faculty training and quantifying the impact that the requirement will have on faculty and students."

The committee first started meeting in 1996, after a group of Pomona students sent a report entitled "A Call to Action" to administrators. The report documented recent hate incidents at the Claremont Colleges, as well as first-hand testimonies from students of color who had felt "threatened, oppressed and silenced" in classes. It challenged the administration to hire more faculty of color, offer more courses in ethnic studies, and provide more funding for resources like the Office of Black Student Affairs.

In response, Multicultural Hall was formed for Pomona students who wish to live in a theme hall that addresses diversity issues. In 1998 the five colleges approved the Asian American Studies major.

In 1999, the DDP Committee surveyed 262 Pomona students. Students were asked, "Are there currently difference and power problems in our college community?" to which 62% answered yes, 17% no and 21% were undecided. In addition, to the question, "Should difference and power be part of a liberal arts curriculum?" 68% responded yes, 14% no and 18% were undecided.

According to Brown, those opposed to the DDP requirement worry that students who are either openly or subconsciously intolerant might create more tension and even "wreck" the classroom environment. But Brown believes that "it’s possible to raise these issues in a healthy and open academic discussion, even if the entire class will never agree on all the issues."

Tinker Salas says that college administrators across the U.S. are beginning to realize that education should be more than just an academic or intellectual experience. "In ‘service learning,’ students apply what they learn to the community in which they live," he explained.

"The requirement, obviously, will not ‘teach tolerance’ to everyone," Brown said. "But it will give students and faculty some tools to foster discussion of their own experiences."

Michelle Pendoley ’02, who attended the meeting, hopes that the DDP requirement will be realized during her time at Pomona. "The committee can’t develop its ideas much further without the help of the faculty, who ultimately have to vote on the proposal," she said. "I just don’t think that some of the professors are listening to their students."
March 8, 2001

**DDP Requirement is Considered**

By Audrey Hill  
*News Associate*

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The Curriculum Committee is currently considering a proposal for a "Dynamics of Difference and Power" (DDP) requirement, which would address the dynamics of power between racial and gender groups within US society.

According to the DDP Overlay Requirement Proposal, "The [proposed] Dynamics of Difference and Power overlay requirement [would] address the power structures and dynamics students face in daily interactions, their experience at the college, and life in their greater community,"

"In order to fulfill the DDP requirement," the proposal continues, "a class must address one or more of the following in a way that relates to contemporary US culture: race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and/or religion."

The proposal was produced by the student-organized DDP committee and presented to the Curriculum Committee two weeks ago. The DDP committee consists of Alex Cho ’01, Brian Schwartz ’01, Kelly Fox ’01, Lori Ramirez ’03, Max Handler ’01, Regan Douglass ’02, and Sahar Rooholamini ’01.

The Curriculum Committee, which consists of six faculty members, three students, two deans and Registrar Margaret Adorno, is reviewing the DDP and considering various amendments.

"The Curriculum Committee is in general agreement on the concept of DDP," committee member Jake Oken-berg ’02 stated.

"[The committee’s] main concern is with the logistics," Sun added. "There is the concern that some professors might be more burdened by the DDP requirement [than others]."

The position stated in the DDP’s proposal is that "[when] spread over the 80-90 classes that we believe would fulfill the DDP requirement, the burden of increased enrollment would become negligible… However[,] it is important to note that one of the primary goals of instituting the DDP requirement is increasing enrollment in DDP courses."

Another point of contention amongst the Curriculum Committee is whether the DDP requirement should be a new or revised PAC instead of an overlay, as proposed by the DDP committee.

"Some of the faculty in the Curriculum Committee have voiced concern about another overlay," Sun explained. "Some of the people [on the committee] are for [making it] a PAC."

For her part, Adorno feels that "[DDP] isn’t a skill per se, thus it doesn’t belong in [the] PACs. I would see it as an overlay."

Each system of implementation has its arguments. The DDP committee feels that the overlay would be better suited to a system where some students feel that there are already too many requirements.

According to the DDP proposal, "The DDP requirement [would be] an unusually interdisciplinary one. Therefore it [would be] possible to fulfill this requirement while simultaneously fulfilling a PAC, and we appreciate the less burdensome qualities of an overlay requirement."

There is also discussion concerning the proper timeline of action on the DDP proposal. "Tinkering with the PAC system has its own set of problems," Adorno explained. "When the PAC system was instituted in 1994, it was set up [to be subject to] a ten-year review."
"The earliest I see this happening would be for 2002-2003 incoming students," Sun estimated. Before any changes are made to the official proposal, the Curriculum Committee plans to hold a faculty forum later this semester or early next year in order to generate feedback on the proposal. "The Curriculum Committee couldn’t bring the best or most viable proposal to the faculty [for a vote] without broad consultation [of the faculty]," Adorno explained.

The Curriculum Committee will consider faculty recommendations before creating an official DDP proposal. This official proposal will go before the Executive Committee, which sets the agenda for the proposal. The final DDP proposal will then go before the faculty for a vote; the DDP proposal will be implemented only if a majority of faculty approve the requirement.

Despite the progress made in implementing the proposal, Sun is cautious about assuming it will actually be adopted by the faculty. "I would strongly put the caution sign up [about thinking DDP will definitely pass]," Sun warned. "Just because people are talking about [DDP, that] doesn’t mean its going to happen. "I see this still as a tough fight," he continued. "But if students voice their opinion [for DDP], I see this as possible."

In a 1999 poll, 56 percent of 262 students were in favor of a some form of non-PAC overlay (with 23 percent opposed and 21 percent undecided), according to the DDP proposal.

"I believe that dynamics of difference and power are an important part of a liberal arts education, not to mention life in the world today," Douglass explained. "I would like to see Pomona make a commitment to increased discussions, readings, dialogues, and heightened awareness of difference and power in a permanent way, [by] writing it into the curriculum."

Sun concurred with the DDP’s role in heightening and improving discussion about difference within the Pomona campus.

"[The administration and RHS] tried for years to extend this discussion [of power], but the problem I see is that the people who should be exposed to this issue the most are not the ones attending these activities," he stated.

According to Schwartz, DDP is one of the results of "A Call To Action," a document, presented to the administration in 1995, which demanded that the school pay more attention to multicultural and race-specific issues. Since that time, students have been working on the proposal to present to the Curriculum Committee in hopes of implementing the new DDP requirement.
October 12, 2001

DDP Overlay Requirement Proposal

Dynamics of difference and power affect the way we understand, relate to and perceive privilege and disadvantage with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and religion. In an effort to provide Pomona College students with a complete liberal arts education, the Dynamics of Difference and Power overlay requirement will address the power structures and dynamics students face in daily interactions, their experience at the College, and life in their greater community. In classes that fulfill this requirement, students will examine power structures at the interfaces within and between constructed groups in contemporary U.S. society by incorporating historical background, contemporary events, and their personal experience.

A DDP requirement will further Pomona’s mission to "contribute to a diverse, socially supportive community." We envision the DDP requirement as an overlay because the majority of the classes that would presently satisfy the requirement will also satisfy a PAC skill. In order to fulfill the DDP requirement, a class must address one or more of the following in a way that relates to contemporary U.S. culture: race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and/or religion. Furthermore, the class should 1) prepare students for responsible citizenship in a diverse world, 2) examine the causes and effects of power structures and power dynamics within or between groups of people, 3) contribute to self-awareness and understanding/forming one’s own identity, 4) relate the subject issues or groups to U.S. society and contemporary issues, 5) aid students in gaining a better understanding of how the aforementioned areas may or may not overlap and interact.

The DDP requirement will serve as a statement of recognition by the College of the importance of the dynamics of difference and power in contemporary United States culture and the necessity for students to critically address those dynamics in order to be informed and contributing members of society.

-Courtesy of aspc.pomona.edu
I'm going to try to be straightforward. There are four things I want to establish: 1) a brief explanation of what DDP is, 2) a personal understanding of why DDP is important to everyone, 3) an appeal for those who are shut down to these ideas to re-examine, and then 4) a request for collaboration, support, and responses.

1) Since there is a new generation of Pomona students who may not have been here when discussions about Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) were louder, I want to give some background information. It is a proposed overlay requirement (which means you could fulfill another requirement and the DDP requirement at the same time, much like the speaking and writing intensive requirements) that was written by students as part of A Call to Action. A Call to Action was written in 1995 by a group of students of color. It included several demands on the Administration which were realized to varying degrees, resulting in the creation of Multicultural Hall, an increase of faculty of color, and a requirement in the curriculum that became the basis of DDP. DDP has since been refined and discussed among faculty, students, and administrators, but has not yet been implemented. The official requirement proposal reads as follows:

Explore and Analyze the Dynamics of Difference and Power

This skill involves the ability to analyze, from a variety of perspectives and disciplines, the power relations and disparities of different social groups (such as those defined by race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation and gender) with an emphasis on the United States. From a contemporary context students will learn to understand and analyze the ways in which societal structures and workings perpetuate injustice, inequality, prejudice, and unmerited privilege, as well as ways in which these past and current systems are challenged and changed.

2) Every class at Pomona addresses dynamics of difference and power, even when it appears not to. Part of what is so deceiving about dominant ideology is that it can make itself invisible to those who benefit from it. However, inherent power dynamics are entrenched in our current system, there is virtually no incentive for those in power to understand or learn about systematic discrimination of marginalized groups. If Pomona College fails to even acknowledge such power structures in its curriculum, it colludes with the perpetuation of a blind, privileged class; blind not only to the system in which we operate but also blind to the power dynamics among us.

Some opponents of DDP claim that it is too political. We must recognize the politics already present. The distinction is that these dynamics, when they reinforce conventional ways of thinking, go unnoticed and unacknowledged. To not have DDP as part of the curriculum is therefore also a political assertion.

There are underlying assumptions that macroeconomics is the study of American capitalism and that philosophy, through its history, is the study of white, male philosophers. This is all part of the subtext of the status quo, the insipid presence of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. (If this term scares you or confuses you, I refer you to bell hooks. It's a concept that Professor hooks uses to describe the institutional structure of interlocking systems of domination that works to maintain power hierarchies in our society.)

This is not to say that these classes should not be offered, but when they do not analyze power structures, they are reinforcing dominant ideology, and we must recognize that. Professors control how they want to teach their class, but a class that doesn't deliberately talk about power dynamics is not a blank slate. In fact, it presents a specific dogma. These classes need to be complemented by required classes that give students tools to think critically about issues of difference and power. A stated purpose of Pomona
College is to "prepare students for lives of personal fulfillment and social responsibility in a global context." Until analysis of power dynamics is formally endorsed as a requirement, Pomona College will continue to offer an incomplete education and have an unrealized educational philosophy.

In the spring of my first year at Pomona, I took a course on the United States Congress. Studying the United States Congress inherently emphasized the absence of a voice of the underrepresented (working class, people of color, women, among others) in our government. One of our textbooks mentioned that, as of the year 2000, women comprised one-eighth of Congress members but more than one half of the population. While black people make up 12 percent of the population, they make up only seven percent of Congress. In fact, there have only been four black members of the Senate in the entirety of U.S. history. Latinas/os represent less than five percent in Congress, while they make up twice that amount in the U.S. population (according to Congress and Its Members by Roger H. Davidson and Walter J. Oleszek). This is our supposed "representative" government. Without an extensive analysis of why so many people are not proportionately represented, we are left with few tools to deconstruct the power structures and ideology that keep some people marginalized.

I am not a person who remembers details very well. But I do remember when, in high school amidst a day-of-dialogue-type conference on race, a student of color said: "I think about race every single day of my life, with no exception." I, as a white person who thought of myself as "liberal" and "aware," did not even come close to thinking about race that often. Privilege makes itself invisible to those who have it.

3) I challenge those who are reacting to my perspective defensively to try to dig in and examine why they are having this reaction. Guilt and defensiveness are not productive to the discussion on interlocking systems of domination. In fact, it is silencing. I came across the following quotation in a section of a thesis by a student at the Claremont Colleges: "I just wish it wasn't...forbidden to talk about race because [white people] automatically think that I'm attacking them 'cause they're white, and there's just white guilt. And I went through a whole lot of crap today, not just today but this past semester, just because I was saying what I felt and people felt defensive about that and I didn't get how they couldn't [bear to] feel just a little bit crappy about something that I felt crappy about all the time and they couldn't take it for...five minutes..." (Analyzing the Formation of Social Support Networks and Intentional Communities among Latina Undergraduates at Liberal Arts Colleges, by Daniela Pineda, 2001). When people with privilege are unable to listen to peers who don't have the same privileges, they are perpetuating a system that marginalizes and tries to silence those who are different.

We must simultaneously recognize our personal role in privilege and maintaining power structures and realize that these systems go beyond the individual and are actually at the foundations of how our political, economic, and cultural society is structured. This is what feeds our media and runs our curriculum, what forms our leaders and drives our policies. We, as individuals, are both products and participants in this hegemony. I know that I am poisoned by dominant ideology. That is why I need tools to recognize it, deconstruct it, and work towards dismantling it.

4) I am bringing DDP to the table so that the discussion opens up again. Next fall, the entire requirement system, including the PAC system, is being reviewed. This is a pivotal time for the analysis of the college's priorities. We should all be involved in this discussion, whether or not you agree with my arguments or DDP.

I have written this article to elicit responses and perhaps instigate action. I need help if this issue is to move forward. If people are interested, please contact me. Maybe there are further steps we can take to making DDP a reality. Now we must ask: what kind of powerful people does Pomona College want to graduate-those who can analyze dynamics of difference and power, or those who can't?
May 2, 2003

DDP Argument Is Very Flawed
By Conor Flynn
Contributing Writer

Laila Bernstein argues ("Student Should Stay Informed About DDP" TSL 4/18/03) that when the facts are out everyone will support the DDP overlay requirement. Her article pedantically claims that anyone who objects to this must be ignorant, scared, or confused. Unless Bernstein is trying to prove a point about "People...[who] are unable to listen to peers..." by setting herself up as an example of such a person, it seems that her argument is deeply and ironically flawed.

Therefore the job of this response will be to argue for the possibility of substantive disagreement on the issue, which I will do by addressing some of Bernstein's arguments and rhetorical devices.

Surely the first step in any reasoned argument is to allow that opposing viewpoints can have legitimate objections, yet when Bernstein condemns philosophy and economics as tools of "insipid...white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" she condescends to give no reasons for the charge but the following: "If this term scares you or confuses you, I refer you to bell hooks." As if only blind ignorance about these terms could lead us to doubt her! It is disturbing to see the issue cast in terms so entirely pedantic as to preclude even the possibility of informed dissent, although I fear that this kind of rhetoric may be symptomatic of what DDP proponents consider informed analysis.

Bernstein argues that Pomona students should be able to analyze dynamics of difference and power, yet her strongest argument is a "challenge [to] those who are reacting defensively to try to dig in and examine why they are having this reaction. Guilt and defensiveness are not productive to the discussion on interlocking systems of domination." If it is wrong to defend oneself against the extremist claims Bernstein is making, then I stand accused. If her argument is that it is impossible to argue with her without being guilty of blasé ignorance or, worse, white supremacy, than I request an apology, because I do not believe that everyone who opposes the DDP requirement is a stubborn and biased ignoramus. I believe that I and others have a right to feel defensive when we are accused not only of white supremacy, but of being too ignorant to even understand of what we are guilty.

I hope that Bernstein would respect the readers of TSL enough to give them informational and compelling arguments rather than appeals to the authority of bell hooks or ad hominem attacks against philosophers and economists. In another example of questionable logic, she argues that because the ratio of minorities in governmental positions is not exactly equal to that of the population at large, our government cannot be representative. First, I don't think this follows at all, and second, even if it did, how does that show the need for a DDP requirement? If an operational bias in the electoral system could be identified such that minorities were effectively precluded from voting this would indeed be unjust. Yet it is questionable that such operational bias occurs, and without an identified causal link we are left with mere argument by assertion. As presented, her article only shows that the head-count of minorities in the U.S. Congress is not proportional to the population as a whole although many factors could explain this inequality. Therefore, without a causal link between the fact that "black people make up 12 percent of the population...[while they] make up only seven percent of Congress" the mere fact that disparity exists cannot be taken as proof of the "power structures and ideology that keep some people marginalized." Certainly the readers of TSL deserve a better-reasoned rational for adopting another core requirement.

Bernstein's other major critique, mentioned above, accuses philosophy and economics of "systematic discrimination of marginalized groups" yet again presents no compelling story for how this might be. Of course subjects such as, say, mathematics present a hegemonic viewpoint of the world, but no one would state that by ignoring race relations mathematics is guilty of "invisible...dominant ideology." This is simply ridiculous. Each field has its own specialties and its own heuristic and rhetorical abilities to account for the world. Philosophy and economics, as well as politics and history, are classes that are
taught in order to pursue certain questions. To state that these classes are just inherently biased is to misunderstand the role of higher education. Surely we must take a class in Marxism if we are to understand the American Communist Party, but this narrow realm of knowledge does not have a necessary and sufficient claim on our education to warrant a core Marxism requirement. In the same way, those wishing to talk about bell hooks' theory of the "insipid…white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" have the right to do so, and I encourage them to project their debate into broader and more well-lit arenas of discourse, but they do not have the right to force their views upon the campus as a whole. It is important to distinguish between a meaningful and substantive dialogue about all aspects of our society, and one particular paradigm which is focused on "injustice, marginalization, and …."

I would argue that the dynamics of difference and power are already being discussed in both philosophy and economics classes to the satisfaction of their specific educational schemes. To assume that they are deficient and in need of a supplementary DDP band-aid is a serious criticism that must be substantiated (beyond merely labeling them as purveyors of an insidious "dominant ideology") and which, even if true, need not necessarily be addressed through an additional core requirement. Until we are told more about the exact nature of the charges of systematic bias that Bernstein levels at philosophy and economics the case has not been made for a DDP overlay.

Why not convince the professors for the need to include more DDP in their curriculum and then let the teachers do the teaching? After all, who would be teaching this new requirement anyway? Specifically, I don't understand the knee-jerk appeal to authority and institutionalization that DDP proponents take for granted. Make a compelling and specific case and I'm sure the professors will follow. Stand up in your class and question economic assumptions using the tools of analysis that are taught there and go ahead and question philosophical rhetoric using the ample tools of logic and rhetoric. But please spare us gentle readers of your ad hominem attacks and catch-all condemnations of the "status quo".

I suggest to Bernstein that she retract her claims implying that an informed debate about DDP is impossible and urge her to advance reasoned arguments toward the end of convincing those who might be skeptical of the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" she takes to be so self-evident.
September 26, 2003

Survey Shows Split on DDP Requirement

By Lori DesRochers
News Associate

For the last ten years, Pomona College administrators and students have been debating the necessity of an additional graduation requirement related to the study of difference and power dynamics.

Last spring, enrolled students were asked in a survey if they agreed with the statement that the college should require students to take a course that addressed issues of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation and religion in relationship to the exercise of power. The data showed deep divisions amongst students.

Overall, 53 percent of students agreed with the statement and 47 percent of students disagreed, but opinions differed by factors of gender, race/ethnicity and year in college. Specifically, students who disagreed with the requirement tended to be male and white, while those who agreed with the requirement tended to be female and students of color.

This information was gathered as part of a larger online survey given by the Consortium on Financing Higher Education, and 848 of the 1401 enrolled students responded. Of those students, 766 replied to the question regarding the requirement. “We were very excited about the response rate and feel that the distribution of respondents reflects the college as a whole,” said Jose Moreno from the Office of Institutional Research. The survey asked students about the general principles of the Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) proposal.

Ninety percent of students who identified as Black, 71 percent of Foreign students, 67 percent of students who identified as Asian and Hispanic, and 58 percent of students who identified as other, multiracial or declined to identify with an racial or ethnic groups agreed with the requirement. Only 47 percent of students who identified themselves as White shared this opinion.

Dean of Students Anne Quinley was hardly surprised with these findings. “They’re sort of what you would predict. Students of color who live with issues of race all the time would be interested in people paying attention to issues of race,” she said.

With regard to gender, 62 percent of students who identified as female and 42 percent of students who identified as male agreed with the statement. “It’s an issue of privilege. It’s so comfortable to not have to talk about issues of race or difference, but if you’re Latino or Asian or female or transgender, it’s something that you have to deal with every single day,” said Andres Lopez ’04. “You always have to be wary of statistics, but these results make sense.”

In relation to year in college, 67 percent of fourth year students agreed while only 39 percent of sophomores agreed, and first and third-year students hovered around 55 percent. Daren Mooko, Director of the Asian American Resource Center, speculated on the reasons for these discrepancies. He suggested that fourth year students are the ones who “have the most information about Pomona,” and are then in a better position to express what is a necessary part of their education. Also, Mooko suggested that studying abroad as upperclassmen might give students a better opportunity for reflection on their educational needs resulting in their opinions on DDP.

It is unclear whether or not the results of this survey will help to determine the future for DDP, but it is certain to frame the debate of the next two years. When the PAC system of ten general education requirements and two skill overlays was implemented in 1994, it called for a ten-year review. In 2001, the faculty’s Curriculum Committee, the group charged with this review, heeded a student request to include a discussion of DDP in their report due out in April. There report will be the basis of the debate in the faculty, who will ultimate decide these issues next year. The possibilities for implementing DDP include
adding it as an additional PAC, or simply adding it as another overlay, like the writing intensive and speaking intensive requirements. The decision of whether and how to implement DDP will be made by a majority vote of the faculty in '04-'05.

The DDP proposal has its roots in student generated proposal over a decade ago. Proponents of DDP contend that the unearned social, economic and institutional benefits that are granted to some groups at the expense of others is inherent but often unspoken. They argue that classes specific to DDP will help students to recognize and acknowledge the systems of power and privilege that govern their lives. Detractors contend that some faculty members will then be burdened with the additional weight of DDP courses, and that new faculty members and courses will need to be added. Others object at a more philosophical level. Critics say that DDP will politicize the curriculum or will contribute to divisions amongst students at Pomona.

It is unclear how student opinion will factor into the final decision. Dean Quinley sees the issue as one that is largely in the hands of the faculty. “The faculty own the curriculum, and I think that many faculty of color worry about having a requirement like this,” she said. “This has been on the table since 1994, and I don’t think it has been student sentiment that has kept it from happening.”
December 5, 2003

DDP Is Enforced Political Correctness
Editor:

Fellow Sagehens, help me: I am a tormented minority. If you really want to understand the dynamics of difference and power here at Pomona College then I have a place for you to start: right here. I write you to disagree. By the nation’s standards, I’m a moderate. Imagine if I were a conservative. Wait, I have something worse for you to imagine: what if I voted for Tom McClintock? I bet you don’t like the sound of that one bit.

Now I have another situation for you, imagine that the year is 1953 and Joe McCarthy is having a great time of it over in Washington. But what if I voted for a Communist? What if I was a Communist? It would still be illegal for the federal government to employ me. Society would not accept me.

Understanding the dynamics of difference and power is a wonderful thing. I’ve read Orientalism, I know more about bell hooks than just her stance on patriarchy, and I support the PDAC committee. But I think that requiring DDP would be teaching and enforcing political correctness. Enforced political correctness is as much of a restriction on thought and the ability of a community to express ideas as McCarthyism was on this nation’s ability to express ideas and think freely. What am I saying? Enforced political correctness is neo-McCarthyism.

We do not have to teach political correctness to recognize its value. We have PDAC and we should all support their efforts to raise awareness without mandating its instruction. Individuals in our society should be protected from racists, anti-gays and the like. As a school of intellectuals, we should not start with a series of assumptions and then generate a discourse; rather, we should start with a question. We should come to our beliefs on our own.

To hold values against the grain of society is a brave and difficult task. I salute the true conservatives who have to validate themselves here in this bastion of ultra-liberalism.

I’m a lot more like you than the rest of the country. As liberals, it is our duty to make sure we do not in any way hamper freedom of speech, of the press, or of thought.

Because I think critically about gender does not make me sexist or anti-feminist. Because I understood Jared Diamond’s answer to Yali’s question, and think he’s probably right, doesn’t make me a colonialist. Because I hold some conservative views does not mean that you should assume I’m wrong and dismiss me.

The PAC system was designed to provide a balanced education to the students of Pomona College. Where is our education the most lacking? As a school we shut out the value of the conservative argument and nullify it almost automatically. That is where our PAC system fails us most completely. If we do not have a complete understanding and appreciation for the conservative argument, we will fail to affect change in national policy and George W. Bush’s face will wind up on our coins—in your pocket and mine. If we are so determined to add overlaid requirements to the PAC system, let’s remember that to have a good education we must have a balanced education. If you get the chance, I urge you to vote for a new overlaid PAC: Understanding the Value of the Conservative Argument.

~Brian Hardesty ’07
December 5, 2003

DDP is Real Life
Editor:

I am writing to express my concern that DDP be included in any revised PAC system as an overlay requirement.

In his Inaugural Address, President Oxtoby said: What is a liberal arts college today, in 2003? To begin to answer that question, let me go back one hundred years to the eloquent polemic written by W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of Black Folk.” This monumental work from 1903, which Du Bois introduced with the prophetic words “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line,” touches on the role of higher education in ways that speak profoundly to us today. In his words, “The function of the university” (and, I would add, the liberal arts college) “is not simply to teach bread-winning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools, or to be a centre of polite society; it is, above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.” [My italics]

DDP is real life. Every student at Pomona, every citizen and non-citizen of this country, deals with power dynamics on a daily basis. Our country’s history is one of inequality, and that inequality persists to this day, manifesting itself in our culture, in our institutions, and subtly, powerfully, in our mentalities.

Whether it is the Asian-American student feeling alienated by a literature course filled with books written by white men only, the white student confused by why there are so many clubs for people of color, or the lesbian student afraid to come out, students at Pomona confront the dynamics of difference and power every day. These dynamics do not disappear after Pomona. In fact, their influence grows stronger.

As students at Pomona, we anticipate an education that gives us the skills to view our society and our world critically and holistically. Such an education is not inherently liberal in the ideological sense, nor is it conservative. However, it is comprehensive and demanding, preparing us “to lead a rewarding and productive life in a rapidly changing world.” We can not fully understand our economy, our art, our government, unless we understand how they are influenced by, and how they influence, power dynamics. Pomona College does not fulfill its mission until it acknowledges, through a curricular commitment, the implications that power dynamics hold for our lives.

Today, the dynamics of power, long understood by the oppressed, have begun to be explored and confronted within the broader population. Pomona College must serve as an organ of this not-so-fine adjustment. If we do not, we shirk our responsibility as a college, and more importantly, as individuals.

Jesse Last, ‘07
Curriculum Committee Deliberates DDP

Faculty seeks student opinions on revisions to General Education requirements

November 11, 2005

by Kindra Wilson

As the Curriculum Committee prepares to propose another variation of a Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) general requirement to the faculty, dialogue about the advantages and disadvantages of this program are resurfacing on campus.

The concept of a DDP requirement originated in 1995 when students presented a list of demands to the administration called “A Call to Action.” A student would fulfill the requirement by taking a class that examines power dynamics of race, class, gender, sexuality and religion in the United States. After ten years, this demand remains unfulfilled.

Although the Curriculum Committee has been discussing several different ways to incorporate DDP into Pomona’s curriculum, it will not reach a final decision until broader student and faculty opinion is accounted for. The committee will seek to solicit opinions through forums discussing the purpose of DDP in locations such as the Frank Blue Room and the Rose Hills Theatre.

One proposal on the table is based on the structure of the original proposal in 1995 and a subsequent proposal made in 2001. In this new suggestion, DDP would be an overlay course—which could be fulfilled simultaneously with another general education requirement—similar to the writing and speaking-intensive requirements from the old PAC system. Although the original proposal was predominantly focused on contemporary issues in the United States, the committee has also discussed broadening the scope to an international context.

Regardless of which direction the committee chooses to go, Economics professor Slavi Slavov will vote against DDP primarily because he believes it is an ideological requirement.

“The DDP proposal is antithetical to what a ‘liberal education’ is supposed to be about,” said Slavov. “At a liberal arts college, you simply do not force every student to sit still through a class which covers a set of issues from a very narrow ideological perspective. It is a very illiberal approach.”

Sociology professor Gilda Ochoa, a DDP proponent and Curriculum Committee member, argued that all education is political, not just DDP.

“When education tends to follow the dominant way of thinking, it’s considered apolitical,” said Ochoa. “I define DDP’s purpose to be a structured chance for dialogue about race, class, gender, sexuality and religion. Students will talk about how it relates to them in very different ways.”

Academic Affairs Commissioner Dan Kleinman ’06 believes the issue of whether DDP is an ideological requirement is irrelevant. The real issue, he said, is whether students perceive DDP as being ideological in nature.

“If students feel like DDP is an ideological requirement, they will shut down and refuse to engage in discussion,” said Kleinman.
Kleinman who is a voting member of the Curriculum Committee, is opposed to DDP, but wants to help develop the best DDP proposal possible because a 2001 student opinion poll indicated that 53 percent of the student body is in favor of DDP. He plans to voice all of his concerns after a formal proposal is made.

Ochoa, on the other hand, sees many advantages to a DDP requirement and is very supportive of the proposal. She feels that the faculty has an obligation to respond to it because it is a student-driven initiative.

“Pomona is behind other colleges in terms of diversity and multi-cultural requirements,” said Ochoa. “Many other colleges have this type of requirement already.”

She also noted that the requirement would increase students’ individual knowledge and awareness, thus improving the campus climate and possibly attracting more faculty and students from a variety of backgrounds.

However, Kleinman believes the requirement would clash with the values of student choice he thinks are central to a liberal arts education.

“An additional requirement of the overlay nature is not compatible with the rationale that underlies the new general education system,” said Kleinman. “It was founded on principles of student choice, and creating an additional requirement that privileges certain areas of the curriculum seems unnecessary.”

Slavov supports the values of DDP, but said it cannot be required because it must be something students opt to take on their own.

“The only thing to do—and the right thing to do—is to win students over,” said Slavov. “You cannot win hearts and minds for [DDP] by forcing everybody to sit through [a DDP course]. But you can win hearts and minds by making it so attractive and so popular that most students want to take it.”
Not In Your Names: Senate Cannot Speak for Study Body on DDP

February 17, 2006

by Dan Kleinman

You support DDP.

No, that’s not a question. I’m telling you: you have supported DDP since April 2002, before you even came to Pomona. Not only that, but you are against the war in Iraq, and you think that the 2000-2004 Bush administration “[did] not represent the American people according to the democratic principle of popular sovereignty through free and fair election.”

If you take issue with these statements, you are out of luck: they were endorsed in resolutions approved by the ASPC Senate four years ago and the student body as a whole three years ago, respectively. Since neither has been repealed, then you, as a member of the Associated Students of Pomona College, have effectively signed your name to them.

Why am I bringing up history? Because, if the veritable throng of observers at this week’s Senate meeting have their way, it is about to repeat itself. The resolution that we passed this week which demanded the Curriculum Committee of which I am a member present a DDP proposal for faculty consideration by mid-March was not good enough: they want us to put forth a proposal of our own and endorse it as well.

The problem is that the Senate has no business telling the world what students think, or even what students should think, about DDP. We lack an electoral mandate to do so, however, since only two senators mentioned the issue during their election campaigns, and they hold opposing views on the matter. In addition, the Senate has not yet had any serious discussion regarding the pros and cons, much less the curricular impact, of a DDP requirement. As a result, it is not clear to me how we can even consider ourselves informed enough to pass judgment on an existing proposal, let alone draft a new one.

At one particularly contentious point during this week’s meeting, an observer said that it is the Senate’s job to make decisions for the student body on any and all matters. I reject this assertion in the strongest possible terms, as I have always believed that it was our job to inform students and let them draw their own conclusions. Were we really elected to take our opinions and pass them off as yours? To simply ignore the fact that students are heavily divided on this issue and to cater instead to the whims of a small number of observers whose opinions represent those of the student body even less than those of our own split Senate? While that may be how representative democracies work in the real world, this is a small college, and we should not pretend that Senate is the only student voice on campus. If individuals or student groups want to urge the Curriculum Committee to support a certain proposal, they can do so without overstepping their boundaries.

My point is this: reasonable people can and do disagree over DDP. This is why, despite the fact that I strongly oppose requirement-based models of DDP, I will never attempt to pass an anti-DDP resolution—it doesn’t accurately represent my constituency. Furthermore, the arguments for and against are complex, and anyone who pushes for a proposal in isolation of practicalities is doomed to fail. How does a particular proposal integrate with the new G.E. system? How will the process of deciding which courses count work? How well does it satisfy the concerns of professors who teach DDP courses who don’t want unwilling students crowding their classrooms? Those who cannot understand why the Curriculum Committee hasn’t already proposed something do not realize that these questions are equally important, if
not more important, than the content of the proposal itself, which must be both desirable and viable if there is any hope of it being implemented.

So go on, single-issue observers, and select fellow senators: go on and craft, in one week, the DDP proposal that the Curriculum Committee has been unable to produce after more than 100 hours of deliberation over the past year. Go on and affix ASPC’s stamp of approval to a document that fails to represent it. Go on and hijack the implicit signatures of your fellow students because their opinions don’t matter to you anyway. And when you are finished, let us hope that our constituency remembers what has been said and done in their names come spring elections. In the meantime, if you are against DDP or you want to represent your own voice rather than leaving it to us, I urge you to come out of the woodwork and make your voice heard by coming to the DDP proposal forum today at 4 p.m. in SCC 136 and our next Senate meeting, held on Tuesday at noon in Frary South Dining Room.
Senate Approves DDP Resolution

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. Tuesday’s meeting began with the most guests the Senate has seen this year. Nineteen student observers piled into Frary South Private Dining Room to participate in the Senate’s discussion about a resolution urging the Curriculum Committee to produce a Dynamics of Difference and Power proposal by March 20. Almost immediately, CCLA Commissioner Megan Cribs ’06 motioned to pass a resolution drafted by ASPC President Lori DesRochers ’06. Senior Class President Caleb Oken-Berg seconded her motion. Academic Affairs Commissioner Dan Kleinman ’06 objected and called for more discussion before voting. Sports Commissioner Alex Wakeman ’06 questioned the necessity of the fourth paragraph of the resolution, and DesRochers admitted she’d taken it from another document. Kleinman motioned to add quotations marks to paragraph 4; Wakeman seconded. The motion passed with one abstention. Kleinman then took issue with the resolution’s claim that the Curriculum Committee has “failed” to address DDP. He motioned to change the wording of the second paragraph to state that the committee has “failed to put forth a sufficient proposal.” Cribbs seconded, and the motion passed. There was a motion to insert quotations around paragraph three, which quoted part of Pomona College’s mission statement. The motion passed. The resolution was approved with one abstention from Kleinman, who sits on the Curriculum Committee.

Students Criticize Resolution

During the Senate’s discussion, many students said the resolution was bland and did not take a strong stance in favor of a DDP requirement. Kleinman believed the resolution’s neutrality was appropriate because it reflected the student ambivalence shown in a 2001 poll that said only 53 percent of the student body wanted DDP to be required. Some students pointed out that it was an outdated poll and student opinion may have changed significantly. Junior Class President Erin Noble agreed, but reminded the guests that the Senate is working with the best information they currently have available. Oken-Berg, however, said he is tired of the Senate’s ambivalence and would like to see the Senate take a stand on DDP at least after the proposal from the Curriculum Committee comes out. Zachary Schenkkan ’06 urged the Senate to take a side. “[Senate] is the body that decides for students,” he said, “so [the Senate] should be taking a stance.”

Resolution Does Not Offer a Plan

More students criticized the resolution for only setting a deadline for the Curriculum Committee instead of demanding that a particular DDP requirement be proposed. One student suggested that the Senate come up with “a concrete idea of what DDP is.” Noble explained that it is the Curriculum Committee’s job to create a DDP requirement—not the Senate’s. Schenkkan agreed, but pointed out that the resolution did not indicate whether Senate had any intentions of supporting a proposal once it was produced. However, Eamon Hoffman ’07 added that if the Senate were to support DDP before it was proposed, they would be committed to supporting whatever proposal the committee came out with—whether or not it is acceptable to the Senate. DesRochers defended the resolution by describing it as a means of giving the committee a deadline. She assigned Kleinman, Oken-Berg and Wakeman to draft another resolution concerning the Senate’s support of DDP.
**DDP Resolution Calls for Immediate Action**

February 17, 2006

by Editorial Board

The Associated Students of Pomona College (ASPC) Senate has recently taken a crucial step in moving toward a solution in the debate over a Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) requirement. In passing a resolution demanding that the Curriculum Committee make a proposal for DDP to the faculty by March 20, they have recognized the highly charged cloud of opinion surrounding the issue and made sure that the issue is formally addressed by the faculty.

While the debate is clearly not yet settled in the minds of students and professors, it can no longer be ignored—if it is tabled again, with the general education requirements already overhauled and settled on, it may never be brought to a vote. It is indeed problematic that the two sides of the debate seem to be still vehemently in favor of their respective opinions, but letting it go without a quantifiable picture of the faculty’s take is unacceptable.

The reasons for the Committee’s failure to submit a proposal as of yet run deeper than a divisive split of opinion within the faculty and student body, though. Given the loaded nature of the topic, many faculty members are undoubtedly reluctant to have their true opinion of the requirement be heard in worry over the implications for their own department and, in certain cases, their specific position at the college. Political correctness and sensitivity to issues of race, gender, and politics are at the very heart of this debate and push professors not to come forward with an honest opinion. On the other side, certain professors who already teach courses that may very well be counted under such a requirement in the future may have a vested interest in voting for its creation, as it would help assure their own courses’ continued existence.

Students’ opinions on the issue are still crucial to its resolution, but at this point, it is up to the faculty to take the decision to a vote. The Senate has made the push that DDP deserves, putting it forward for a decision that has been called for since the idea’s conception, and the excuse of not having had enough time to debate the issue to its natural end simply is no longer valid. The Curriculum Committee has waited too long to create a formal proposal—their time is up.
**Senate Passes DDP Resolution**

The Curriculum Committee is given until March 20 to submit a DDP requirement proposal

February 17, 2006

by Kindra Wilson and Amanda Shapiro

On Tuesday, the ASPC Senate passed a resolution demanding that the Curriculum Committee propose a Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) requirement to the faculty by March 20. The resolution was created to address ASPC President Lori DesRochers’s concern that if the committee does not make a proposal this spring, then any DDP measure will die quietly in a committee unnoticed by many in the college community.

The resolution states that students and faculty have advocated for a DDP requirement since 1995 with little success. In 2003, the Curriculum Committee was tasked with designing a model for DDP that would work in conjunction with the PAC system, but a concrete proposal never materialized. DesRochers, who drafted the original proposal and openly supports a DDP requirement, hoped that the current resolution will serve as a wake-up call to the committee and provide a necessary sense of urgency to the issue.

“If the Curriculum Committee doesn’t propose DDP by the second faculty meeting in March, they are implicitly saying that DDP will never happen,” said DesRochers at a recent Senate meeting.

But even with the new resolution, Chair of the Curriculum Committee and Professor of Mathematics Adolfo Rumbos said that the process of coming up with a workable model for DDP might take a long time.

“We have continued to deliberate on DDP this semester; it has been at the top of the agenda in all our meetings,” said Rumbos. “At this time, it is hard for me to say whether or not a proposal will be brought to the faculty [this year].”

According to Rumbos, the Curriculum Committee must continue to deliberate until a concrete plan is agreed upon, at which point the plan must be submitted to the faculty and student body for discussion and revision. Once they reach a general consensus, the committee must draft a formal proposal to be voted on by the faculty. As of now, no timetable has been set by the committee for this process.

The Senate itself was split on whether or not to endorse the resolution. The first draft, written by DesRochers, contained more forceful language, which some Senators felt deliberately advocated a DDP requirement. Dan Kleinman ’06 argued that the Senate, as the voice of the student body, should stay neutral on the issue until a proposal has been put forth.

“It seems to me that we should not be in the business of making blanket statements in the name of our constituents when students are very evenly divided on such an issue,” said Kleinman in an e-mail sent to his fellow Senators on Feb. 9. Kleinman, who also sits on the Curriculum Committee, presented a different version of the resolution, which explicitly stated the Senate’s neutrality.

In response, DesRochers wrote, “The Senate should never remain neutral on an issue that so directly relates to our constituents! It is our job to have an opinion, and to influence the business of the College.”
The resolution that passed on Tuesday contained language from both DesRochers’ and Kleinman’s versions, with more moderate language but without a statement of neutrality.

Kleinman said that the resolution would have little effect on the Curriculum Committee. In response to claims made by DesRochers and others that the committee is lacking in urgency Kleinman said, “They should sit on a faculty committee and see for themselves how things are done. The pace of committees is glacial at best. Things must be debated, mulled over, revised, etcetera. This process takes months.”

Other members of the Curriculum Committee agreed that while student input was important, the committee will ultimately act based on what it feels is best for the curriculum. Just as in the Senate, members of the Curriculum Committee differ in their personal opinions of DDP.

“I personally support some kind of DDP component for [the general education requirements],” said Rumbos, who has taught at Pomona since 1991. In contrast, Professor of Politics and committee member David Arase disagreed, saying that DDP would be “laying another onerous course requirement on the students and the faculty.”

Most members of the committee agree that while it would be ideal to present a proposal to the faculty by the end of March, missing that deadline would not mean the end of DDP. Registrar and committee member Margaret Adorno said that a March vote would, in fact, be “premature, and therefore harmful.”

But even Kleinman agreed that DDP has less of a chance of survival the longer it takes the committee to address it.

“There can’t be a better environment that is more conducive for DDP than now,” he said.

This is one point on which he and DesRochers seem to agree.

“This is the last chance for it,” she said. “To be honest, the faculty is tired of this issue because it’s been on the table for ten years. If we make a big push this time, we might not have the same energy the next time.”
Dan Kleinman’s editorial on Friday, “Not in your names...” has several solid points in it, such as the fact that the Curriculum Committee has worked long and hard for the past two years and found no easy solution to DDP and that a proposal from ASPC probably will not offer anything new they haven’t already thought of. However, the article also suggests that it is not ASPC’s role to vote for or against DDP. Nothing could be further from the truth—issues like DDP are precisely the reason that we choose Senators to represent us.

Kleinman notes with disappointment that “an observer [at the ASPC meeting on 2/14] said that it is the Senate’s job to make decisions for the student body on any and all matters.” Now, I think that I am the observer who Kleinman believes said this, but I’m also pretty sure that I never said those words specifically. What I did say was that the Senate is charged with making many important decisions for the student body and that they should not shrink from their duties simply because they aren’t sure whether students support or oppose their choices. ASPC is a type of representative democracy, not a direct democracy, and the Senators should not be looking over their shoulder at every vote, checking to make sure that a statistical majority of the student body backs them up at all times. They don’t do this for 99% of the issues that they vote on every week or for 99% of the decisions made by the committees they sit on. ASPC representatives are elected to deal with problems at our school that most of us don’t have time for. This is the way representative democracy is supposed to work.

Kleinman counters this argument by saying that “While this may be how representative democracies work in the real world, this is a small college, and we should not pretend that Senate is the only student voice on campus.” Only the last point is fair—the Senate is not the sole voice of student opinion, and for this reason, I don’t think that anyone actually believes that because the Senate passed a resolution supporting DDP in 2002, this means each Pomona student supports DDP today. The Senate is, however, a part of the real world, and the fact that we are a small college does not make ASPC’s members less obliged to function as our representatives. In fact, it makes them more obliged. Large, powerful representative democracies like the U.S. legislature are plagued by members who constantly worry about polling data and reelection campaigns with every vote they make. ASPC does not have the resources or the influence for any sane senators to worry about these problems; we are, in other words, too small to be treating our on-campus problems with so much caution and temerity.

In general, this fixation on representing constituents as though the constituents themselves were voting on each issue is misguided. Polls ask mostly yes-or-no questions, or at least vastly simplified questions, but our representatives are elected to solve very complex issues. If a U.S. Senator sees a poll saying that 60% of his constituency doesn’t support abortion, that doesn’t mean he can just vote against anything pro-life and expect to be doing a good job for his constituents. Some constituents oppose abortion only in certain cases or for certain reasons. Some oppose it just because the majority of their neighbors do. Some will change their minds if an elected politician makes a persuasive argument in favor of the opposing view. Politicians, after all, are meant to be leaders, not weathervanes.

For example, consider the questions that Kleinman poses in his article: “How does a particular proposal integrate with the new G.E. system? How will the process of deciding which course counts work?” Sounds complicated, right? Can you imagine a majority of our student body deciding, in any coherent
way, to support any single answer to any of those questions? Of course not. This is why bodies like ASPC exist: to discuss and decide issues on behalf of the students.

If, as Kleinman writes, the Senate has not discussed DDP in detail, has not evaluated the pros and cons of the issue, then I agree with him that they should start doing so now. However, our representatives should not wait for some sign from the student body, or some new piece of polling data, to tell them whether to support DDP or not. Rather, they should take their election to the ASPC as a sign, a mandate even, that they will need to make up their own minds about these things and choose, one way or the other, how to best represent the interests of students.
There has been a lot of talk over the past decade of requiring students to take a course in Dynamics of Difference and Power in order to graduate from Pomona. While we haven’t seen a concrete proposal, presumably students would be required to take a course dealing with the marginalization of groups of people based on race, gender, sexuality, or other factors.

However much people might like to tell you that DDP is about guaranteeing that students receive a broad education, that’s not really what it’s about. The motivation behind DDP is social change. The hope is that if we all have to take a class about issues of race, gender, and/or sexuality, we’ll adopt a new viewpoint on those issues. The proponents of a requirement want us to see the marginalization of those groups as the major driving force in history and society today. I’m not going to argue about whether it is or is not okay, but that’s beside the point. It’s not just that they want us to be aware of that viewpoint, but that they want to make sure we believe it. And it isn’t the place of the ASPC or the Curriculum Committee or anyone else to tell us what we ought to think.

Some object, claiming that there is a legitimate educational value to ensuring that everyone looks at history, society, or culture from the perspective of a marginalized group at least once before graduating. It’s a seductive argument. The problem is that there is a legitimate educational value to everything offered here. If classes weren’t worthwhile they wouldn’t be offered. If the push for DDP were about making sure our education were complete, then there would also be a push for all kinds of other requirements. It would do us all some good to explore different trends and ideas in religion, even if we aren’t too religious ourselves. And how about economics? I think we can all agree that economics is important too. I know that the vast majority of students here have never written a computer program in their life, so we could throw in a computer science requirement too. Computers are more important in our lives every day, and we should know something about them if we want to get by in the world. But it would be silly to have a huge set of requirements like that. No one wants requirements like that bogging down their schedules. That’s why students were relieved when the old PAC system was done away with. The proponents of a DDP requirement are not seriously pushing for more requirements designed to ensure we receive a rounded education.

Graduation requirements are not for making political statements. That’s what speeches, petitions, and dare I say it, the pages of TSL are for. I know that the people who want a requirement want it for serious, sincere reasons. They want people to be aware of the inequalities in the way society treats people and in how people treat each other. They want people to change the way they act, the way they talk and the way they think. It’s a noble goal. This just isn’t the way to go about it. If they want more people to take a course in Dynamics of Difference and Power, they ought to convince them it’s a worthwhile use of their time. They shouldn’t be using the coercive power of the school to make people change their views.
If the outcry were about a lack of course offering in DDP, I would be behind it all the way. Examining issues of race, class and gender is an important and worthwhile use of time. But we already offer courses in DDP. We offer everything from Race in the U.S. Economy to Gender and Science to Race, Class, and Power. You can take Feminist Interpretations of the Bible at Scripps or Feminism and Queer Theories at Pitzer. There’s a wide range of choices available. I think that’s fantastic.

A DDP requirement, on the other hand, takes choices away from the students. There’s a huge difference between offering the choice of DDP and requiring it. The people who are pushing for a DDP requirement aren’t simply saying that DDP issues are important; they’re saying that they know which courses are worth your time better than you do. It’s as if they don’t trust us to make basic decisions, like which courses to take, on our own. And these are other students. They don’t have any more expertise or experience than any of us. And yet they’ve gotten it into their heads that somehow it’s their place to force you to take the courses they consider important. They’re telling you that you must take a course in DDP. Not should or ought to or might want to consider, but must.

I know that people have a passionate belief that these issues are important. I agree. But what they need to realize is that everyone needs to make that determination themselves. I’m sure that they would be livid if there were a requirement that we examine history and society from an evangelical Christian point of view. But from an objective standpoint what would the difference be? The only difference is the point of view being advocated.
Pomona Desperately Needs a DDP Requirement

February 24, 2006

by Justin Huang

Editor,

Forgive me for the melodrama, but confusion is clouding my mind. Up until the point when I read Dan Kleinman’s article about DDP, I thought

I was an elected student official and that I could speak for the student body. My colleague Mr. Kleinman disagrees. He believes that on issues that concern the intelligent people who elected us to represent them, we should constantly be turning to them, asking “Are we doing okay? Do you agree with us?”

What is a leader? Is he or she someone who tries to always please the public? Does he or she constantly think of his or her own image? OR! Or does a leader have the tenacity and the insight to impact change by making a decision that may not be necessarily popular, but in the long run will benefit the community he or she serves?

From what I read in his article and what he has said in meetings, Mr. Kleinman has reduced ASPC into a congregation of bobbing heads who meet for sandwiches once a week. Whatever happened to taking a stance? Dan Kleinman’s views of DDP are unclear. So I will take one. To the students of Pomona, I will officially announce my support of DDP. I haven’t conducted any polls, nor taken any surveys. I was elected because my fellow Sagehens trusted me to make decisions that would benefit Pomona, even if it means that there may be initial opposition. I’m tired of this politician shtick, and I wouldn’t dare patronize my fellow students.

I will say it simply: Despite this school’s loud declarations of tolerance, I personally have never been in a more racist environment. As a male of Asian descent, I never have been taunted more about the alleged size of my penis, or the slantiness of my eyes, until I came to Pomona. I was talking to my mother on the phone once, and people who were in my room began to imitate my Mandarin, butchering it to sound like dogspeak. Pomona is a very white school, with more than 60% of the student body having European backgrounds. This is not a bad thing at all, since it is an accurate proportion of educated America, and I believe that it creates an essential dynamic. It would be interesting to note, however, that ASPC further inflates this majority. Out of the fifteen elected senators, only three are students of color: President Lori DesRochers, Freshman President Myles Durkee, and yours truly, Justin Huang.

I’m not saying that “DDP” is the magic word that will solve issues like racism, gay bashing, or bigotry. But it’s an undeniable push in that direction. Mr. Kleinman says that these DDP courses would be full of “unwilling students.” I guarantee him that he will find “unwilling students” in every course of our current general education system. But what he, and other opponents of DDP, fails to realize is that DDP promotes knowledge that is just as important as, say, mathematics, when it comes to success in later life. A person who cannot interact with different types of people will ultimately fall short of his or her full potential. DDP encourages a necessary wisdom! To deny Pomona students this wisdom because you’re afraid stepping on some toes is cowardice.

Justin Huang ‘09

South Campus Representative
“He is the President”

Associated Students of Pomona College President Lori DesRochers ’06 called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. She introduced Pomona College President David Oxtoby to the Senate and asked him to offer his views on the Senate’s resolution concerning the Dynamics of Difference and Power general education proposal, changes to Pomona’s farm, and Pomona’s ongoing strategic plan review. Oxtoby said that he would like for the DDP issue to be resolved this year, although he did not offer his own personal view on the issue. He reminded the Senate that if the faculty does not vote on DDP this year it would not be “apocalyptic.” “It will come back next year,” he said. DesRochers asked Oxtoby to offer his opinion on the appropriate role of student government in the DDP debate. Oxtoby said that he believed that while Senators are supposed to be representatives of the student body, they should not just vote based on majority views. He noted that Senators have perspectives on issues most students do not have.

Organic Farmin’ Hippies Battle Evil College via E-mail

Oxtoby then provided the Senate with background information on the College’s proposal to relocate and expand the student farm located near the Wash. He explained that he decided to delay presenting the plan to the Board of Trustees next week in order to allow for more discussion of the issue. “This is not just an issue of the evil college versus organic farmers,” Oxtoby said in response to how he felt some students had characterized the issue. Katie Beaton ’06, a student observer of the Senate who is involved with the farm, commented that students organized against the College’s proposal because they felt the decision had been rushed, not because they were against the plan. She said it was unfair for Oxtoby to portray students as organic farmers and hippies. Oxtoby said his description was not directed towards students who had met with him, but rather towards students who had sent him “nasty” e-mails. Beaton said students want to work with the administration. Oxtoby closed his remarks by updating the Senate on the College’s strategic planning process and invited the Senate and students to participate in it. He said that the College will decide by next year whether or not to expand its size by ten percent.

D! D! DDP! We! We! We Agree!

DesRochers presented to the Senate two forms of a letter to the college community that would endorse the creation of a DDP general education proposal. The first form of the letter endorsed a DDP proposal similar to that under consideration by the Curriculum Committee. The particular proposal calls for students to be required to take a course at Pomona that “examines the dynamics of difference and power as they relate to race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and/or ability.” The second form of the letter stated that out of four possible models of DDP considered by the Curriculum Committee, the Senate endorsed a course-based requirement approach and left the details to the committee. Senior Class President Caleb Oken-Berg said he did not like the second letter because it only offered labels for possible DDP requirements. DesRochers said she did not want it to appear that the Senate was writing its own DDP proposal, since that is the job of the Curriculum Committee, so she drafted the second form of the letter. Newly appointed Off-Campus Commissioner Kindra Wilson ’08 suggested that the Senate letter offer a rationale regarding why a course-based requirement is superior to the other options.
Benjamin Heidlage ’06, a student observer of the Senate, said that if the Senate does endorse DDP it needs to provide a justification for its decision “in the face of large opposition.” Fellow student Senate observer Andrew Perraut ’06 agreed with Heidlage. He said that the Senate was moving too quickly to endorse DDP without discussing whether it ought to take a stance. “Senators are often times actively enforcing their own ethical norms through student government,” he said. ASPC Vice President Galen Benshoof ’06 said that the Senate has already had multiple discussions about DDP, offered a “pretty intense justification” of it, and had moved forward because there has been “no sizable oppositions within the Senate.” South Campus Representative Justin Huang ’09 countered that the Senate had yet to express its view on DDP. He encouraged the Senate to have more courage and actually take a vote. Junior Class President Erin Noble said there has been some resistance to the Senate taking a stand.

And then Galen Sneered at the Rabble

Academic Affairs Commissioner Dan Kleinman ’06 said that the proposal offered by the second letter would not fit with the current general education requirements and that some professors who teach classes that would fulfill the DDP requirement might not want students to be compelled to take their classes. Wilson said that the Senate ought to revise the letter so that it better explained why the Senate supported DDP. Heidlage said that it “takes arrogance to say that [the Senate] is going to support or not support DDP.” He reiterated that the Senate is supposed to represent the student body. Huang responded that he believed it was unfair to accuse the Senate of arrogance. He defended his support of DDP. “Since when was a decision that did good popular?” he said. “I don’t want to enforce my agenda on people, but I feel it will benefit the student body. I truly feel that the knowledge we promote [with DDP] is a necessary wisdom.” CCLA Commissioner Megan Cribbs ’06 said that unless the Senate came to a conclusion, it could debate DDP forever. Benshoof moved to endorse the first letter. Kleinman called for a roll call vote. The measure passed nine to five. Voting in favor were: Hilton, Wakeman, Oken-Berg, Cribbs, Huang, Durkee, Wilson, Thompson and Benshoof. The following Senators did not approve: Patterson, Noble, Kleinman, Maas and Goldstein. DesRochers abstained. Wilson announced that she voted in favor but felt that the resolution would have no effect on the Curriculum Committee. The Senate adjourned at a little past 1 p.m.

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Huang’s Letter Misses DDP Point

February 24, 2006

by Lyubov Tovbina

Editor,

Forgive me for the melodrama, but confusion is clouding my mind. The definition of a leader depends on the established political system of the community that he or she leads. In a benevolent dictatorship, a leader is entrusted to make decisions that will benefit the populace in the long run. In a representative system, a leader is someone who can put his or her own views and biases aside and focus on representing the constituency he or she was elected to serve. From what I read in his letter to the editor, Justin Huang has elevated ASPC into a congregation of benevolent dictators, with the legitimate right to impose its opinions on the student body rather than representing its constituents.

I will say it simply: I have lived in many places in the world, and I personally have never been in a more tolerant environment than Pomona. As a female Russian Jew and a recent refugee from a lower-class background, I never have been taunted more about my alleged Communist background, or my desire to become a mail-order bride for money or a green card, or my assured future financial success as a Jew, until I came to Pomona. More than once, as I was talking to my mother on the phone, people who were in my room began to imitate my Russian, butchering it to sound like Hollywood spy movies. Fortunately, I find these stereotypes to be humorous, and often join my friends in making fun of my own background. The overwhelming majority of Pomona students is intelligent and informed enough to understand that stereotypes are mere caricatures of reality—and treat them as such by using them in humorous contexts, instead of trying to mask their existence under a veil of political correctness.

The United States is a “very” white country, with more than 68 percent of the population having European backgrounds. Pomona College, however, is a reasonably diverse school, where whites are underrepresented according to Mr. Huang’s statistic. Above all, there’s more to diversity than the color of your skin. Class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and a variety of other human characteristics also qualify under the blanket definition of diversity. Unfortunately, Mr. Huang’s perception of Pomona’s diversity is only skin-deep. According to Mr. Huang, “out of the fifteen elected senators, only three are students of color.” But how many lower-class students, how many non-Christian students, how many GLBT or Jewish students are on Senate? What about other positions of student leadership? How many RHS staff members are white? By my calculations, 42%—hardly a representative ratio.

I’m not saying that I oppose DDP—actually, I think it’s a wonderful idea. However, the purpose of DDP is to educate all Pomona students about people different from themselves, and the implementation that DDP advocates have proposed—a mandatory overlay chosen from a list of currently available offerings—will not come close to accomplishing this goal. If the current proposal is approved, I predict the following: Most students identifying with at least one “[insert adjective here] Studies” group will fulfill the DDP requirement by taking a course relating to their own group, the result being that only about 30% of the student body—straight white males—will be required to leave their comfort zone and take a course about a group other than their own. (Then again, according to a reasonably conservative interpretation of section (d) of the resolution passed by Senate on 2/21, everyone could just take U.S. Foreign Policy and be done with it.) I will submit an alternative proposal for a successful implementation of DDP to the next issue of TSL.

Lyubov Tovbina ‘06
A DIVIDED BODY

Pomona’s student body remains divided over both the Dynamics of Difference and Power general education proposal and the appropriate role the ASPC Senate ought to play in advocating for its implementation. A Student Life telephone survey of 98 randomly selected students Sunday evening found that among students who hold an opinion, a slight majority endorse both Senate involvement and the DDP proposal itself, but that a majority of students report themselves unknowledgeable about the issue. A vast majority of students, 92%, agreed that the faculty ought to take into consideration student views. --JAY ANTONEN

Most students unknowledgeable about the DDP issue

- 39.80% of students report themselves to be knowledgable.
- 60.20% of students report themselves to be unknowledgeable.
  The confidence interval for both percentages is +/- 9.66%. The standard error of difference is .9889 with a Z-statistic of 2.063 (statistically significant).

Students divided over DDP

- 41.48% +/- 9.77% of students support a DDP requirement.
- 28.57% +/- 8.94% of students are against a DDP requirement.
- 29.59% +/- 9.04% of students are unsure about a DDP requirement.

Most students have an opinion about DDP

- 70.41% of students either in favor or disfavor of DDP.
- 29.59% of students report themselves to be unsure about DDP.
  The confidence interval for both percentages is +/- 9.037%. The standard error of difference is .9922 with a Z-statistic of 4.436 (statistically significant).

Among students who have an opinion, slight majority back DDP

- 59.42% of students support a DDP requirement.
- 40.58% of students are against a DDP requirement.
  The confidence interval for both percentages is +/- 11.59%. The standard error of difference is .1182 with a Z-statistic of 3.594 (statistically insignificant).

Students split on holding an opinion of ASPC Senate involvement in DDP debate

- 54.08% of students either approve of or disapprove of the Senate.
- 45.92% have no opinion about the Senate.
  The confidence interval for both percentages is +/- 9.066%. The standard error of difference is .1007 with a Z-statistic of .8108 statistically insignificant.

Among students who have an opinion, most approve of Senate involvement

- 75.47% of students approve of Senate involvement in DDP.
- 24.53% of students disapprove of Senate involvement in DDP.
  The confidence interval for both percentages is +/- 11.58%. The standard error of difference is .1162 with a Z-statistic of 4.310 (statistically significant).

All statistics based on a 95% confidence interval.

DDP Debate Continues: ASPC Senate Resolution Endorses General Education Requirement

February 24, 2006
by Amanda Shapiro

On Tuesday, February 21, after nearly an hour of intense and emotional debate, the ASPC Senate passed a resolution that expressed to the Curriculum Committee its support for a Dynamics of Difference and Power (DDP) general education requirement.

The resolution, which passed with a vote of nine to five, endorsed a DDP curriculum requirement, which is one of four DDP proposals currently under discussion by the Curriculum Committee. The other three proposed models include a more general civic engagement/global citizenship requirement, a public affirmation of commitment to DDP made by the college, and a proposal for no change.

The Senate resolution states, “While we realize that there are many different ways that the idea of DDP can be addressed, we would like to strongly support a proposal for this required overlay course.”

The resolution passed in the final minutes of a Senate meeting that was considered by some to be the most highly charged session of the year. Senators traded verbal blows with each other and other students who came to the meeting to voice their opinions.

It became apparent that the DDP issue has called into question the fundamental role of the Senate and its members. Senators and students alike are divided on whether it is the organization’s prerogative to endorse a proposal that is not supported by a clear majority of the student body.

Ben Heidlage ’06 said that DDP was on the Curriculum Committee’s agenda regardless, and the Senate was overstepping its boundaries by taking a position.

“It takes, in a sense, a lot of arrogance to say [the Senate] has the authority to make this decision for the student body,” said Heidlage. “I do not feel represented. The only people that are represented [in the resolution] are the supporters.”

South Campus Representative Justin Huang ’09, who was moved to tears during the debate, called Heidlage’s statements hypocritical.

“His view is that because we are students in elected positions of power that we are obligated to be completely devoid of opinions,” said Huang. “But his, and others’, attempts to shut down my right to my own voice is the strongest act of presumptuous arrogance I personally have ever encountered.”

Huang described DDP as imparting “necessary wisdom, just as important as math and English.”

President David Oxtoby, who spoke on the issue, emphasized that the Senate is a representative body, not a direct democracy.

“It is important to poll the student body, but not necessarily to always vote with the majority,” said Oxtoby. He urged Senators to use their own judgment and act in the best interests of the college.

Student-at-large Drew Perraut ’06 said that the Senate had failed at this task.

“[The Senate] is trying to enforce ethical and moral norms on the student body,” said Perraut.
Student-at-large Eamon Hoffman ’07 responded to Perraut by saying that the resolution was not intended to be dogmatic.

“We’re not imposing ideology; we’re imposing discussion,” said Hoffman. “There is overwhelming support for DDP [among students], whether it constitutes a majority or not.”

Some Senators felt that in the case of DDP, the best interests of the college were not easy to determine. Academic Affairs Commissioner and Curriculum Committee member Dan Kleinman ’06 disagreed with President Oxtoby’s characterization of the Senators’ roles, and argued that the student body has a range of opinions about DDP that the Senate has failed to address.

“While it is hardly necessary for the student body to be unanimous on an issue before Senate takes a stance on it, I cannot help but feel that our resolution failed to represent the diversity of viewpoints among students concerning DDP,” said Kleinman.

Other Senators, like Vice President Galen Benshoof ’06, said that, as members of a governing body, they had greater access to resources such as faculty and administrators, and more time to debate the issue, and therefore, were better educated than most students when it came to DDP.

Perraut called it “unbelievably arrogant,” to assume that the Senators “understand the complexities of the issue at hand and that everyone else is uninformed.”

The intense discussion was cut short at 1 p.m. when Benshoof motioned to vote on the resolution. Some Senators, like Junior Class President Erin Noble ’07 who voted against the resolution, were “extremely unhappy” with the outcome of the meeting.

“The proposal to vote caught me off guard,” said Noble. “I am disappointed because the nature of the last-minute vote forced me to oppose a letter, on technical grounds, whose spirit I have come to support.”

Kleinman characterized the vote as “premature and uninformed,” and said it should be accorded “little, if any weight by the student body, the Curriculum Committee, and the faculty as a whole.”

“The Curriculum Committee has been trying to come up with a good DDP proposal for more than a year. It was foolish for anyone to think the Senate could do such an important topic justice in half an hour,” he said.

Even Huang, who strongly supported the resolution, was concerned about the nature of the vote.

“I agree with the resolution that the Senate approved today, but already there is talk among the Senators that the meeting was rushed, that ‘outside voices’ prevented them from speaking up, and that some voted with uncertainty,” he said. “ASPC should not pass a resolution and put our collective name on it unless each and every Senator is sure of their opinions.”

ASPC President Lori DesRochers ’06 felt that the vote was not rushed in any way, given the amount of time the Senate has spent discussing DDP in recent weeks.

“There will never be a time when we can all agree on what to think about DDP, and even those of us who do support it do so for varying reasons,” said DesRochers. “The only thing to do was to call for a vote and then move forward with that information.”
DDP Proposal Falls Short

February 24, 2006

by Benjamin Heidlage

Dear Editor,

I was dismayed to learn that the ASPC Senate passed a resolution that demanded a proposal be submitted by the curriculum committee to implement a DDP general education requirement, and even more dismayed that it may pass a resolution explicitly advocating its enactment. I argue this not because I think issues of inequality and power are unimportant, but rather because they are so important.

Suppose we did have such a requirement—what would it entail? One would probably guess that classes such as “US Labor and Working Class History” would probably be included, but that classes such as “U.S. Foreign Policy” and “Campaigns and Elections” may not. These are just examples, I admit, but the specifics are unimportant: the line of what will be included and excluded must be drawn somewhere.

Why these distinctions? After all, the argument for DDP is that these issues deeply permeate our society. In fact, isn’t examining how issues of power and inequality affect such institutions as our electoral system or how we formulate our foreign policy just as, if not more, important than studying class as a separate issue? DDP creates false distinctions, artificially separating issues of inequality into its own subset; DDP institutionalizes the marginalization that it proposes to address.

The only way these issues will be adequately addressed is if they are incorporated into the education at large, not separated into an arbitrary requirement. These issues should be addressed in all classes that deal with social interaction. Therefore if students don’t learn about class, gender and race through satisfying the general education requirements which include “Social Institutions and Human Behavior,” and “History, Values, Ethics and Cross-Disciplinary Studies,” it is not due to a lack of requirements, but a failure in the courses themselves.

Lastly, I believe it should be noted that the DDP student movement differs greatly from previous student movements. Previous movements, such as those to create various cultural studies departments, attempted to increase the options for the students who were in favor. In contrast, this movement consists of a group of students attempting to put restrictions on another group. While this does not necessarily disqualify it, I believe that any such proposal demands a higher burden of proof that it will achieve a positive effect. A burden which, considering my arguments above, I do not believe it meets.

Respectfully,

Benjamin Heidlage

Pomona ´06
**Nature of Liberal Arts Education in DDP Debate**

March 3, 2006

by Zack Schenkkan

DDP isn’t just a political issue. There is a perception among some students and faculty, most recently expressed last week on this op-ed page, that DDP is purely a matter of some students and professors pushing for social change. Judged solely on the origins of the proposal, this view might be fair—the original proponents of the new requirement were displeased students who recommended DDP as a way of off-setting what they saw as a college environment hostile to students of color, queer students, and students from working class backgrounds. However, the conflict over DDP, particularly the conflict among the faculty, has as much to do with academic arguments about what a balanced liberal arts education is as it does with liberal politics.

The majority of the classes that the traditional overlay DDP proposal (endorsed by the ASPC Senate last week) will cover are found in departments and programs like Women’s Studies, Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Asian Studies, Asian American Studies, and Media Studies. The basic academic argument in favor of DDP, which is frequently obscured by the debate over campus politics, is that these departments express an entirely new, distinctive intellectual philosophy, something one cannot learn simply by taking your average science, math, history, politics, or English class. Without a requirement to take a class that covers this new philosophy, the argument goes, liberal arts students will not receive a comprehensive education and will miss out on some of the fastest-growing, most popular fields in modern academia.

What is this new philosophy, you ask? A very fair question, and I would argue that the faculty’s inability to agree on a concrete DDP proposal stems from the difficulty of answering this question succinctly and accurately. (This isn’t idle speculation—I served on the Curriculum Committee last year and watched the faculty debate the issue in depth). As a broad answer, though, one can say that this new philosophy insists that the study of underrepresented communities and identities can offer insights into the subjective nature of human experiences, beliefs, cultures, etc. The word “subjective” is probably the most important to remember as it differentiates these new departments from many of the older ones, particularly ones like the “hard” sciences, math, and economics. In fact, almost all the professors and courses that would satisfy DDP rebel not only against the white, male, capitalist status quo but against the imposition of any supposedly objective status quo—or even more broadly, the imposition of anyone’s opinion on anyone else. I emphasize this last phrase to point out yet another reason why DDP is so divisive: many people who believe in this new academic philosophy also believe it is hypocritical to force others to study it. Supporters of DDP argue in response that they’re only asking to impose their views to the same extent that previous curricular requirements have done so as well, and the debate continues.

The academic discussion becomes even more heated once you consider the new area requirements that have been put in place. Many professors and departments object to the idea that these young departments should get their own requirement when some of the old ones don’t get that privilege. However, our requirements aren’t meant to perfectly divide students between all departments—in other words, our system doesn’t have to be fair. The argument can be made that many of the oldest departments—chemistry, English, biology, math, history—have no trouble attracting students in large numbers and already have a great amount of resources. Many of these newer departments and programs, on the other hand, are 5-C based because no single campus can provide enough classes to support those who major in the field. Most of them are also interdepartmental: every professor of, say, Women’s Studies is also a professor in the English department, or the History department, or the Politics department, etc. This means that they have to shoehorn their Women’s Studies material to also cover the other subject of which
that they are a professor. Which brings us back to the argument that these departments and programs need DDP as a way of bolstering support for themselves at the college, hopefully setting them on the path to becoming more official, independent institutions.

I am not trying to argue that the academic side of the DDP debate is the only side; there is obviously a political aspect to the issue as well. But I do want to point out that DDP cannot be dismissed as “just politics”—the issue of how to integrate this new educational philosophy and these new interdisciplinary subjects into the curriculum is, in many ways, a cutting-edge debate among academics today, both in the sense that it is new and potentially ground-breaking and in the sense that it is a deeply divisive, “cutting” issue for faculty. With luck, the Curriculum Committee will put something forward this March that will somehow bridge the divides inherently created by DDP and foster some sort of supportive goodwill for these new departments.
DDP Decision Worse than No Decision At All

March 3, 2006

by David A. Smith \w06

Editor,

Last week, the Senate did a disservice to the entire student body by rushing a poorly thought-out proposal that satisfied neither DDP supporters nor its opponents. Because they failed to respond to student criticism, the proposal was too confusing and weak to be wholeheartedly supported by those who approve of DDP. And because they failed to justify their support, students against social engineering felt unheard.

Surveys show that students and faculty are not confident that a DDP requirement will resolve more campus issues than it will generate. That Galen and other Senators feel they are more qualified to understand this issue than those whom this will directly affect makes me wonder if they can see the upshot from their high horses.

The question that President Lori and nine Senators failed to address in the senate meeting was, “Is a DDP requirement the solution to campus problems?” (Justin Huang admitted that he didn’t know what the DDP proposal involved just two minutes before voting for it.) Instead, the Senators believed that good intentions could excuse their lack of critical thinking, presumptuously ignoring and insulting the ten non-Senate members who had come to generate precisely this kind of discussion.

Justin Huang thinks he is being a leader by bravely choosing the default PC response. That is not being a leader, Justin. A leader would have listened to the issues raised by the student we actually elected to decide these issues: Dan Kleinman. Had the Senate paid attention, they would have heard the many concerns that Pomona students have whether or not they ultimately support DDP ideals. Instead, Justin and his cohorts reluctantly endured 20 seconds of rushed criticism, forgetting everything instantly and leaving the concerns unaddressed. This may be why Justin erroneously believed that Kleinman’s views were unclear.

What was brave of Justin was to presume that his goals were laudable despite lacking serious forethought; something Kleinman and the Curriculum Committee have done. Justin et al. wanted to somehow benefit Pomona, which is an admirable ambition. But casting aside serious concerns of the students to push the senators’ personal agendas is a dereliction of senatorial duty. That is not being a leader, Justin.

The premature call-to-vote by Galen that hastily ended this controversial debate resulted in a feckless proposal resisted by senators who ultimately support DDP (e.g. Erin Noble). A bad decision is worse than no decision: Lori and the nine senators need to realize this.

Sincerely,

David A. Smith, ‘06
Senators Lack Mandate for DDP

March 3, 2006

by Joe Steinberg ’06

Editor,

I’d like to address several points in Justin Huang’s letter in the February 24 edition of TSL. First and foremost, I am absolutely, positively astounded that anyone could possibly believe that a DDP requirement is as important as mathematics in determining a person’s success later in life. Not only is this statement ridiculous, but it marginalizes the efforts of Pomona students who major in technical fields, many of whom go on to succeed in high-paying fields such as investment banking and consulting.

Mr. Huang asserts that a DDP requirement is necessary, for without it, students will be “unable to interact with different kinds of people,” and will “ultimately fall short of [their] potential.” This further assertion directly offends me. I have taken virtually no classes outside the economics and math departments, and certainly nothing that would meet a hypothetical DDP requirement. According to Mr. Huang, I simply will not be able to reach my full potential because supposedly, I can’t interact with different kinds of people. Yet somehow, I was able to procure a position at a top consulting firm which I will start after graduation. During my final interview, I talked with nine employees of the firm. Of these nine, seven were of Asian descent. Despite my supposed ineptitude at interacting with people who are not white males, I had no trouble ingratiating myself with these people who are now my future co-workers. Clearly, it was my technical abilities that landed me the job, not knowledge of power differences.

My story is certainly not an anomaly. I need more than two hands to count the members of my class who have had similar successes. Mr. Huang’s assertion about the relative importance of DDP is not only completely false, but outrageous given strong evidence to the contrary here at Pomona. DDP is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to force students who have not already done so to adopt a liberal ideology. If implemented, it will have absolutely no effect on the success of future Pomona students in the real world. Pretending that it will is deception.

Second, Mr. Huang asserts that because he has been elected to the student senate, he is obligated to do what he believes is right for the college, regardless of the popularity of his actions. I would like to remind Mr. Huang to remember this comment the next time he whines that President Bush does not truly have his supposed electoral mandate because the size of the majority that elected him was too small. I see a fairly obvious parallel between complaints about the size of the majority that supports DDP here at Pomona and complaints about the size of the majority that elected our country’s President. Keep in mind, senate-member proponents of DDP, that because you as a group are obviously the loudest whiners about the President’s actions around here, that if you don’t believe he had the right to invade Iraq or torture detainees at Guantanamo, you shouldn’t have the right to force DDP upon the students you claim to represent given the slim majority that supports it.

Joe Steinberg ’06
Friedersdorf Against DDP Requirement

March 3, 2006

by Conor Friedersdorf '02

Editor,

In his letter to the editor last week Justin Huang wrote, “Despite this school’s loud declarations of tolerance, I personally have never been in a more racist environment.” His subsequent argument amounts to the following: Pomona College is a racist place, therefore a DDP requirement is a good idea. Why does one follow from the other?

“I’m not saying that ‘DDP’ is the magic word that will solve issues like racism, gay-bashing, or bigotry,” he wrote. “But it’s an undeniable push in that direction.”

I hereby deny that a DDP requirement is an undeniable push toward solving racism, gay-bashing, and bigotry. One hardly needs a collegiate-level understanding of “the dynamics of difference and power” to understand that it’s wrong and offensive to ridicule someone based on racial stereotypes. Enter any fourth grade classroom in America and you will find that most of the kids understand such behavior is wrong, and most who engage in it understand all too well the dynamics of difference and power: “You look different,” they intuit, “and I can use that fact to increase my power to make you feel bad.”

As for the kids who don’t know any better, any fourth grade teacher worth her salt can deliver a stern lecture that explains why racism is wrong in a single detention period. Do Pomona students really require a whole semester’s instruction to understand that racism is wrong?

DDP may have benefits as a requirement. Arguing that reducing acts of overt racism is among them, however, is quite silly.

People like me who want to fight racism but oppose DDP believe that Pomona’s racial dynamic is unhealthy because the institution fixates on race—from the moment students check the Asian American box on their application and are placed, without being consulted, into racially segregated mentoring groups.

(By Pomona’s logic, a fifth generation Japanese kid from Beverly Hills High School has less in common with his white high school classmate than with a first-generation Hmong kid from rural Wisconsin.)

I happen to believe that race is an insignificant factor in someone’s identity, and that racism will endure only so long as society treats race as a significant factor.

Pomona College treats race as the quintessential trait of an individual through its institutionalized policies and its orthodoxies of thought. A DDP requirement seems to me likely to reflect these orthodoxies of thought—to teach things like the desirability of affirmative action, the idea that identity group rights sometimes outweigh individual rights and the importance of multiculturalism that actively prevents the melding of cultures to purposely preserve the distinction of some people we define as “others”.


Insofar as that happens, I think that DDP will exacerbate the unhealthy racial climate at Pomona, indefinitely postponing the day when race is no longer seen as the quintessential characteristic of an individual at the college.

Conor Friedersdorf

Class of 2002
In the “Nature of Liberal Arts Education in DDP Debate” (TSL 3/3/06), Zach Schenkkan makes an important contribution to the school-wide discussion of the DDP requirement: DDP is contentious because it is a debate of academic politics and departmental practice. Advocates for DDP not only assert that every student should study the experiences of subjugated minorities but that the procedures that the departments and programs that focus on these issues are valid, even necessary, for each student at Pomona. Zach frames the question of DDP well: Are the methodologies employed by these newer departments and programs (Media Studies, African American Studies, etc.) more essential than those of traditional departments, necessitating a required course? However, in his discussion of this issue, Zach misrepresents and even tacitly caricatures these departments and programs—in doing so, his analysis of the DDP question is misleading and reactionary.

His exposition of “this new philosophy” begins with an attempt to define it, or rather to explain why it is particularly hard to define. It is uncertain whether he is referring to a contemporary branch of thought called postmodernism with “new philosophy,” but because post-structural thinkers such as Michel Foucault were so foundational for the basic tenets of these departments and programs, it is not possible to view the two in isolation. There would be no Media Studies Department as we know it without the influence of Foucault and Althusser. Madan Sarup characterizes post-structuralism broadly as “a critique of metaphysics, of the concepts of causality, of identity, of the subject, and of truth.” Zach, on the other hand, argues that “this new philosophy insists that the study of underrepresented communities and identities can offer insights into the subjective nature of human experiences, beliefs, cultures, etc.”

This statement in isolation is partially correct because it ostensibly asserts that these departments and programs are concerned with the nature of the human subject and the limits of its freedom, personally and socially. However, in differentiating “this new philosophy” from other departmental philosophies that employ the scientific method, Zach crucially misses the point: these departments and programs do not wholly deal with people’s subjective thoughts, but employ different theories about the nature of subjectivity to better understand the structure of society. The study of underrepresented minorities does not “offer insights into the subjective nature of human experiences,” an examination of subjectivity allows for the study of social institutions, hierarchies, and practices. Indeed, the subjective/objective distinction that Zach implicitly inserts into the debate is a red herring because by comparing these departments and programs only with those that use the scientific method, Zach essentially asserts that the use of the scientific method is the dividing line in the debate. This is obviously not the case; if it was, the entire fields of the humanities and social sciences would be contentious.

In addition to this early misrepresentation, Zach makes his most inaccurate claim, that “almost all the professors and courses that would satisfy DDP rebel not only against the white, male, capitalist status quo but against the imposition of any supposedly objective status quo—or even more broadly, the imposition of anyone’s opinion on anyone else.” This statement was dangerously worded: by equating the “white male status quo” with an “objective status quo” it could be read as tacitly asserting that a “status quo” in which white males are in power is somehow objective and empirically founded, but I will give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that this association is not intentional.
However, Zach more obviously errs when he writes that these departments and programs “rebel against…the imposition of any supposedly objective status quo.” They are not concerned with the imposition but with the very existence of objective truth, as Sarup explained. Zach’s final phrase, that “this new philosophy” does not accept “the imposition of anyone’s opinion on anyone else” is a flagrant caricature: the very stance that people’s opinions should not be imposed on anyone else is itself the imposition of an opinion. Should any department or program seriously practice what Zach suggests here, there would be no education or learning, only polite, jejune conversation. Zach’s view of “this new philosophy” misleadingly renders these departments and programs as practically meaningless.

For better or for worse, the errors that Zach makes are common not only in viewing academic fields, but also in observing other progressive school policies. Zach’s caricature about the lack of imposing any opinion on anybody else is strikingly similar to the mockeries of political correctness that people often make. For example, a prevailing idea among many students is that deeming certain phrases inappropriate could somehow spiral out of control to the point where no one is allowed to say anything to each other without worrying about being offensive or subjugating. In this view, political correctness is the elimination of creative thought and communication. Hopefully, students will continue to understand the methodologies of these departments and programs well enough so that they do not view them as many do political correctness.
The DDP Debate Continues

March 24, 2006

by Justin Huang

Editor,

Regardless of their opinions, I admire those students-at-large who have expressed their views on DDP in the recent issue of TSL. Yes, they may have elevated me to become the poster child of DDP (which is far from an insult for me), and by doing so they tend to resort to false accusations and dismissals of my personal experiences, but what they ultimately achieve is an increase in awareness. Awareness and constructive discussion (not yelling at senators at Senate meetings) are what cause positive change to ultimately occur, since realization always eventually ends ignorance.

Since they addressed me personally (some even on a friendly first-name basis), I feel obligated to return the favor, and to clear up their assumptions and misgivings. To Dave Smith, I found it interesting how you referred to DDP as a “default PC response.” I enjoyed the most likely unintentional wordplay of “Pomona College” and “politically correct,” but beyond that I took great offense at the fact that you have the audacity to assume that I am being “PC” because I support something that I can fundamentally relate to on a personal level. And if you noted the poll results, Dave, you’d realize that a majority of knowledgeable students support DDP, thus making the “majority” you and your cohorts alleged were against DDP impossible. This is not being good with numbers, Dave.

I find it amusing that people like Joe Steinberg immediately assume that supporters of DDP are Bush-haters. This assertion directly offends me, Mr. Steinberg. It is easy to call DDP a liberal agenda because it allows you push the larger issues under a proverbial rock, which reassures you that since you are able to talk to a group of Asians who share the same career interests as you, you are completely aware and able to fully appreciate the differences of all those around you.

Conor Friedersdorf (who I applaud for continuing to contribute to the public forum even after his graduation) expresses a common misconception of my letter than I’ve had to clarify more than once. By relating my personal experiences as a new student at Pomona, I wanted to put forth the idea that our school is not the “safe haven” it is touted to be, and that beneath the surface there still exists overt ignorance and intolerance. My sole intention for that section of my letter was to burst the PC bubble that many believe Pomona dwells within. But moving on, I propose that Mr. Friedersdorf come back onto campus to really review what DDP would encourage. Yes, a fourth grade teacher could be able to explain “why racism is wrong” (mine sure didn’t), but DDP goes far beyond that underrated truth. It would endorse to a willing listener an appreciation and respect for those around you of different race, gender, orientation, beliefs, and backgrounds. Perhaps it is indeed simple and safe to think, “I’m not racist/homophobic/sexist/upper-class, thus I don’t need DDP.” Yet possibly the most ridiculous and hilarious point of his letter is that he implies that I should deny my race as an essential personal characteristic. I am proud of my heritage and I see it as part of my identity, Mr. Friedersdorf, and if you think that eliminating my recognition would end racism, I’ll have you know that you’re being quite silly.

I won’t address Ms. Tovbina, because unlike the aforementioned gentlemen, she failed to present a constructive and intelligent argument (I’m still not even sure what the heck her stance is), but instead submitted a rather pitiful attempt at parody. But I encourage the rest of the Pomona College student body to take after Dave, Mr. Steinberg, and Mr. Friedersdorf: educate yourselves in these issues that can truly impact great change. It doesn’t matter what your stance and views may be, as long as you can support a
cause that you are passionate about, a cause that you believe will better the community for those who follow you. This is an exciting opportunity! Don’t waste it!

Justin Huang ’09

South Campus Representative
A letter last week and an article last month stated that Senate lacks a mandate to decide on DDP. The Senate does not lack a mandate for DDP, so why was such a justification used in the first place? Never before has such a reason been used regarding any issue. Why now? Why this time? Nowhere is such a “mandate” mentioned in either the ASPC Senate Constitution or Bylaws.

We can assess the commitments of the Academic Curriculum Committee through institutional priority, not through rhetoric. Responsibility regarding the dynamics of difference and power clearly is not seen as important to the faculty on this committee. By these dynamics, I do not mean a narrow reading that only includes race, but that which acknowledges the intersections of class, gender, sexuality, ability, and etc. This knowledge that does not translate into economic benefits after our time here are marginalized. This knowledge is important because it integrates information in ways that we are not used to seeing and that we must be aware of. DDP allows for sites for communication, education, community, revolutions of sentiments, critical awareness, celebration, and self-expression. All these are severely lacking at Pomona College.

Historically, this knowledge has been excluded from the academy. They haven’t even been identified as forms of knowledge because they aren’t centralized or organized. They haven’t been handed to us in boxes with descriptions attached, and so we don’t know where to fit this knowledge. And there have been attacks from all sides, however critical several major institutions are in addressing this knowledge by prioritizing it within their breadth of study requirements. The General Education requirements as they currently stand do not reflect a “well-rounded curriculum,” so why not have an open curriculum?

There are no safe spaces in this environment where we can talk about our experiences without being threats. I am not a science or math student. That is not why I am here. I don’t want the powers that this institution breeds us to acquire. I do not want to tell you about getting a top consulting firm job after graduation where a majority of those whom I will be working with are people of color, so clearly I don’t need DDP. (P.S. Thank you for erasing class privilege.) I don’t want to be a part of that.

What does it mean when we are self-promoting to justify our power? What does it mean when we seek to invalidate each other’s experiences? It means that the model that we have set up is the source. Our education cannot only be analyzed in terms of economic gain. Steinberg’s assertions define success in the same way it has always been defined—by money and how much control one can have over an environment one will soon enter. There are so many oppositions we experience as students and there are many tensions out here because we can’t talk to each other. We are supposed to hate each other instead of supporting each other’s differences. Why do we have to have DDP in the current system? Because every other space is a power hungry exploitation—what is the problem?

What I am saying is easily co-optible not only by what has been favored as knowledge at Pomona, but also because discomforts and silences invading this environment are not being taken seriously.

Linda Rigas
Need More Science Before DDP

March 24, 2006

by Rachel Paterno-Mahler

Editor,

I have been following the DDP debate with interest. Mr. Schenkkan seems to argue that a specific course that fulfills a DDP requirement should be an integral part of a liberal arts education. In my experience as the sole female physics major in the junior and senior classes, I am negotiating differences in dynamics and power every day. I have the ability to work with everyone in the department, and my gender is not an issue. I do not need a class to tell me how to approach these differences, and I think that most of the Pomona student body has enough awareness of these issues that a required course is not necessary.

Also, adding a DDP requirement further exacerbates the short shrift given to the sciences by the new area requirements. As a science major, I have no choices such as “English for the Non-major” or “History for the Non-major.” That’s fine—I enjoy broadening my horizons and stepping outside of Millikan every once in a while. A quick glance over the courses that satisfy the Area 4 requirement (Physical and Biological Sciences) yields four classes for the non-major, and that’s just spring semester. One of these classes is Astronomy 6: Archeoastronomy. Under the PAC system, this class was PAC 9, which is “compare and contrast contemporary cultures.” Clearly, there should be a large difference between classes that compare and contrast contemporary cultures and classes that are part of the physical and biological sciences, but by virtue of the fact that Archeoastronomy is a class that starts with “Astronomy,” it is now a “hard science.” If we truly want Pomona students to be well-rounded, I propose that everyone should have to take an introductory science class—Physics 51, Chemistry 1, Geology 20, or Biology 40. Once this happens, then we can think about adding a DDP requirement.

Sincerely,

Rachel Paterno-Mahler, ‘07
The DDP Debate Continues

March 24, 2006

by Justin Huang

Editor,

Regardless of their opinions, I admire those students-at-large who have expressed their views on DDP in the recent issue of TSL. Yes, they may have elevated me to become the poster child of DDP (which is far from an insult for me), and by doing so they tend to resort to false accusations and dismissals of my personal experiences, but what they ultimately achieve is an increase in awareness. Awareness and constructive discussion (not yelling at senators at Senate meetings) are what cause positive change to ultimately occur, since realization always eventually ends ignorance.

Since they addressed me personally (some even on a friendly first-name basis), I feel obligated to return the favor, and to clear up their assumptions and misgivings. To Dave Smith, I found it interesting how you referred to DDP as a “default PC response.” I enjoyed the most likely unintentional wordplay of “Pomona College” and “politically correct,” but beyond that I took great offense at the fact that you have the audacity to assume that I am being “PC” because I support something that I can fundamentally relate to on a personal level. And if you noted the poll results, Dave, you’d realize that a majority of knowledgeable students support DDP, thus making the “majority” you and your cohorts alleged were against DDP impossible. This is not being good with numbers, Dave.

I find it amusing that people like Joe Steinberg immediately assume that supporters of DDP are Bush-haters. This assertion directly offends me, Mr. Steinberg. It is easy to call DDP a liberal agenda because it allows you push the larger issues under a proverbial rock, which reassures you that since you are able to talk to a group of Asians who share the same career interests as you, you are completely aware and able to fully appreciate the differences of all those around you.

Conor Friedersdorf (who I applaud for continuing to contribute to the public forum even after his graduation) expresses a common misconception of my letter than I’ve had to clarify more than once. By relating my personal experiences as a new student at Pomona, I wanted to put forth the idea that our school is not the “safe haven” it is touted to be, and that beneath the surface there still exists overt ignorance and intolerance. My sole intention for that section of my letter was to burst the PC bubble that many believe Pomona dwells within. But moving on, I propose that Mr. Friedersdorf come back onto campus to really review what DDP would encourage. Yes, a fourth grade teacher could be able to explain “why racism is wrong” (mine sure didn’t), but DDP goes far beyond that underrated truth. It would endorse to a willing listener an appreciation and respect for those around you of different race, gender, orientation, beliefs, and backgrounds. Perhaps it is indeed simple and safe to think, “I’m not racist/homophobic/sexist/upper-class, thus I don’t need DDP.” Yet possibly the most ridiculous and hilarious point of his letter is that he implies that I should deny my race as an essential personal characteristic. I am proud of my heritage and I see it as part of my identity, Mr. Friedersdorf, and if you think that eliminating my recognition would end racism, I’ll have you know that you’re being quite silly.

I won’t address Ms. Tovbina, because unlike the aforementioned gentlemen, she failed to present a constructive and intelligent argument (I’m still not even sure what the heck her stance is), but instead submitted a rather pitiful attempt at parody. But I encourage the rest of the Pomona College student body to take after Dave, Mr. Steinberg, and Mr. Friedersdorf: educate yourselves in these issues that can truly impact great change. It doesn’t matter what your stance and views may be, as long as you can support a
cause that you are passionate about, a cause that you believe will better the community for those who follow you. This is an exciting opportunity! Don’t waste it!

Justin Huang ’09

South Campus Representative
One Last Stand on DDP Curriculum Proposal

April 14, 2006

by Dan Kleinman

One week from now, on April 21, the faculty is scheduled to consider the question of what to do about dynamics of difference and power (DDP). On the one hand, the Curriculum Committee (CC) will propose a version of DDP that, while roundly affirming the college’s commitment to the importance of studying inequities as they relate to facets of personal identity, has no required component. On the other hand, there have been rumors that a professor outside the CC might propose a DDP overlay requirement of the sort that was originally suggested by students some ten years ago. While I am looking forward to the faculty meeting in question in much the same way that one might enjoy watching a car wreck, I would like to explain why a DDP requirement is ill-advised in both principle and practice and why even people who support a requirement should, at this point in time, be throwing their weight behind the CC’s proposal instead.

Perhaps most importantly, a DDP requirement is not supported by a clear majority of either students or faculty. Interestingly, faculty forums and discussions over the years have shown that a sizable number of professors who teach DDP courses are not in favor of a DDP requirement on the grounds that they wouldn’t want unwilling students in their classes and they feel it would put a large burden on a small number of shoulders.

As for the students themselves, polls over the years have shown the student body consistently split almost 50-50 on the issue. While, as some people have pointed out, the numbers become more telling when you break them down along racial lines, I don’t find that a particularly convincing argument either for or against a requirement since it reflects the fact that people tend to think that their priorities should be imposed on others. This is not to say that only a few students care about DDP issues, but that caring about such issues is not reason enough to mandate their study. As proof of this fact I refer you to the faculty discussions on general education last year, when every department and program wanted courses in their field to be required.

Speaking of general education, a DDP requirement is fundamentally incompatible with the new G.E. system. While I was an outspoken critic of the five-areas solution, its major strength was that it succeeded in balancing the faculty’s worries that students would avoid taking their classes against the notion that students should be able to exercise choice in their educations. A DDP requirement would significantly disrupt both that principle of choice and the state of equality that currently exists by virtue of the fact that every course fulfills exactly one requirement. It is not, as some people have written in these very pages, a way to achieve parity between departments and programs that offer DDP courses and those that don’t, because a state of parity is the status quo. Rather than putting those fields on an equal playing field with “classic” departments, a DDP requirement would actually elevate them to a level of higher importance, privileging them by making their courses count double in G.E. While I agree that it would be unfair if, say, Asian American Studies classes did not fulfill a distribution requirement, I simply do not see why they need to fulfill two.

There is an important question that must be asked of any proposed requirement: What is it supposed to accomplish? In the case of DDP, I am led to believe that its proponents have at least two main goals. First, they want the college to demonstrate, in the words of the original DDP proposal, an “official, academic commitment” to issues of personal identity and power dynamics. Second, while no one claims that a requirement would put an end to hate incidents on campus, they hope that it would sufficiently raise
awareness about these issues so that the community would be more knowledgeable and better-equipped to discuss them.

However, there are problems with both of these rationales. Different attempts to formulate a list of classes that would satisfy a potential requirement have yielded anywhere between 150 and 200 courses, depending on the criteria used. The way I see it, that practically screams “official academic commitment.” After all, the fact that Pomona and the 5-Cs offer so many different courses that deal with DDP issues is a clear signal that they already consider them a priority. But while that rationale is therefore irrelevant, the other is altogether misguided.

Given the sheer number of DDP courses throughout the curriculum, a majority of students—various calculations have put the figure at anywhere between 66 and 75 percent—already take at least one of them before graduating. Clearly, a requirement would be intended to cover the remainder. But is a student who does not take any DDP courses during their college career—and in all likelihood does so intentionally, given that one must actively work to avoid them—going to be affected by taking a single course? Probably not. And to those who say that a requirement would be worthwhile if it benefited even one student, I respectfully disagree: Pomona should not be in the business of enacting curricular reforms that determine graduation eligibility because there is a small chance that they might help a tiny fraction of the student body.

In place of a requirement, the Curriculum Committee will propose a model of DDP that affirms the college’s commitment to the study of dynamics of difference and power and provides a resource for students who wish to take courses that deal with them. If approved, it would add language to the course catalog explaining what DDP issues are and why the college expects students to be knowledgeable about them. That is not trivial: The language would be placed alongside the paragraphs that explain the purposes of general education and what it means to attend a liberal arts institution, signifying to the entire world that Pomona considers DDP an institutional priority. Furthermore, the Registrar’s Office would publish, each semester, a list of DDP courses (volunteered to be on the list by the faculty who teach them) that would be offered during the following semester, thus providing a resource for the community that would inform students’ enrollment decisions.

If you support a DDP requirement, there is one final reason to support the CC’s proposal when it comes up for a vote: While the faculty is notoriously difficult to predict, I am fairly certain that at this time, with this faculty and the current lack of any DDP “footholds” in the curriculum, a requirement proposal would probably be rejected. Long-term groundwork must be laid before it would have any chance of being approved. If that is your ultimate goal, the CC proposal can be viewed as a step in the right direction.

For all of the above reasons, I urge the faculty to approve the Curriculum Committee’s DDP proposal and, if one is brought forward, to reject any model of DDP that includes a course requirement.