

GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
12/16/2009
Olin 304

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM.

Members present: Tom Bengtson, Karin Youngberg, Virginia Johnson, Amanda Beveroth, Anne Earel, Ashley Booth, Randall Hall, Kristin Douglas, Alli Haskill, Joe McDowell, Dan Lee, Allen Bertsche and Josh Morgan.

AGENDA ITEM I: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

To approve minutes from the 12/9/09 meeting; 1- Tom; 2- Karin APPROVED

AGENDA ITEM II: NEW BUSINESS

- A. LSFY discussions
 - B. Update from curriculum task force
- (Note: These two items merged into a single discussion).

Kristin: We are reviving a discussion that we tabled in the fall term in an effort to deal with what had been the more pressing matter of LC shortages. Now that we have dealt with immediate LC concerns, we should begin to address LSFY concerns. Several faculty members have come forward with concerns about the LSFY program, and in particular, concerns related to the 102 and 103 courses.

Allen: We should make evidence-based decisions as we proceed in this discussion. Wabash study data exist, and we should look at these data to guide our decisions for the future. We have some evidence that we have good things happening in the LS program.

Randall and Allen: The curriculum task force and other entities on campus have expressed the sentiment that gen ed needs to think about cutting the program as part of a larger curriculum overhaul. Because gen ed had already begun discussions about shrinking the program, it seemed logical that the gen ed committee would be central to the aim of trimming courses as part of a feasibility study that will be occurring on our campus prior to a proposal being advanced to the faculty for consideration later this year.

Allen: In January, departmental discussions about possible course reductions will be taking place.

Allen explained that Jeff does not see this curriculum reduction discussion as a means for saving money, however, we are likely only to consider models that will maintain or decrease current funding levels.

Allen: Right now, the total courses required for graduation at Augustana is 41.

*See Allen's proposed models described in a separate document for 3 alternate models for addressing course reduction.

Allen: Right now, we are at the point in the discussion where we are looking at what other institutions have done with load reductions (faculty and student). The goal is to provide Augie faculty with data to make a decision by mid-Spring term. The task force would like to have a joint session with gen ed before that time. If the faculty were to vote for a change this spring, then next school year would be a planning year and thus, 2012-2013 likely would be the first year a new change (if recommended) would be implemented.

Karin: How could money be saved through any of these models?

Allen's answer: Savings, if any, would come from either 1) reduction in PT faculty coverage and/or 2) reductions in course releases.

Dan: What types of releases would be eliminated?

Allen: That discussion will occur later. Some possibilities: eliminating releases presently granted for some committees and dept. chairs.

Dan: These are important considerations.

Kristin: True, but we need to focus our current discussion on gen ed matters. Is AGES too big? If so, what is too big about it?

Dan: What skills do we think are critical? This answer should guide our discussion.

Randall: Who is disgruntled?

Kristin: Disgruntled LSFY faculty who are dissatisfied with the current system have spoken to Kristin.

Karin: If we are thinking about cutting gen ed, one of the recurring issues is that repetition matters in developing skills. When we think about cutting pieces of the gen ed program, we need to consider this. The core skills need to be repeated.

Dan: GEWG members felt strongly that time gaps in skills development should be avoided; the cumulative process needs to be there or we lose out on skills development.

Dan: A possibility raised at the faculty retreat was to replace LSFY 103 (in its current form) with department specific offerings.

Joe: Have any disgruntled faculty members moved forward solutions to reducing gen ed's credit load?

Allen: Not really, just the data we examined in the summer showing how large our gen ed program is compared to peer institutions.

Dan: At a recent meeting, a senior faculty member discouraged reducing gen ed—voices such as these exist on campus and we need to be mindful that there are other perspectives on campus (other than the perspective that gen ed is too large).

Kristin: If we reduce gen ed credit requirements, students will have to fill up their schedules some other way. Will they want to take more departmental courses? If so, will there be enough seats available for them?

Tom: There are several challenges facing our current LSFY program. Remember, though our LS program initially crafted by GEWG was approved by the faculty, it was not a unanimous decision. Some changes have occurred since the program was adopted. Now, common content, readings, etc. have been eliminated or reduced. Several faculty members see this as a problem. Also, since its inception, we have a lot of new faculty members on campus, many of whom have been charged with teaching these courses and may not want to teach them or they may be ill-prepared to teach them. The skills component is critical to this program, which makes it difficult to construct a course. These courses are hard for instructors to negotiate with regard to balancing skills

and content. We have done very little to bring new faculty members up to speed on how to construct these courses.

Allen: Attendance at LS term meetings can be very low.

Karin: Not all instructors know how to teach skills. English teachers typically are strong in this area, but others may not be.

Alli: Kristin and Margaret and the LSFY term coordinators offer assistance. Some seek individual help and others do not.

Mariano's comments via email: When people are successful at putting a syllabus together that focuses on skills over content, there have been some positive experiences.

Joe: Student may not see how the menu of course options in a given LSFY term fit together. If we don't cut first year courses, maybe should we refocus and redesign our current model? For example, ideas over time (history of ideas) could be a revised focus of LSFY 102.

Josh: It is very difficult to explain to prospective students what the point of the LSFY program is. Current first years may see the courses as arbitrary but not necessarily beneficial to them in the long run.

Karin: We have backed off the historical/chronological aspect of the original LSFY program. Because we have agreed to eliminate the historical aspect piece, we have lost an important element of skill development.

Allen: We don't advertise our LSFY courses as skills courses; we advertise on the basis of content. This may be misleading.

Virginia: Rhetoric, inquiry, ideas in time—labels such as these that emphasize skills may be more transparent than titles devoted solely to content.

Randall: The sentiment of this committee seems to be that it is important to retain a first year sequence of gen ed courses, but rethink our current model.

Kristin and Karin: Much can be done in the marketing of these courses (e.g., reconsidering titles and descriptions).

AGENDA ITEM III: OLD BUSINESS

Teagle III and General Education Credit

Kristin: Do we need to have next year's participating instructors develop objectives to show how they are addressing dispositions?

Allen: Unless there is a value besides an LC, how will we attract students to take these courses? They need to know the practical reasons why the courses will benefit them.

Allen: The dispositions listed are extremely difficult to assess. How will we prove that any proposal will have the potential to meet these objectives?

Joe: The students who will have a challenge participating in these courses will be those who have rigid sequences (e.g., chemistry, education, etc.). There are several students who feasibly will not be able to participate.

Randall: There are two models- a model that will attract primarily majors (e.g., water resources) and a model that will attract primarily non majors (e.g., brain/philosophy).

Kristin: We will ask participating faculty to explain how they will entice students to enroll.

Dan: It seems inappropriate for us to decide what requirements these courses should fulfill without seeing faculty members' proposals.

Kristin: How will the students register? As a single LC worth 9 credits (like an internship)? Or for separate credits? This is a challenge- we'll need faculty to explain how the credits should be distributed.

Tom: In favor of reducing requirements for gen ed for students who take these courses.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 13, 2010.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:02.