

**General Education Committee
Minutes**

September 14, 2017

Present: Tien Chih
Jim Barron
Emily Arendt
Cori Hart
Lance Mouser
Tara Haupt (ex-officio)
Melinda Tilton
Matthew Queen
Tom Regele
Scott Harris
Megan Thomas

Absent: Bernie Quetchenbach*
Leanne Gilbertson*
John Roberts*

*excused

Guest: David Craig

Jim Barron called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. in McMullen 305.

I. ELECTION OF CHAIR(S) FOR 2017-2018

Jim Barron & Melinda Tilton volunteered to be Co-Chairs. There were no objections!

The minutes of April 19 and September 1 were accepted as presented.

II. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Testing incoming freshmen with abbreviated test in First Year Seminar

At the retreat, the idea arose to test the freshmen in the A&SC 111 course, using the 40 minute abbreviated test from ETS. That is about 250 students in all this Fall. However, the instructors of the course say the schedule for that one-credit course is too tight, and the GEC is asking after the semester has already started. They did offer to work on including testing in Spring, and offered to promote a Fall testing session set outside of classtime, should the GEC want to go that route again. The question becomes, is it worth GEC members' time to do yet another testing session where a handful of students show up? It would be great to have incoming freshmen's scores so we can see just how far we are moving our students from their base knowledge coming in. It was agreed that

the Committee will set up a couple testing sessions this semester, probably one evening during the week and one Saturday, and when very few students show up, that will give us further evidence that we need required testing.

Jim Barron and Matt Queen are working on a script for the introductory video for all our ETS testing. If possible, the video will be completed to use for these freshmen sessions. This video could be shown in the A&SC 111 class, since they did agree to promote the testing. It would also be valuable to learn what instructors say about Gen Ed in the A&SC 111 course. The abbreviated tests have been ordered and should arrive soon. Tara Haupt noted that she will contact the Residence Hall staff to promote the testing sessions to freshmen in the dorms, as well. The GEC could even send an email to every instructor of a Gen Ed class this semester, asking them to promote the testing to the freshmen in their classes. It was noted that we must be clear that the testing will only be for freshmen and takes only 40 minutes.

B. Proficiency Profile Testing Requirement

It was noted that we should tell the Senate that we are not moving forward in any capacity until we get concrete direction from the Senate about where we should go. It was argued that we don't need Senate authorization to begin required testing of all students completing Gen Ed; it should be up to the administration to implement it. We should meet with the Provost & Vice Provost and get that ball rolling. The objection has been that this Proficiency Profile test does not cover all our Gen Ed objectives, and it does not. But we need to get one type of assessment working successfully first, and then make sure all objectives are under the assessment umbrella.

C. Proposed Pilot of New Gen Ed Course: HONR 194

Guest: David Craig, Director, University Honors Program

Dr. Craig stated that the development of this course, which would apply to the Communication & Information Literacy category, is an effort to give the Honors Program a greater curricular identity and make the program more cohesive. Rather than trying to compete with "prestige" programs like Bozeman and Missoula, they would like to illustrate to potential students the value added by the Honors Program. This course is something like a hybrid between COMX 111 Introduction to Public Speaking and LSCI 125 Research in the Information Age, with Honors components.

It was noted that, especially since the HONR 194 course would be open to all students (with instructor permission) and LSCI 125 is already open to all students, the LSCI course would be an appropriate place to collaborate. Dr. Craig noted that they do want all the Honors students concentrated in one course, and it was responded that the Library could set up an Honors-only section of LSCI 125. Dr. Craig argued that part of the draw for Honors students would be the HONR rubric: the rubric makes it clear the course is an Honors course.

The question was raised as to whether adding another course to the Communication & Information Literacy category would crush another course's enrollment. It was noted that impacts on enrollments in courses are not really the concern of this Committee.

Dr. Craig noted that the Honors Program will be responsible for finding an instructor for HONR 194, and that may well end up being one of the librarians, but could also be a community member or other faculty involved with the Honors Program.

The Honors Program is not asking for authorization for the Spring HONR 194 to be counted as Gen Ed. It will be handled as a substitution by the students' advisors. It was cited that last year, a similar proposal came forward and the GEC stated that advisors should not be allowed to substitute the course, but rather an official statement of approval from the GEC would be most appropriate. The Honors course should be handled the same way. Further, should this course move past pilot stage, the GEC will see it again and vote again.

- Motion by Scott Harris, seconded by Tom Regele to **allow HONR 194 to count in the Communication & Information Literacy category for Spring 2018.**

- Motion carried.

D. Search for Cultural Diversity Questions on the Proficiency Profile Exam

Dr. Barron noted that he matched most, but not all, of the Gen Ed outcomes to the scores produced by ETS. It was suggested at the retreat that there are probably questions on the test that address cultural diversity. We can request special analysis from ETS for a subset of questions, so if we can find test questions that address what we need, we can get that data, at an additional price. All members were asked to review a copy of the test both to check their category objectives and to look for questions addressing cultural diversity.

E. Biennial Review of Gen Ed Courses this Semester

Review of courses in the Gen Ed program to assure they are meeting the objectives is the responsibility of the GEC. However, the mechanism has been to simply ask the department chairs if their courses are still meeting the listed outcomes, and the answer is very often a short, "Yep, they are." This is supposed to be a meaningful review, but it's not working that way. Perhaps we need to create a template or guide for Chairs which includes what we really need: evidence of meeting the objective in the course.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Guidelines for Study Abroad Courses Counted in Gen Ed as Cultural Diversity

A well-designed study abroad course would certainly have components appropriate to the Gen Ed Cultural Diversity objectives. It would be good to encourage such courses, and to create a guide for proposing such courses. A discussion of possible criteria will be added to a future agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.