

**General Education Committee
Minutes**

September 23, 2013

Present:	Mark Jacobson	Bernie Quetchenbach
	Melinda Tilton	Kurt Toenjes
	Rhonda Dillman	Mike Havens
	Jennifer Lynn	Tom Regele
	Jodi Lightner	Leanne Gilbertsen
	Patricia Nichols	Rosemarie Dugi
	Scott Harris	Elizabeth Fullon
	TyRee Jenks	Matt Redinger (ex-officio)
	Becky Lyons (ex-officio)	Tasneem Khaleel (ex-officio)

Absent:

Guest: Cheri Johannes

Mike Havens called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. in McMullen 305.

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Since Kurt Toenjes was Chair Alternate last year, he has agreed to be Chair this year. Dr. Havens will stay on as Chair Alternate.

Dr. Havens and Dean Tasneem Khaleel will be going to the MUS Core meeting next week in Helena. It is an odd meeting.

The minutes of April 22 were accepted as presented.

II. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

**A. Writing Courses in Gen Ed, Advising Worksheets, & State Writing Requirements
Guest: Cheri Johannes, Registrar**

Dr. Johannes noted that until last year when Gen Ed was changed, the Gen Ed package basically directed students to take WRIT 101 plus another 200-level course linked to their majors. Now, with the changes in Fall 2013, students have 6 credits of “restricted electives” which theoretically will be used for at least one 200-level writing course. The issue is that WRIT 101 is the prerequisite for all of the 200-level writing courses in Gen Ed, and since students are required to take only 3 credits, it seemed both unclear and impossible to have the 200-level courses listed. So, this summer they were removed from the advising worksheets. After several faculty members voiced concern, the 200-level courses were added back to the advising sheets. However, students were still asking why the 200-level courses are listed if students must only take one course, given that WRIT 101 is the prerequisite course.

It was noted that then the issue became the writing requirements indicated at the end of the Gen Ed section of the catalog:

Students who intend to graduate with a baccalaureate degree are required to have passed at least three courses with a WR indicator. WRIT 101 is required. The second course must be one of the following: WRIT 201, WRIT 220, WRIT 122, or WRIT 121. The third course must have a WR indicator and be selected in consultation with an advisor. The WR indicates that the course requires at least one extensive and evaluated writing assignment. To identify these courses refer to the Course Descriptions section.

In addition to passing at least three WR courses, each student is required to undertake and successfully complete a writing project as determined by their major department(s).

This policy has not been enforced in years. Dr. Johannes noted that we have invested time and money into making our academic programs fit into computer programs. As the policy above is currently stated, it cannot be put into a computer unless we find a way to tag all appropriate writing courses. Most likely we can tag the courses in DegreeWorks. However, it was cited that the current WR courses in the catalog have not been reviewed in more than 10 years. It was noted that the courses with the WR tag were originally evaluated by the UCC.

The Committee was reminded that students can also test out of WRIT 101, through the COMPASS test, and if so, their English Gen Ed requirement is considered met.

It was agreed that the GEC needs to have a discussion of the above policy, whether it should be removed entirely or modified. We need to clear up the confusion and implement our ideology of writing in a way a computer can understand. However, at the same time, we cannot let DegreeWorks rule us.

B. ETS Test Results from Spring 2013

In Spring 2013, we tried to use capstone courses to administer the tests. We bought 300 tests, but only used 97 of them. As it turns out, if enough questions are left blank, the test is thrown out. The scores are in a range of 400 to 500, and our score was 451. That puts us in the 71st percentile among the 400-some schools using this test. We most definitely need a bigger sample than 97 students, but if we use the entire graduating class, it may paint us into a corner if we don't like the results. We sampled mostly juniors and seniors, with a handful of sophomores. Even though some of the statistics are upsetting, this is the first time we have ever compared ourselves to other universities. First impressions indicate our remedial courses are doing a good job for our students.

The question was raised as to whether we should provide students' scores to them. It was noted that students do try harder and do better on such tests when they know they will get their scores. However, if we are using the test results for data that is used in decision-making, we cannot share the scores with the students.

Ultimately, last Spring's implementation was a failure. We need a better plan for this year. Funding will be provided for what we need to do. We also need to take this out of the faculty's hands, because they simply do not have time. We could test on University day, holding an open house, or require the test before students can graduate. It was suggested we use the graduation applications, which are due in November, and take a sample from them. Our main issue is we need a plan we can reproduce every year. Dr. Havens agreed to do the math to figure out exactly how many students we need in our sample.

The meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.