

**GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
October 5, 2011  
Evald 305**

The meeting was called to order at 3:45 PM.

**Members Present:** Lendol Calder, Anne Earel, Margaret Farrar, Meg Gillette, Patrick Howell, Rick Jaeschke, Virginia Johnson, Brian Katz, Jason Koontz, Joe McDowell, John Pfautz, Rowen Schussheim-Anderson, Fred Whiteside, Xiaowen Zhang

**Guests Present:** Mary Koski

**AGENDA ITEM I: APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion-Katz, Second-Koontz**

**“To approve the September 28, 2011 minutes of the General Education Committee meetings.”**

**MOTION CARRIED.**

**AGENDA ITEM II: FACULTY SENATE REQUEST**

Rowen informed the committee that Randy Hengst invited the Gen Ed committee to report on the progress of the general education reduction proposal at the next faculty senate meeting on October 20, 2011. Margaret Farrar indicated that there ought to be a report from Gen Ed even if there is no handout to present, as the departments are holding off their own reductions until they hear from Gen Ed. Rowen indicated that the committee will work on the faculty senate presentation at next week’s Gen Ed meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM III: DISCUSSION OF REALIGNMENT DECISIONS**

Rowen Schussheim-Anderson asked the committee if they felt there is a sufficient amount of documentation that would support the committee’s proposed reductions. Most committee members felt that documentation currently exists that supports the rationale Gen Ed has for eliminating, changing or adding components to the proposed Gen Ed curriculum. Margaret Farrar reminded the committee that dramatic departures from the Draft 8 document need to be justified. For example, eliminating elements such as the “I” or “Q” or various skills would need justification. Pareena Lawrence’s directive to the Gen Ed committee was that the committee is bound by the Draft 8 document because that is Augustana’s statement of general education outcomes and desires. If the committee determines that something in Draft 8 is not important enough to keep, that is a fairly radical departure from the balance of what we are allowed to do. The committee likely does have documentation to support the elements of general education that are desirable to keep with the reduction, but likely does not have documentation or justification archived if the committee is proposing a dramatic departure from Draft 8.

Margaret Farrar expressed concern over what was arrived at in consensus at the September 28, 2011 meeting, as there was no mention of a discussion on staffing to accompany the gen ed decision put forth in the minutes of that meeting. Several committee members assured her that what they reached in consensus was really only a sketching out of their thoughts and not a proposal that was ready to present to the faculty. When asked what area concerns her with staffing, Margaret indicated that it was 3

terms of LSFY and 2-course learning communities. Staffing learning communities has always been a challenge, and it is inevitable that it will be more difficult when faculty only teach 6 courses as opposed to 7. This year there are 177 senior students who still need a learning community for winter and spring terms, and there are just over 200 seats open for learning communities. Many of those learning community seats are major-specific. Scheduling is going to become more difficult for students and staffing will become more difficult for administration. Margaret reminded the committee that Pareena Lawrence's email clearly stated that Gen Ed must come up with a plan that is able to be staffed.

Regarding the "D" and "G", Joe McDowell recalled that at the end of last year the committee was strongly considering the combining of "G" and "D" into one diversity suffix, although a new definition was still to be determined. Now it appears that both "G" and "D" are in the mix in the Gen Ed reduction proposal.

Lendol Calder pointed out that the response to the learning community question on the faculty survey was paradoxical. They are valued highly, however, no one wants to staff them. Rowen Schussheim-Anderson asked what the committee must do differently in coming up with a proposal. Margaret said the committee must make choices. For instance, if LPs are reduced dramatically, problems will arise for departments whose upper level course enrollments rely on learning perspectives. Six LPs seems manageable, having five is getting a little low, and four is not realistic. Rowen indicated that what the committee came up with at the last meeting was five LPs, not counting the one attached to LSFY 103. Margaret countered that one of those LPs is Christian Traditions, which is only coming from the Religion Department, which leaves four coming from departments across the college that are not part of the first-year program, as opposed to nine which is what we currently have. Therefore, a curriculum cannot be planned out that there is no staffing for.

The Gen Ed committee needs to choose between learning communities and a full-year LSFY sequence. In her September 25, 2011 email to the committee, Margaret Farrar explained the feasibility of this approach. Margaret indicated that making learning communities a requirement across the board sets us up for failure. The option of making LC one of several options students could choose, such as service learning, internships, international experiences, or a traditional learning community course like we currently have creates a demand. Fred Whiteside asked Margaret to explain the difference in the model she supports and how LCs are now. Margaret explained the proposed model is a single course that includes a service learning experience that would count for integrative/experiential learning and would be expanded to offer more options. Rowen Schussheim-Anderson asked if we would have to define it as 1-2 courses because students choosing the traditional LC would still need 2 courses. Margaret agreed, but indicated that what this does is lower the minimum commitment plane of Gen Ed requirements and will help Gen Ed make its case to the faculty. If the committee can support this expanded definition of experiential learning, Margaret indicated the concern with staffing should be resolved. Rowen Schussheim-Anderson spoke for the committee by agreeing that Margaret's idea is in the spirit of Gen Ed's discussions.

Brian Katz shared his view that the liberal arts is about multiple disciplines and that while experiential learning is interesting, he would rather focus on interdisciplinary methods. Suggestions he has put forth over the past two years are clusters, requiring a general education capstone and reducing somewhere else. His ideal learning community is students bringing tools from previous courses with them to their learning community so they begin to synthesize without being told that's what they are doing. Xiaowen Zhang said that area studies (Asian Studies, Latin, etc.) are interdisciplinary by definition. Brian Katz said that interdisciplinary majors and minors would satisfy and is the thing he is looking for.

Margaret Farrar recalled the Gen Ed committee talking about this last year and that the faculty rejected it. The committee tried to incorporate this integrative learning and broadness in the initial attempt to adjust learning communities. They included interdisciplinary majors and minors satisfying that requirement and faculty senate explicitly rejected it because they felt it was not general education. They felt Evergreen II was fine, as long as interdisciplinary majors and minors were not included. The Gen Ed committee was mystified by that response.

Joe McDowell explained that the response from faculty in these cases usually is because not all the faculty are gathered at the same place at the same time and when the final product is presented they have not heard the several presentations backing up the proposals, and also that it is difficult convincing the faculty as a whole that there are staffing problems associated with learning communities. He suggests that Gen Ed might make a case with the help of the registrar's office by offering charts of the maximum/minimum commitment of Gen Ed. The recent faculty survey helps make the case as well.

Margaret said that if this is named experiential high impact learning, that is one thing, but we also want to get at the interdisciplinary part. If the traditional learning community fulfills both, then other things can fulfill the interdisciplinary area. She added that as faculty focus on boxes, we need to urge them to think about what happens inside those boxes. For example, is anything done in LPs right now that encourages students to do integrative reflection? We would be well served by requiring students to do something inside LP courses that causes them to look forward or backwards.

Joe McDowell pointed out that this could be done if the LPs were part of a cluster. Instead of free-standing LPs, there would be clusters of LPs, or an interdisciplinary liberal arts minor that could be an option along with area studies minors, gender studies minor, or Africana studies, etc. Margaret indicated that clusters are not needed to accomplish that. Joe agreed, but added that a draft list of skills and dispositions, etc. would have to be written up for every LP. Brian Katz agreed that the list of skills and dispositions, etc. is needed because otherwise the added connections cannot be at all about the content. Students can reflect on the content they have had in the past, but the teacher does not have access to any common experiences or other courses that the student has had in the past. Brian indicated that what he loves about clusters is that faculty can talk to all the other teachers in their cluster to figure out what is going on, and the interdisciplinary minor faculty have occasional conversations about what is going on in their minor and that allows a different kind of connection. Those are the connections with synthesis of content lenses and coordination of faculty would be powerful.

Joe McDowell expressed his support. He feels strongly that one of the reasons the new AGES system was put in place is because faculty were unhappy with the old buffet system. Brian's ideas solves that problem in ways that the current AGES never did. By going to LPs instead of departmentally-determined suffixes, we did not solve the problems in ways we thought we were, but this does. This gets courses talking to each other. How? For example, there is an environmental cluster. The courses that apply for and join that cluster have documents and suggested topics, meetings, and faculty talk about what is going on in their classes. Teacher A might not know everything Teacher B is doing in their class, but knows in general that there is such a class in their environmental cluster. For instance just today Brian Katz shared with another faculty member who will have many of his students next term a discussion arising out of his class that day in an attempt to make connections .

Because some members were unfamiliar with the cluster idea, Joe McDowell explained it. Six LPs with some integrative component. Students take two of them which are intentionally linked (but are not called LC), or take three of them from a small group linked in a cluster where the faculty talk to each

other, or students take several of them from where you get an interdisciplinary major or minor, just something that allows the potential for intentional integration of multiple disciplinary lenses. Joe added that if we stick with these LPs, that is an 18-credit load, about what the interdisciplinary studies minors are. It would be 18 credits they take for their general education. Lendol Calder felt that scheduling would be very difficult both from the registrar's office and the student perspective, and asked if that could be addressed in our discussions

Margaret Farrar said that this essentially is what Gen Ed has always envisioned for LPs. There is nothing now that makes faculty talk to each other and there is no component in LPs that make that happen naturally. Although she likes the idea conceptually, logistically it is difficult to envision how it would look and how it would facilitate exactly the kind of interaction that is desired. Joe agreed that coming together among faculty in a cluster cannot be stipulated. LPs now have no intentionality, nothing connecting it with whatever version of LP you have. If we have at least a common theme, however, then some progress has been made. You would know that all the courses taken in sociology in a gender studies cluster are at least going to be dealing with those issues talked about when discussions about gender, even if the teachers have not shared a lot of information with each other. Rick Jaeschke asked if there would be enough for 2,000 students.

Lendol Calder said that he shared the desire for the hoped-for outcomes of this idea, but feels that this idea is extremely complicated and we do not have the faculty to support it. He also feels that if faculty do not share information already, that they should not be forced to do it.

Margaret Farrar said that we already have clusters that are interdisciplinary majors and minors: Environmental Studies is already a group that already has a minor. Women and Gender Studies already has a minor. Rowen suggested if students were in one of those minors it would be in the place of an LC. Margaret replied that is what we tried to suggest and it was soundly defeated last year.

Joe McDowell said that maybe if students were in one of those minors it would be in the place of the distribution requirement. We are distributing courses across these six areas, three of them twice, but we are not requiring they be linked to one another in any way. The idea of the clusters would be exactly what we already have, but instead of saying English Department courses, come up with five random LP courses that would be five courses that fit in these thematic clusters. The students would still be taking their courses across this range, we would still be teaching those courses, we would be just more intentional in developing those courses along thematic lines. He does not feel it is more complicated, just more intentional. Joe will staff the same number of general education courses, but instead of having groupings of courses that have happened randomly over the years, he will have a new set of courses that fit within these.

Margaret Farrar said again that it is difficult getting faculty to commit to intentionality right now. Asking them to do an additional component of intentional planning that affects staffing and all kinds of things, is that much harder. She does see some possibility in giving credit for interdisciplinary methods to programs that are already happening, and value that and acknowledge that as part of our program. She asked is there a way we can, for example, have a certain number of LPs and then that requirement is waived? Have that diversity of LPs waived if you are doing an interdisciplinary area studies major or minor. If you aren't doing one of those, you have to take 6, one from each category. If you are doing one of those, that sort of diversity is waived and you get credit for the whole basket.

Joe McDowell said that what we need to be focusing on is development and interdisciplinary in the breadth requirement, in the distribution requirement, which is what clusters do. Any of the existing

interdisciplinary studies groups or these new clusters would take the place of the current distribution system.

Fred Whiteside asked if we would get rid of LPs altogether. Joe explained that no, they would be grouped differently, so instead of a random PN and a random PL, we would have a PN and a PL that were talking about the same kind of material, except that they would not be at the same time, they wouldn't even have to be in the same term. It would be a stand-alone LC.

Concerns were expressed about making sure students get signed up for these, especially in since classes in the sciences and chemistry get locked in and are not offered every year.

Because of the concerns, both on the faculty end and on the student end, Margaret expressed her thought that the payoff is not great enough, and if it is made to be easy, it becomes too easy that we do not get anything in return that we are not getting now. If it is difficult you run in to problems. She suggested that we have LPs and said that LPs actually were a good idea regardless how they were executed. How can we make those things a richer experience of for our students, a more intentional experience for our students. We have the framework already.

Margaret said when discussions on the construction of LPs were happening, the view was much like LSFY—they had meetings, LSFY instructors would get together and talk about what happens in those classes during the course of the year. LP instructors would get together and have those conversations about what was happening in those classes in the same way. That hasn't happened, but that does not mean we can't think about things that can happen within that structure to make that a better structure.

Xiowan asked if Political Theory, which has a PH, can be categorized as integrative learning. It is political science, but is about human values. Margaret felt that is a "slippery" area.

John Pfautz said that last week the committee listed internship along with the experiential list until one member said it doesn't really fit and then it was tossed out. Does it fit? He senses that the committee is leaning the other direction towards Brian's suggestion of integrative learning, which isn't internship or service learning, so that is less. He asked if service learning and internship can be separated to let them be interdepartmental requirements and their own components, keeping them separate from general education, and use integrative learning as a stronger focus for Gen Ed. He explained further to say rename that box. We need a box of interdisciplinary learning. It covers LC and it covers clusters (or don't call them clusters), imply that this is an option, and keep it simple.

Rowen added that it might be worth asking the faculty again about choosing between LC or fulfilling that requirement through an interdisciplinary minor, or another suggestion, such as clusters. Margaret replied that if you only have LCs and interdisciplinary minors, you do not solve the staffing problem. Rowen suggested adding international study as well. Margaret said that would help.

Brian Katz offered a version of the clusters that reduces stress from the advisor. If contract minor was co-opted instead of "Tell us about coherency in your own education" it meets the interdisciplinary component and becoming a responsible learner and those other things. Rowen asked who they would tell and how do they tell? Brian replied that we would have to figure that out.

Lendol wanted to know the relationship between integrated learning and interdisciplinary, and asked if they are the same thing or slightly different things and which of those are we valuing most highly. Rowen said that interdisciplinary is probably going to be integrative, but doesn't know if integrative is

interdisciplinary. The one Brian Katz wants is when students have to bring something from multiple different disciplines from the past. This is his definition of liberal arts. Per Joe this is capstone. Rowen asked why the past is better than things happening right now. Brian said because you are being told exactly which skills you need to bring to the table as well as being responsible for collecting them and evaluating them. Lendol believes this is something that belongs with the majors.

Lendol added that anybody who is on the forefront of their discipline is interdisciplinary. This happens in his field just as a matter of course and believes it is true in biology, chemistry, and most other fields. People are interdisciplinary. It seems like this is what the majors do is give students tools and they bring them from course to course and go up the food chain of the major. It is going to happen if Gen Ed does not require it.

Joe McDowell added what Gen Ed needs to guarantee for the whole college the breadth question, but it will not happen spontaneously, which is why he is pushing this idea. The LP already has the structure in places and we should just make it better, which is exactly what Brian and he are saying about using clusters. We find a way of making courses relate to one another so students are able to relate their sciences and their social science and their humanities courses.

In order to discuss further, Rowen Schussheim-Anderson will try to look for the archives on clusters and asked anyone else who had them to forward to her.

Margaret expressed her concern that because not all departments are likely to step up to the plate and offer these clusters, we are asking those departments who are already contributing quite a lot: the bulk of LSFY, the bulk of LCs, the bulk of LPs, and now we ask the same departments to think about another structure.

Joe McDowell added that if he had a system of courses that were all about something, could, he thinks that would make his scheduling a little easier and make developing a class easier, especially for incoming adjunct faculty because you have a broad rubric.

Virginia Johnson said in some ways, the contract minor fascinates her because students make their own connections and their own clusters and it puts the onus on their own choices. Joe asked if that would be the distribution system? A kind of intentional thing that the student develops in their first year. Lendol asked what would happen if you required all students to put their own together. Would they really do it?

Brian indicated that he was not suggesting that the cluster idea correlated to all of the LPs, but a maximum of half. If they take one LP each their first year, then they still have another half with which they could be intentional or not. He did not intend for it to sound like he was talking about then all fitting together. Advisors would tell students to choose 3 from a cluster of 6.

Lendol asked what would happen if 80 percent of our students had no interest in the clusters we offered.

Meg Gillette asked if clusters could be developed but not required. Several members were in support of this, especially since it does not involve the advisor and it is not being mandated. Also this gives the clusters an opportunity to be tested to see if they work or not. Where this could be placed, however, (in high impact category, integrative/interdisciplinary category) was not resolved.

Lendol Calder then indicated that he feels the LC can be eliminated. Margaret reviewed the faculty survey and by looking at what counts as a high priority to faculty, LC is not one of them. This survey was taken by 90 out of 180 faculty. Lendol feels that there will not be many faculty in the remaining 90 who will support LCs.

Rick Jaeschke asked if Christian Traditions is Gen Ed's domain. Margaret answered yes, and added that now is the time to act on this. There is strong support for global diversity. Rowen asked if a committee member was willing to write up a suggestion for how that could look. Rick asked for more discussion on the issue because of its complexity. Margaret suggests that it would benefit the Gen Ed committee to discuss this with the Religion Department.

Fred Whiteside asked if eliminating LCs is a change in Draft 8. Margaret indicated that it is a big changes and it would need to be justified.

Rowen reminded the committee discussion will continue on the list of things in 103 and whether or not 102 and 103 will get LPs, and if they will still have content attached to them.

#### **AGENDA ITEM V: ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Koski  
Academic Affairs