

GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

May 11, 2011

Olin 304

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

Members Present: Stefanie Bluemle, Meg Gillette, Randall Hall, Alli Haskill, Carrie Hough, Virginia Johnson, Brian Katz, Jason Koontz, Joe McDowell

Guests Present: Mary Koski, Mark Salisbury

AGENDA ITEM I: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion-Koontz, Second-McDowell

“To approve the General Education Committee meeting minutes of April 20, 2011.”

MOTION CARRIED TO APPROVE MINUTES OF 4-20-11 as presented.

Motion-Koontz, Second-Hall

“To approve the General Education Committee meeting minutes of April 27, 2011.”

Discussion: The April 27, 2011 minutes should reflect that Mary Koski was not in attendance and the date of the minutes should be changed from April 24, 2011 to April 27, 2011.

MOTION CARRIED TO APPROVE MINUTES OF 4-27-11 as amended.

New Gen Ed committee members for 2011-12 were announced: Rowen Schusheim-Anderson and Rick Jaeschke (at-large members), and Xiaowen Zhang, filling in for Carrie Hough fall term. The fall term replacement for Alli Haskill is to be determined. The committee members commended Alli Haskill for leading them through a difficult year on the General Education Committee.

Virginia Johnson reported that in fall term, four classes will be piloted and targeted students will be invited to enroll. It is hoped that these courses will help reduce the number of students in jeopardy of academic suspension. Students and their parents will receive an explanation of the course, and will be told of the advantages of taking the course. These are regular LSFY 101 courses, they have a 15-student cap and are closed to non-LSFY students. It previously was a required course and students were not resentful about taking it because they were being taught like in any other class. They are rigorous, and faculty are more intentional and more detail oriented. In Virginia’s experience, if students do not think they need the extra help fall term, they usually realize they do by winter term. At this time there is no follow-up course scheduled for 102. The four faculty involved will meet several times to discuss what might be best practices for these students. Since a couple of the instructors also teach additional sections of LSFY, there may be enough data generated to begin assessing what will work for these courses, and potentially some of the intentional things done in this course might become part of a revision of LSFY.

Carrie Hough shared a difficult experience she had encouraging a student to take the ENGL 111 class resulting in zero success. Because it is a hard conversation for a faculty member to have, she asked if the Director of Advising could be charged with this task or could it be include in first-year advising training? There should be some method to teach people how to have this discussion with students or how to facilitate the issue. Virginia agrees this would be a good thing to talk to advisors about.

AGENDA ITEM II: NEW BUSINESS

A. Learning Perspectives Approval

Motion-Katz, Second-Koontz

“To approve a “PP” for THEA 201: Analysis and Research in Theatre in Performance for Non Majors [Irelan].”

MOTION CARRIED.

Learning Perspectives & Suffix Approval.

Motion-McDowell, Second-Koontz

“To approve a “PN” and “I” for BIOL 180: Fundamentals of Ecology [Dziadyk].”

Jason Koonz said that this course has been on the books for a long time, with little demand for it. With the addition of the Environmental Studies major, it has now become an elective for students hoping for some ecology without actually taking hard science classes. Bo Dziadyk will flesh out a more detailed syllabus before class begins.

MOTION CARRIED.

B. Election of General Education Committee Chair for 2011-2012

Alli Haskill nominated Rowen Schussheim-Anderson for Chair of the committee. Rowen has previous general education experience and is willing to serve. No other nominations were brought forth.

Motion-Haskill, Second-McDowell

“To approve Rowen Schussheim-Anderson as the 2011-2012 Chair of the Gen Ed Committee.”

MOTION CARRIED.

Now that the calendar issues has been voted on, Alli mentioned that cuts will have to be deeper than on a semester model. Margaret Farrar will provide Rowen and the Gen Ed committee continued support throughout the year. Alli Haskill has a meeting planned with Margaret Farrar soon to discuss a timeline and to review some of Gen Ed’s recent discussions. Plans to call a faculty forum by Gen Ed is planned for early in the fall, and members were encouraged to think about Gen Ed reductions over the summer and to think about whether or not to seek faculty input through a survey before calling the faculty forum. Alli suggested additional summer homework for Gen Ed, such as a drafting an email that might be sent to faculty, Gen Ed survey questions, etc. Joe McDowell agrees having a faculty forum early in the year would be desirable, as he has had faculty members approaching him already with their ideas. Their ideas were good and their interest positive, and he feels faculty would be willing to attend a faculty forum to discuss this.

The committee was then asked by Alli to respond to the following. Should Gen Ed:

- Send a survey before the forum showing rationale and pros and cons to see where priorities lie.
- Send out a data and rationale document for Gen Ed's reduction proposal and then follow up with a survey.
- Host a mini-workshop that focuses on one topic at a time. A survey requires Gen Ed to have an idea so people can respond to it. But if faculty meet on one issue at a time, there is a potential for fresh ideas to come forth. A survey does not invite ideas readily.
- Put out a call for ideas for a Gen Ed program. Faculty could be told that the call would be coming in a couple weeks so they have time to think about a response, and then be asked to complete a survey.
- Break the survey into categories (LSFY, LP, etc). Faculty could be asked "If you could choose only 4 of these 5 options, what would you choose?"

A goal Brian Katz hopes to achieve is to read current general education research and start the year sharing parts of that. Brian felt that Mark Salisbury's comments at Making Learning Visible were noteworthy, and will share a copy of that talk with the Gen Ed committee. One of Brian's concerns with the NSSE survey is that it shows that external structure of general education is not the way to approach the issue. AlliHaskill agreed with Brian, but indicated that Gen Ed's charge is to look at the external structure. Joe McDowell added that was Gen Ed's charge from 6/35, but before 6/35, the Gen Ed committee was in agreement that some of the program's parts weren't working desirably. For example, intentional connections in the distribution system. Gen Ed has been assessing and advising all along, and he hopes Gen Ed does not become too 6/35 driven.

Mark Salisbury commented that as he perceives the way the Gen Ed committee is thinking... that some of these external structures more successfully provide a framework for delivering grades that really matter. Sometimes it is useful that those structures really work well. And at other times, maybe the way we do learning communities is a square peg round hole thing. You can toggle back and forth between which structures work for delivering experiences and which structures don't. He believes it is smart to think about this in terms of: What experiences do we need to deliver and what's the best way to it? The conversations he hears within the discussions of "What course are we going to take away from this major? What are we taking away from that major? What course or experience do we take away from Gen Ed?" sometimes haven't included that we all think that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. He feels Gen Ed can be an effective leader in this. It may be that some majors really need a certain type of general education experience more so than other majors because they get it in their major. Take, for example, a student majoring in Anthropology. Because of the way the Anthropology major is constructed, having another required course in general education may not be necessary, as that individual needs more quantitative reasoning. Mark's comments are based on his observations and discussions with people starting to talk about this.

Virginia Johnson offered a comment that the cluster idea with learning perspectives attached might fall into integrated learning. Randall Hall added that we need to move away from the structure starting with the goals and think about what we want the learning outcomes to be and figure out what we want students to do: write and to think quantitatively. Learning communities, for example...the goal of community might already be built in. We need to come up with learning outcomes. Brian Katz reminded us of Margaret's goal of tying everything to assessment.

Carrie Hough asked if there is a document of Gen Ed's 2011-12 goals that Gen Ed could work from and build on towards those goals. It was also suggested that the committee refamiliarize themselves with the GEWG document.

Mark Salisbury added that it makes sense to go back and figure out within this new framework, How does Gen Ed best contribute to those outcomes? Consider the suggestion about the idea that we do community pretty well because of how this institution is set up, and suggest that Gen Ed maybe could tag-team with some things that could or should be going on in the co-curricular shop to be more effective.

Virginia added that while we do community, we don't do academic community very well, but maybe we could get co-curricular. Joe Mc Dowell added that one thing we've done well co-curricularly is the Honors Program. There is a difference between what Logos and Foundations kids look like in the spring and what the other incoming first-year students look like in spring. They've had a different experience. It's not just about the kind of work they have done. It's about being together and sharing experiences and being able to talk about Kierkegaard outside of class. They have a common language, they melt together and become a community in a way that just doesn't happen in learning communities.

Mark Salisbury is trying to work with the co-curricular side of what we do to get students to more originally think about how we do learning and how do we start thinking about synergy. There's a real desire to do that and a need for an invitation or something to start that conversation in a meaningful way. By co-curricular Mark means Res Life, student services, student activities. He adds, students are doing a lot of learning, but we don't know exactly what they are learning or how they are learning it. We have not had as much intentionality there as we have in our curricular construction. Joe McDowell added that the Gen Ed committee is a faculty committee and are not in control of what students do outside of class. Mark feels Gen Ed could be a contributor.

Virginia Johnson discussed with residence hall directors recently the idea of the directors playing a role in helping their students to be students. She asked what their bulletin boards said, and was told they were not academically-oriented. When she asked then to think about adding academic achievements of their students and adding academic events to the bulletin boards, they were very receptive. The residence hall directors did not realize that they could be part of the academic program.

Mark Salisbury indicated there are ways to create synergy that don't take resources but would help students to weave into who they are and how they see the world, and get it to be more

effectively a part of who they are instead of something they've learned...the very things general education is about, and the things we all care about. Rowen Schussheim-Anderson believes that task would need to be charged to a separate committee, and is not the charge of the Gen Ed committee.

Randall Hall said that in this co-curricular way, it is not so much about identifying objectives or checking things off, but is more about creating a culture of learning and integration among students. Once you get culture in place, students carry it in every aspect of their lives.

Meg Gillette mentioned that Ken Brill's office is bringing in speakers and is having conversations on labels. His office has been amazing at mobilizing resources and getting students involved. Meg wishes there was more of a relationship between student affairs and academics.

Mark Salisbury added that it doesn't need to be much more than messages and communication to start to turn the ship or plant the seed, and eventually there is a rise to critical mass. It has to start somewhere, from more than one person. It has to come from a group. A group that represents something, that has some level of broad-based credibility and value, and it has to be something that other people would buy in to. It does not have to be anything extreme. The planter of the seed does not have to be the one to carry it through to fruition, but this is something that can add in important ways to the effect of Gen Ed.

Joe McDowell finds this idea fascinating, but wonders how much of this can come out of Gen Ed. He wonders about how students get interested in things on campus. Augie Acres and Farm-To-Fork were started by a group of individuals, kids who like each other and have the same ideas, etc....not Gen Ed.

Randall Hall ties this with dispositions. If that is redefined by Gen Ed and a memo goes out to other activity groups asking how their projects fit in, we could get everybody on the same page for a common goal and let it go.

Joe McDowell thinks this could tie into the cluster idea. If students are repeatedly exposed in six courses spread out over a period of time, eventually some of that stuff makes sense and they start making connections. It might more successfully become part of the dispositions we're thinking of. So that might be where Gen Ed comes in. He asked the committee if they still like the cluster idea.

Mark Salisbury added that even if the cluster is just two courses. As long as both instructors are aware of the experiences those students were involved in in the residence halls and student activities, that essentially creates an environment in which they had to have diverse interaction for a sustained period of time with people who are different than them. The two of them tag-team together so that the whole of the experience does a lot of the deep learning for you.

Joe McDowell said that Gen Ed's idea of clusters are you have some number of theme-related cluster of courses, e.g., social justice, environment, etc. But if the co-curricular side of the

campus knows that there are these six clusters, they can invent all kinds of stuff to tap into or to capitalize on what they already do.

Mark Salisbury said that from having conversations on campus, that there are people within the co-curricular shop who are hungry to participate in something like this, but they need a directive from someone to do it. Brian Katz indicated that Evelyn Campbell has fantastic ideas and if she was given something from Gen Ed telling her this is what we're thinking of, she'd run with it.

Joe McDowell suggested that Gen Ed should begin to think about what clusters to put together to put out for comments. This would be a good summer task for the Gen Ed committee. Virginia Johnson suggested that a good place to start would be with the Wish List.

Alli Haskill announced that the Gen Ed committee would try to meet a couple times over the summer.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Koski