

Academic Senate General Education Committee
Meeting Minutes

August 31, 2001

Present: Mark Hardt
George Madden
Sandie Rietz
Randall Gloege
George Benedict

Ex-Officio: Dan Zirker
Janie Park

Guests: Lee Peters
Curt Kochner

Mark Hardt, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. on August 31, 2001, in the Bridger room of the SUB.

“General Education Department” models

- Design an entirely new model
- Tinker with the present system
- Decouple general education from departments

Model Details

- Classes should be distinguished from categories. This would bring about a possible lowering of the required credit load of general education or at least options for taking fewer credits/classes.
- General education class syllabi need to do a better job of describing how they fit into the present categories. Students want to know how these classes fit into their education.
- These changes should be made first, before more philosophical discussion should commence.

Inter-related Categories

- Courses should be designed specifically for general education that can fit in more than one category. However, there are certain guidelines for class content and number of credits required that must be followed.
- Classes that are connected to a certain major/minor should be included in that major/minor, rather than be listed as separate general education classes.
 - This concept would aid transfer students in distinguishing which general education classes they must take to fulfill requirements.

Class Bloat

- Too many classes have been created with no money to pay instructors to teach them. The creation of such classes may have led to the increase in part-time instructors employed with the University.
- Too many courses being added and they need to be cut down.
- Education is a process, not a list of courses to be performed.

General Education Faculty Core Group

- Group could serve as a committee on general education
- Faculty could design general education courses through this Core Group, rather than those who seek FTE.
- Most of the general education faculty is part-time, and would not have time to serve on such a committee.
- Faculty could be appointed to the Core Group according to course load. Or the faculty themselves could decide the percent of time they want to devote to the Core Group.
- Using percents or course loads may cut into the participation of some departments.

As a side note, it was mentioned that students often ask why general education courses are considered so important, but are taught by part-time faculty.

The First Year Program

It consists of advisement, connection of students to a faculty member, and could be linked to general education courses.

- Capstone courses could be added which would contain elements of both a general education course and first- and last-year elements.
 - Students' first semester would include a general education course that also involved components of a "freshman experience" course.
 - Students' last semester would include a final course where the student summarized his or her general education experience.
- The Honors Program already includes this capstone concept.
- The University really does not need more courses.

Interest Among the Faculty

- Some interest is noted, but the general education ideas need to be more focused.
- Senior faculty *do* teach general education courses, but not many.
- Faculty do not enjoy teaching four to five sections of the same class.
- The faculty commitment should be assessed in terms of two concerns:
 - Applying a limit to the number of general education credits
 - The teaching of large lecture classes

Students' Relation to General Education Courses

- Evaluations of general education courses are very low.
- Fifty percent of the freshman class is lost every year (25% after the first semester, and 25% after the first year).
 - Could the general education courses be a let down for these students?
- Reducing the dropout rate to 30% would be a considerable victory.
- As a remedy, the faculty could be retrained or retrain themselves to aid in retaining and engaging students.
- No watering-down of the general education courses. Students are aware when the subject matter has been simplified.
- Another solution is the Academic Support Center (ASC), where students could get needed help.

Relationship Between General Education Courses and Majors/Minors

- Students usually do not make a critical analysis of their general education courses; they only know they did not understand why they are taking the course.
- An important miscommunication is the students thinking that a general education course is *all* there is to a given field.
 - The students need to know that there is more to the field.
- The faculty needs to be aware of the University general education philosophy so they may tailor their syllabi.

Blending of Courses

- The goal of blending would be to make general education a single, coherent process of interrelated classes.
- This bringing together would be a function of the General Education Core Group.

Cost

- No *extra* funds are available.
- However, if the general education courses were decoupled from the departments and collected in one General Education Department, there may be sufficient funds to begin this program.
- FTE may be affected by this decoupling.
- Another solution: partial but not complete severing of general education from the departments.
 - General education would grow out of the departments, but still be part of those departments.
 - The credits could follow the instructor who may teach under more than one rubric.
- Double rubrics could also be used, which already exist. For example: PHIL/GenEd.
 - A possible intermediate step

Organization of the General Education Committee

- Committee would become an oversight committee which does not provide the final answers on general education issues, but rather a framework on which issues can be resolved.
- Committee would also meet every two weeks.
- A deadline of January for these changes to be implemented was discussed, but was not settled.

Possible Functions of the General Education Committee

- Assembling the general education faculty (which has never been done) in a required meeting.
- Survey to be conducted covering course load, offerings, and faculty credit load that is tied up in general education (that is, not just number of courses, but total credits, etc.). Mark Hardt stated that he would contact Karen Everett about obtaining this survey information.

College of Technology General Education Courses

- Classes offered at COT should match those at the main campus since the main campus receives these students.

The Goals of the Next Meeting of the General Education Committee:

- *Discussion of content areas covered by general education and the possible changes for making such classes interdisciplinary and intercategorical. Also to be discussed are the guidelines and regulations set by the state and other governing bodies.*
- *Develop models of the interdisciplinary and intercategorical class system.*
- Mike Barber is to be contacted about adding a rubric attachment in Banner. The other portion of the rubric attachment/double rubric would be double-listing general education courses under both General Education and their departments in the catalog.
- Identification of the general education instructors and the information in the survey about these instructors.
- Discussing a plan to convene the general education faculty.
- Discussing a plan for changing the required 37 credits of general education to 30 credits.

The formation of the **General Education Core Group** is set as a future goal.

Responsibilities of the General Education Core Group:

- Study philosophy, content, and organization of general education (an ongoing process)
- Ongoing assessments
- Design and execution of assessment protocols
- Reforming syllabi to fit philosophical intent of course and categories
- Tie in the “First Year Program” and final capstone class
- Overall examination of curriculum to consider “bloat” areas which can be pooled

It was decided that the faculty should be contacted about what was discussed at this meeting, and that minutes should be taken and distributed for all future meetings.

Committee on Committees

- Settle the membership of the General Education Committee
- Inform these members that their presence at all meetings is vitally important.

The problem of the books ordered last spring but not received by the members of the committee was solved by reordering the books. Also, George Madden suggested a few new books that would be purchased and put on reserve.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe