

**GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 7, 2011
Evald 305**

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

Members Present: John Bagnuolo, 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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion-Katz, Second-Zhang

“To approve the May 11, 2011 minutes of the General Education Committee meeting.”

MOTION CARRIED.

Motion-Katz, Second-Pfautz

“To approve the August 24, 2011 minutes of the General Education Committee meeting.”

MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS: LEARNING COMMUNITY PROPOSAL

Motion-Pfautz, Second-Jaeschke

“To approve learning community “Music and Movement in the Classroom” [Ellis/Tendall]

EDMU 386 – Elementary Music Methods & Materials

HEPE 236 – Music and Dance for Educators

MOTION CARRIED.

AGENDA ITEM II: OVERVIEW OF GEN ED’S WORK LAST YEAR

Margaret brought up a point of discussion that Augustana must ensure it is not only accountable to the campus community and producing a good report for the Board, but also accountable to the Higher Learning Commission and the Board of Education, who both feel they have control over curriculum and who provide standard as what can count as a credit. For example, we have to make a case for this justification: what is different about our courses that it is not credit inflation? The Department of Education strictly equates seat time with credits. We reject that in the 6/35 proposal for a good reason, but we must make sure we are within the range that they find acceptable. We need to make a convincing case for the Higher Learning Commission that what we do benefits students. Just indicating that we are going to 4 credits, but nothing will change will not be acceptable.

Even though currently our seat time per credit is very high, the new reduction will bring us down to a low level and that is problematic. We have to be conscientious about this as we move forward. Some schools solve this dilemma of satisfying the Department of Education by adding time in the classroom of five minutes. If we do not do that, we need a robust justification why this is not credit inflation.

John Pfautz indicated that the faculty wanted to go to four credits because the average student time out of the classroom is low, about 10 hours a week. We can now require more reading and justify this by

saying the student is doing more work for this class. Margaret agreed and said that is why Steve Bahls said that the faculty has made a baseline case for this move. Mark Salisbury has been telling us that “the container matters less than what is happening inside the classroom.” In this case advocate for as we do a proposal: let’s build in assessment, like the IDEA Center tool that looks at what students think happens in class, so at the end of class, students have to say “we did a lot of reading...” This will help to make our case and as an added benefit, will help with assessment.

AGENDA ITEM III: DISCUSSION OF EMIL KRAMER’S GEN ED REVISION PROPOSAL

Emil Kramer’s 8-21-11 email to the Gen Ed committee was read. He believes that LSFY courses should count for something other than LSFY by incorporating LSFY courses into major/minor requirements. Margaret indicated that it is reminiscent of one of the things Gen Ed talked about previously: the third course would be an introduction to the major. Meg Gillette clarified that it wouldn’t count towards a major, rather toward six different departments, more interdisciplinary. Brian Katz did not understand Emil’s last claim that “a great deal of the pain inherent in the 6/35 proposal might be avoided,” and wonders if this is pushing more low level courses into each major. Margaret agreed that the 6/35 changes will affect small departments with only a couple members. She added that there is such an imbalance of who offers LSFY and what the first-year majors are. Thirty-nine percent of incoming students claim they are on a biology or premed track, which is up from twenty-nine percent last year. It is a need that is out of whack with who offers LSFY. Jason Koontz attributes this to the move towards the health care field and where the jobs are. Lendol Calder said then the link of LSFY to the majors will not happen as long as people in the sciences are not involved with LSFY. John Pfautz asked if an individual department could make their own decision about this matter. Margaret said that this matter did come up a few years ago and the Gen Ed committee at that time said no because it would be so unevenly distributed and would benefit some students but not others. Perhaps adding a G or D in the spring and building that into the skills matrix would be easier than adding a learning perspective designation for those courses. Last year’s students perceived it as a diversity class anyway.

The consensus of the committee is that they cannot support Emil Kramer’s proposal.

AGENDA ITEM IV: FACULTY SURVEY

The draft faculty survey was distributed. In reply to a comment about LSFY, Margaret indicated that she wanted to pose the question in a way that asks “how do you think this benefits students” instead of a faculty member’s personal feelings about LSFY.

Brian Katz did not connect with the point Margaret was making. He would instead write a more manipulative question, such as “The NSSE data shows the academic rigor of first-year sequence is greater than our peers and others. Do you believe that it is really LSFY...” and claiming to interpret the data than just asking for their opinion. Margaret asked what the others thought.

Lendol Calder does not think many faculty know that data, so this survey is another chance to get the information out there. Lendol suggested that the LSFY background information could be segregated at the top of the document and then questions just below that. Rowen feels that people will not read it, but that if information is divided up, people are forced to read everything.

Margaret is interested in communicating the information about “We have seen a change in the data and it coincides with our implementation of the changes of our LSFY program” and asked if we should include some preface of information with that question. Jason Koontz would like to see it right before

the questions—not all at the top. Someone not teaching LSFY is not sure what kind of thought processes they should use. Saying “Given that our data says this is a successful program and we know we need to change some things, which of these do you think is the most, or rank them knowing that this is a successful program.”

Meg Gillette said she thinks there are some things that aren’t working well with the first year program. Is there is a way to phrase the question to get people to rank their priorities about the first-year program and how important is it to have it staffed by continuing faculty and interdisciplinary classes, or connecting it to the major or something like that? She wouldn’t want to shut down any possible changes to the first-year program, but if there is a way to get feedback on strengths or weaknesses or what people value, or what they’d be willing to sacrifice in the first year program, that would be beneficial.

It was suggested that there be a short prologue that says “Here’s what we think we know...here’s what we’re unsure about” and include bullet points. One bullet would be our survey that shows that students hated LSFY at first, but it is being received much better. Other bullet suggestions:

- D and G feedback, and feelings about eliminating the D or G
- Adding learning community to LSFY 103
- PE requirement...is it important to keep as requirement
- What are most important integrative interdisciplinary skills
- How does integrated interdisciplinary happen in multiple classes?

Fred Whiteside asked if the Gen Ed committee would be happy going to 4 credits. Brian said that the 4 credit issue is across-the-board multiplication and does not change anything internal except specific programs that require a number of credits. Margaret added that this is why someone proposed making them 2 credits across the board. The Higher Learning Commission is why that would be difficult to do because it is a counter-intuitive thing. We ask students to do a lot in their class. We have an elaborate skills matrix and yet the credits associated with that work are fewer. The HLC would question that. What we need to do in that case is to make it meet two days a week as opposed to three. Margaret said it would have impact on load and would mean all the rest of our classes were 4 and it would mean teaching 2 of these in order to make up. She said it would not be impossible, but you would need to think how it would impact faculty.

Brian said that learning perspectives, learning communities and the idea of integrated interdisciplinary thinking were left out of the survey. Also that idea of what happens inside the class. We need to find a way to connect the things that are happening in multiple different classes, like what the Clauss data from the faculty needs survey says. Brian commented that he wished he knew or that it was a lot easier to find a way to get an expert or someone else to contribute something in his LSFY class; that kind of integrated interdisciplinary stuff.

Virginia expressed concern about the questions in the middle of back page, the ranking of the LSFY sequence. The first one lists some actual content of the courses, communication, literacy skills, etc., and the other three do not. She suggested that at the beginning of this question “the expectation would be that skills would continue in perhaps a different format”.

Discussion continued with the following survey question. John Pfautz asked if that was what we talked about with Emil and decided not to go with the “I”. Do we still want to ask that question? Margaret is inclined not to ask it, but wants to know what the committee thinks. Rowen added that if we are considering using that third term to fulfill the D or G or LC, we’ve moved past this without getting faculty

feedback. Meg Gillette indicated that it would be useful feedback to her to find out what would it take to make that possible...if it is a staffing or curricular issue. That would give the committee more information to work with. Margaret indicated that it is a staffing and curricular issue. Business, Education and Biology are the biggest programs and could not be involved in this sort of thing. Margaret added that part of why when we argued for three terms of LSFY, this is a more powerful argument for that. That introduction to the major experience is so varied across departments that we have no way of knowing or guaranteeing what is happening in those courses, and majors will hold fast the idea that they cannot possibly add more stuff, especially if they're dealing with accrediting agencies.

Brian Katz stated that this survey also ought to make people feel like they've been heard. Margaret added that one way to do that might be to ask "What is your biggest concern regarding these changes? What do you fear the most? What do you see as the most desirable outcome of these potential changes," and she asked for feedback on the wording. Lendol Calder questioned whether a survey fulfills the purposes of people feeling like they've been heard, especially for two-person departments. Margaret agreed, and stated that what the survey will do is give the Gen Ed committee a pulse of things. It is one strategy for hearing people. If we talked about the next steps, they are to figure out who are the deeply-invested constituents in each of these components that we are proposing a change for and then go and meet with them and talk with them about their concerns, whether it is the instructors in LSFY or it's the area studies program with D and G, or it's majors who are deeply fearing their LS or LC commitments.

Margaret said the most important question to ask may be "Do you teach in the program or not."

Rick Jaeschke informed Margaret that the 2nd block on page 1 where it asked people to rank, that the directions are unclear to him and should be clarified.

The committee discussed whether there ought to be a direct question about G and D. Margaret indicated that if the committee wanted such a question, to forward her the language; however, she feels the faculty have other options within the survey to address D and G, so she is not convinced we need a separate question about it.

AGENDA ITEM V: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Koski
Academic Affairs