

**GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**August 24, 2011**

**Evald 21**

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 PM.

**Members Present:** Margaret Farrar, Meg Gillette, Rick Jaeschke, Virginia Johnson, Brian Katz, Jason Koontz, Pareena Lawrence, Ellen Lose, Joe McDowell, John Pfautz, Rowen Schusheim-Anderson, Fred Whiteside, Xiaowen Zhang

**Guests Present:** Mary Koski

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The May 11, 2011 General Education Committee meeting minutes were not available for approval.

**AGENDA ITEM I: INTRODUCTIONS**

Members introduced themselves. Rowen Schusheim-Anderson announced that Joe McDowell will serve as Gen Ed Chair the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of winter term, and she welcomed Dean Pareena Lawrence.

**AGENDA ITEM II: NEW BUSINESS**

LSFY 102: From Wonderer to Wanderer, European Romanticism [Vivian]

This proposal was not discussed due to the absence of the LSFY 102 Approval Form.

**AGENDA ITEM III: 6/35 CONVERSATION**

Dr. Lawrence addressed the Gen Ed committee about their work in the process of preparing a Cabinet and Board-ready proposal for 6/35 curriculum realignment. EPC's suggestion to her in this matter was to propose that EPC oversee Student Learning Group 1 and Gen Ed oversee Student Learning Group 2. Although this is a logical option, Dean Lawrence did not propose it because both committees have ongoing agendas and their own work to do, and asking both to take on this additional task would be too much. EPC requested to be part of the line of communication with the Student Learning Groups. Dean Lawrence indicated that communication is of utmost importance in this process and assured them that this would happen. The Nominations and Rules committee will send a call to faculty asking for willing participants to serve on the Student Learning Group of their choice. Both Gen Ed and EPC will select their faculty representatives who will serve on the steering committee. The faculty liaison from each of the SLGs will be selected by the membership of each of the SLGs.

Dr. Lawrence asked the committee to think about who might be the liaison to the steering committee from the Gen Ed committee, as well as if there is somebody from Gen Ed who wants to nominate themselves to Nominations and Rules.

Brian Katz asked if the “Proposed Changes for General Education” proposal would come from this committee. Margaret Farrar replied affirmatively. She added that the Gen Ed committee’s work in the early part of the year will be front heavy. The Gen Ed committee will develop two proposals: one for the 6/35 changes, and the other for changes that the Gen Ed committee wants to make regardless. Both of these proposals should be completed (at least in draft form) by mid-year. The Gen Ed committee will be coming up with their general education reduction proposal and feeding that to Student Learning Group 1, and Student Learning Group 1 will in turn, provide feedback to the Gen Ed committee. Margaret Farrar emphasized Dr. Lawrence’s point that communication with all constituencies is of utmost importance.

To bring the new Gen Ed committee members up to speed, Margaret Farrar explained that over the past few years, the Gen Ed committee has been discussing areas of general education that aren’t working as effectively as desired. She indicated that the proposal Gen Ed hopes to make in addition to the 6/35 proposal will include areas such as: D and G, assessment, the skills matrix, senior inquiry, learning communities and learning perspectives. Margaret Farrar commended the members of last year’s Gen Ed committee on the tremendous progress they made during the past year. Much of the work for both proposals is already done.

Dr. Lawrence stated her preference would be for the Gen Ed committee to work on the 6/35 curricular reform proposal first because departments cannot redesign their majors until they have information for general education.

Margaret Farrar indicated that the exact number of credits general education was charged with reducing (one-third), is still a subject of debate on campus. People define one-third differently and people have disagreed about how much overlap there is for various things (double dipping). The departments are inclined to want us to reduce less or more depending on how those things are defined. Before forwarding the proposal to 6/35, Margaret will have some projection scenarios available. These will be typical student experiences including their general education courses through to completion of their major(s) requirements; for example, “Here is what a Biology major’s schedule would look like.” If we can say that with some confidence, then that goes a long way towards answering that question. Margaret will figure out the best way to get that information with the help of the Registrar’s office. This can give people a sense of double dipping as it is likely to occur, and is something that the Gen Ed committee should take the responsibility of doing. One of the things Margaret has heard from Liesl (but need the numbers to back it) is that students do not get any LP credit for learning communities except for the LC credit because most of them have completed all their LPs before the time they get to their LC. If that is the case, there is no double dipping and it would be good to have numbers to help think about that. We must be cognizant about the numbers when we are making determinations on what to cut.

Margaret added that another matter implicit in this is how many seats we are losing, and how many will be needed, and what does that do to departments invested in general education who offer those courses?

Could this have implications for jobs? Margaret Farrar indicated that lines are not at issue. If a faculty member is not teaching an upper level course, their load is shifted elsewhere, likes to LSFY or an LC. Neither Ellen Hay nor Jeff Abernathy gave Margaret any indication that any tenure line was in jeopardy. What is in jeopardy, however, is how their load looks. Dr. Lawrence clarified that this is true for current faculty; however future tenure lines may be a different issue.

Rowen Schussheim-Anderson believes it is important not to make mandates to departments, but to be informed of their needs. She feels that Gen Ed might do well to solicit some buy-in before the proposal gets too far ahead, and suggested Gen Ed members meeting with each other's divisions and gather input, because if the committee knows up front what departments do not want to give up, then the departments are not as likely to "blame" the Gen Ed committee for making them give up this or that.

Margaret Farrar expressed caution doing this. Over the years the Gen Ed committee has heard very contradictory information from faculty about Gen Ed generally. For instance, people are very supportive of learning communities but have no time to teach them. She also does not want to discount the work that the committee has already done and does not think it is necessary to reinvent the wheel for some of these discussions that have already occurred.

Rick Jaeschke asked for a background discussion summary on eliminating the investigative lab. Brian Katz said that the committee felt that senior inquiry contains the designing and asking of the big questions. Rick was told that the committee still intends to keep the PN.

Learning communities were discussed; how students are not receiving credit for the LPs in learning communities because by the time they take their learning community, they have already fulfilled their LP requirements. This is a topic Margaret Farrar hopes to have with Liesl Fowler. Rowen Schussheim-Anderson asked what if learning communities were moved down? Is a forum for learning communities and LSFY in order? Margaret Farrar said that one of the things she suggests is to very soon send out a survey asking faculty to rank their preferences of what they want to keep from this program. That would give Gen Ed a good sense of where faculty opinion lies. She stated that the Gen Ed committee would be far better off having a quorum if they have a more fleshed out proposal that people have something to hang their hat on.

Brian Katz wonders if the issues of not getting credit for LPs in the LCs is an advising problem. Margaret Farrar countered that it is a demand problem. Margaret said this is a good example of why we need more concrete information on double dipping. We operate on the assumption that we have to reduce in order to meet that threshold given by 6/35. If there is more double dipping happening than we think there is, we've been pretty conservative. If there is more double dipping going on than we are acknowledging, then we might not have to do anything with learning communities since people reworked their learning communities to meet these guidelines that we came up with a few years ago. Margaret is not sure the faculty is willing or able to rework general education courses at this moment in time because they are worried more about majors and restructuring their major curriculum. Many of them developed several general education course over the past five years, and she is not sure they want to redesign gen ed courses (LSFY, LCs, courses developed for gen ed population). Rowen suggested this could be a survey question "Would you be willing to convert your course?"

Joe McDowell said that the purpose of learning communities is integrative learning and community building. Literature suggests that learning communities usually are part of the first-year program and part of retention at other institutions. If these were moved into the first-year program here, then students would end their first year with this community-building experience, and students that have community building experience are happier.

Margaret brought up Mark Salisbury's work on diversity data. It is interesting because one of the things it shows is that despite the rigorous changes we've made with D and G, we have not seen a tremendous amount of growth among students in this regard. Mark points out and NSSE data supports that a container of a course is not what matters, but what's inside the course does. So as we think about reconfiguring D and G we might want to think about the kind of assignments that are included. Your instructor must have an assignment where you're actually engaging different or global differences in such a way so that the students are doing something instead of this box-of-learning context. Margaret Farrar explained that that is exactly the kind of criterion that we might include in a revised version of this. The courses would be stronger and better and we wouldn't struggle anymore with those designations.

Rowen asked if there were any volunteers for the steering committee or nominations for Student Learning Group 1. Brian Katz expressed his willingness to sit on the steering committee. Virginia Johnson volunteered to be nominated for the Student Learning Group 1 as long as it is acceptable that she is an administrator who teaches. Margaret Farrar assured Virginia that she would emphasize to Nominations and Rules that Virginia has the full support of the faculty on the General Education committee.

It was asked what the timeline will be, and Margaret indicated that Gen Ed will need to get the proposal out very quickly. Margaret will prepare a draft of the survey and will ask Gen Ed for assistance in making final alterations.

#### **AGENDA ITEM IV: ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Koski  
Academic Affairs