

**GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
August 31, 2011
Evald**

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 PM.

Members Present: John Bagnuolo, 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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Because of issues with Google docs, the May 11, 2011 and August 24, 2011 General Education Committee meeting minutes were not available for approval.

AGENDA ITEM I: INTRODUCTIONS

Members introduced themselves. New SGA members are John Bagnuolo and Patrick Howell.

AGENDA ITEM III: FACULTY SURVEY

Back in 2009, sixty faculty members responded to a survey indicating that the most important feature of the general education program was the first-year writing course. Either LSFY 102 and 103 also were viewed as important as well, but beyond that there was little agreement about what we should prioritize. Margaret indicated that this is important to keep in mind as we compile responses for our current survey. Attention should be paid to faculty perspectives, especially if they are ensuing something, but we should let their responses tell us what we should do. The 2009 survey indicated no specific problems with general education.

Margaret asked for feedback on the faculty survey.

- Could we shape 102 and 103 the same way as the writing program? Margaret said we could ask for skills developed over the course of a year or in years 2 or 3. John Pfautz added that there are about 60 faculty who are familiar with the first-year sequence. If the survey gets too specific, we will lose respondents.
- Make last trimester in first year a summative learning community experience
- Make some courses interdepartmental course
- Assign learning perspectives to some

Margaret feels that departments almost always respond with their self-interest in mind, and not the interest of general education; for instance, they might say 'good idea' if courses were linked to a major. Perhaps a better way would be for them to rank or evaluate each option by preference.

- List two sets of ranking questions; the second one could list a few of the new ideas for gen ed.

- Ask what faculty absolutely want to keep

Xiaowen asked what objectives the Gen Ed committee hopes to achieve with the faculty survey, and if the results will be shown to faculty. Margaret feels the survey will give Gen Ed the sense of what general education requirements the faculty want to get rid of and those they value. Their feedback will serve as an advisory function, not a faculty vote. Margaret asked the committee how they felt about sharing the results, and consensus was to wait and see what the results are first. It may be worth giving them censored feedback, especially if the data is good.

Margaret urged the committee to act quickly on this.

The committee agreed that:

- that learning perspectives will be reduced from 9 to 6
- the committee wants to keep a full-year sequence of LSFY (or list two options being considered, or indicate that two scenarios will be revealed: 1) assume LS is the same; 2) have a two-courses LS sequence rather than three) (Rowen questioned whether this should be relayed to the faculty before the survey is sent to give them time to think about it).

The survey might have two or more scenarios where we say:

Proposal #1	Proposal #2
3 LSFY	2 LSFY & an LC

or whatever the two options are.

Meg Gillette has not heard a lot of support from this committee for the three-course LSFY sequence with the third being the learning community. She suggests the survey language read that Gen Ed plans on a three-course LSFY, but that the plan for learning communities is still debatable. Margaret added that staffing and commitment to the courses are still the biggest obstacles to learning communities. Meg Gillette shared her research that 64 percent of LSFY courses are taught by adjunct or part-time people. Even if every English department member taught two sections, half of the courses would still be taught by a part-time or adjunct faculty member. Most departments contribute to teaching 101; (some do not, however) and although there has been discussion about mandating every department to teach LSFY, it is something the administration is hesitant to do, especially at this time when they are re-doing their majors. There simply are not enough people. Margaret was asked what other colleges do, and she reported that Augustana is an outlier because of its trimester system. Other colleges offer a writing course and some sort of seminar.

Brian Katz would find the survey more valuable if the faculty were asked more about their values than about which specific things they want or do not want. He said that we are going to expect ourselves to look at educational research before we make any decisions about structure, and he feels uncomfortable asking faculty things, and not be clear of us asking them how they like to spend their time as opposed to what they think is best, unless we are going to ask them to support any claims about what is good for our students. We are framing the question, asking them whether or not they want to keep this box or that box. Brian feels we can clearly achieve the breadth requirement in fewer than 9 courses, but is hesitant to say “We’re going from 9 down to 6.” He would much rather us to find a way to organize those and if we say we are going from 9 to 6 it sounds like we are promising; all we are going to do is tell faculty that we are offering less of those.

Margaret thought Brian's point was a good one, and in response to that, asked the committee to remember that we are having this discussion about reduction because the "big picture" discussion is about broadening students' learning. Gen Ed will have work to do on this later this year, and it is her hope that we will work towards deepening general education courses so learning outcomes are reflected in courses we are prescribing. Moving from 9 to 6 means we need to improve student learning and deepen those skills we want our students to achieve in our courses.

Joe McDowell reiterated that he favors the third LSFY course as a learning community because it does deepens student learning. It would be a summative experience that brings focus and rationality to the first-year experience due to its reflective elements. He suggests using the term "summative learning experience" in the faculty survey.

John Pfautz spoke against the first-year learning community experience. He feels students do not experience integration and reflection until their junior year and forcing first years to make these connections might not produce the benefit we hope for. He also feels that he personally would not be inclined to teach a lower-level learning community course.

Fred Whiteside suggested that the HEPE requirement could be dropped for credit, but still be taught as an elective with no graduation requirement attached to it. Because most students are involved in at least one kind of physical activity already, a method could be implemented that would verify that the requirement was met and would be recorded on their transcript.

John Pfautz asked if the committee has made a final decision on the G and D. Meg Gillette explained that the Gen Ed committee wants to strengthen the global/diversity requirement to make those things happen in the classroom by redefining those guidelines. Margaret suggested defining it as "inner cultural competency requirement" which translates that the student actually is doing something as opposed to reading about it. Rowen expressed concerns about graduating students without taking something that was global.

Anne Earel suggested that since we are reducing the number of courses, we have a responsibility to deepen the remaining courses. Gen Ed should have the goal of revisiting all learning perspective requirements to ensure that more is being asked for all courses that have perspectives. Margaret indicated that all classes would have to reapply through the governance system again if perspectives and suffix requirements were changed.

AGENDA ITEM IV: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Koski
Academic Affairs