

## General Education Council Minutes

Date: 2/13/12

Meeting Location: JCK 880

### Council Members Present

Bill Stone

Phil Suckling

Garry White

Janet Butler

Chris Russian

Greg Passty

Sharon O'Neal

Vince Luizzi

Debra Feakes

Sue Beebe

Greg Passty

Lucy Harney

Ted Hindson

Jackie Moczygemba

Kate Peirce

Elizabeth Blunk

Kevin McCurdy

### Visitors

Stewart Welsh

Vicky Brittain

Sherri Mora

Nate Dean

Kirk Walker

Mary Brennan

Angela Murphy

Michael Hennessy

### Agenda

1. Visitors introduced

2. Sharon O'Neal volunteered to take minutes of the meeting with the assistance of Sue Beebe.

3. A motion to approve the GEC minutes of 4/25/11 was made by Garry White, seconded by Janet Butler and approved unanimously.

4. A motion to approve the GEC minutes of 1/23/12 was made by Marian Houser, seconded by Garry White and approved unanimously.

5. Agenda Item:

Meet with chairs and representatives of History, Math and Political Science to discuss their required presence in the General Education Core Curriculum for the fall of 2014.

Ron Brown noted that the curricula required to address core objectives would not go into effect until fall of 2014, but we wanted to get our assessments before the Coordinating Board as soon as possible, as changes in the requirements may occur.

A discussion ensued about strategies for assessing critical thinking.

Nate Dean noted that most of us feel we are preparing the students for life outside of the university and noted that perhaps we could be more creative in thinking about how we prepare our students for life. Ron Brown agreed that this was the thinking of the Coordinating Board.

Another member felt that to spark a discussion is one thing, but how to do this with a 400-person lecture hall of students could be difficult.

Another member noted that with her load of 350 students, it could be difficult to measure some of the core objectives being requested by the Coordinating Board.

Dr. Philip Suckling asked if the Coordinating Board has been asked how these assessments could happen with large "lecture type" classes, as even the upper division discussion courses are sometimes filled with 60 students. This is a practical matter. These questions were raised: Why has the administration not been asking these questions of the Coordinating Board? Is the Academic Affairs Council willing to ask these questions?

Ron Brown noted that it was an excellent point and he would pass it on.

Lucy Harney noted that rubrics were said to be available from the coordinating Board. Ron Brown said they are available but may not be as useful to us as we had hoped. Our question may be how much money can we spend to develop assessment systems to insure quality improvement over time. The Coordinating Board is providing us with some samples.

Most have been adopted by smaller size institutions.

A member said UVAC suggests that other evidence could be found in multiple data sources, not just student outcomes.

Ron Brown said his sense was that the Coordinating Board is expecting student outcomes to be addressed.

Lucy Harney noted that SACS and TX State asked if attendance might be a data source, for example, for personal responsibility. Dr. Bill Stone agreed.

Dr. Luizzi said he had asked Beth Wuest about attendance as a data source and she said absolutely not.

Political Science noted that they have a subcommittee that is studying assessment. They use embedded questions in their final exams as a way to measure some of the SACS core objectives. Their current focus is on their question bank to see if it focuses on personal responsibility, ethical responsibility, communication skills, etc.

One member said the assessment through SACS might not have to be as precise. Ron Brown said SACS feels the individual faculty and the unit requirements are an important variable in these core objective areas.

One asked if we could measure these throughout a semester, saying that (for example) 75% of my students engaged in "X."

Nate Dean said even our "clickers" are a form of communication in a large class. He noted that the use of technology might be the only thing that could make these assessments manageable.

Others agreed that visual literacy and technology might be our only way to measure the core objectives with classes of large numbers.

Nate Dean said that the Coordinating Board is probably talking about personal communication, not using technology as a form of communication, as they see personal communication as an important skill in the world outside of the university.

Dr. Suckling said that we have a course in oral communication. Ron Brown noted that this was what we did in the past and that will not be enough in the future. The Coordinating Board is probably responding to the report that most colleges of business have little writing in their course work. The report also looked at oral communication. Little was found. The Coordinating Board reacted to this report.

Marian Houser said if we knew what the assessment template looked like, it would help. We need something more concrete. Ron Brown agreed.

Lucy Harney asked if we could develop a sample assessment measure and see what the Coordinating Board says.

Dr. Brown said the Provost felt that the rubric or assessment measure should not be a blanket common assessment for all courses.

~~Dr.~~ Sue Beebe suggested that perhaps we could do indirect assessment. For example ask students to say yes or no to a questions such as "I had an opportunity to participate in a group discussion today." It would still be quantitative data.

Most felt it would not be what the Coordinating Board wants.

Dr. Luizzi noted that in his meetings with Beth, she mentioned direct measurements of communication, critical thinking, etc. could appear in a rubric format. Objectives could also be addressed in the course evaluation. Beth felt that direct and indirect methods would be OK.

A discussion of direct and indirect assessments ensued.

Dr. Brown noted that one troubling question is "Do we want to measure if students did "X", or have students learned "X"?"

Dr. Brown asked if we would consider random samples of student work to determine engagement and learning.

Most agreed that this would be more manageable.

Another noted that videotapes of student work might be a possible data source.

Ron Brown said he would try to get Beth at the next meeting to answer these and other questions. Departments (such as Dr. Luizzi in the Philosophy Dept.) have been struggling with how to assess these core objectives.

He asked if we wanted to set up a TRACS site to discuss these issues further.

Dr. Stone noted that feedback to the materials from the Coordinating Board might cause the requirements to change.

Dr. Brown said if we can follow Dr. Bourgeois' notion of getting our ideas to the Coordinating Board as soon as possible, we have more time to react and clarify.

At this time we have little idea of what other universities are doing. Community colleges are probably much further along if they implemented a more top down approach with their faculties.

At this time, visitors were excused.

#### 6. Agenda Item:

Discuss request from Dean Ruth Welborn for science lab exemption for pre-nursing students entering the program in the fall of 2012

Dr. Garry White said the problem is that they may have had no labs if they changed majors at a certain point in time. Does this mean the students still meet the core requirement? Students may figure out ways to get out of taking labs. Dr. Stone noted that it would be difficult to control.

A question was raised: If we can only assess teamwork through the labs, in the future, will it be difficult to allow the students to not have a lab and still meet the Coordinating Board's requirements?

The question was also raised about the number of students admitted to the nursing program. Are there too many students admitted to the program?

Ron Brown's sense was that Dr. Welborn has been in communication with the Biology Dept. However, we need to make a decision and provide her with a response.

Dr. Feakes said that we have a current Gen Ed core for a reason and there should be no exceptions if we believe it is an important core of coursework. The GEC said (by approval of that core) that labs are important in that Gen Ed core curriculum.

Dr. White said in the College of Business an enrollment cap has helped with the unmanageable numbers in required courses. He asked if nursing should have an enrollment cap?

No motion was made and seconded, so no advice will be given by the GEC to the school of nursing and Dr. Welborn.

#### 7. Agenda Item:

Review charge from Provost Bourgeois

The Provost spoke of giving people the opportunity to decide if they want to be involved in the conversation about assessment in their courses.

Dr. Suckling noted that we need to move from 46 to 42 hours in our core curriculum, which means we need to find 4 hours to cut. One may be University Seminar, two may come from Physical Fitness and Wellness (PFW), and that leaves one more hour we need to find, which may be in lab work.

PFW could be a requirement above and beyond the core curriculum.

Dr. Brown noted that as long as we could allow for students to get a degree in 120 hours, we could also have programs that require more hours.

Dr. Stone said the only current requirements are core curriculum and department/college requirements.

It was noted that PFW will now sit outside of those degree requirements.

Sue Beebe asked if PFW could become a part of PACE. PFW faculty noted that his department wanted to be relevant.

It was asked who sets the curriculum for PACE?

Ron Brown suggested that the chair and dean of PFW have a conversation with the Provost regarding the place of the PFW classes.

Ron Brown said he would bring Beth to the next meeting.

8. Agenda Item:

Establish Spring 2012 Plan for GEC consideration of General Education

Ron Brown will contact all departments with core courses, to ask if they are interested in keeping current courses in the new core. We will then establish a procedure as to which departments should come to us next to discuss how their courses will meet the new requirements.

9. Other concerns of GEC?

A motion to adjourn was made by Bill Stone, seconded by Garry White and approved unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sharon O'Neal