



**General Education Committee  
Minutes**

August 26, 2020

<b>Present:</b>	Tien Chih Melinda Tilton Josh Hill Mara Pierce Lance Mouser Christine Shearer (ex-officio) Kathleen Thatcher (ex-officio)	Bernie Quetchenbach Matt Queen Emily Arendt Brian Gurney Megan Thomas Robert Nava (ex-officio) Nathan Williams (ex-officio)
<b>Absent:</b>	Jason Comer* Leanne Gilbertson* Cori Day*	Randi O'Brien* Jeff Willardson*

\*excused

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Melinda Tilton called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. in the Beartooth Room, with several participants attending via Webex.

I. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2020-2021

Melinda Tilton agreed to serve again as chair. Emily Arendt volunteered as co-chair.

- Ms. Tilton & Dr. Arendt were elected co-chairs.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of February 24 were accepted as presented.

III. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

**A. What happened last Spring?**

- Gen Ed Syllabi Received in Spring
- Assignment and Student Work Collection: End of Fall Semester

The syllabi were received for all but a handful of courses, a couple of which have not been offered in years.

It was noted that most faculty and chairs probably don't remember the request from Spring for student artifacts, so a friendly reminder to chairs might be a good idea. Ms. Tilton will write up a reminder.

The question was raised as to why we don't communicate directly with instructors. Because many Gen Ed courses are taught by part-time, the list of instructors is ever-changing and difficult to assemble.

It was suggested that GEC members review different Gen Ed structures and approaches at several universities, so we may glean some ideas. Below is a list of universities, suggested by Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment and Accreditation.

Bernie Quetchenbach	Wagner College
Mara Pierce	Portland State University
Brian Gurney	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Lance Mouser	Green Mountain College
Tien Chih	Roanoke College
Josh Hill	James Madison University
Megan Thomas	University of Hawaii Hilo
Emily Arendt	University of Washington Tacoma (one of MSUB's aspirant institutions)
Melinda Tilton	Western Oregon University (one of MSUB's aspirant institutions)
Matt Queen	Northern Illinois University
Jason Comer	Appalachian State University
Leanne Gilbertson	St. Olaf College
Jeff Willardson	Ithaca College
Randi O'Brien	Appalachian State University
Cori Day	Montana State University (Bozeman)

This list includes Bozeman, since they just recently revised their Gen Ed program. However, we are not required to align with Bozeman.

When reviewing these other universities' Gen Ed programs, we will look at both the structure of the program and the purpose statement. In addition, we will review the message the program conveys to students.

Ms. Tilton stated that she reviewed the minutes from last year and picked out some themes, in regards to the request by the administration that we reimagine Gen Ed.

- The distributive model doesn't make sense to students, and we need to make Gen Ed more understandable to students.
- Possibly use the four themes pulled from our new Gen Ed purpose statement.
- ASMSUB focus group results: new program needs to be student-focused.
- Students make connections between courses when Gen Ed courses are not compartmentalized by discipline.
- The current system is built to generate FTE, not help students.

- Train instructors to talk about the Gen Ed purpose in their Gen Ed courses, to create a focus for students—will be essential in rolling out a new Gen Ed program.
- Remove and/or delete courses.
- Consider transferability for all Gen Ed courses.
- Develop more “teeth” to our Gen Ed course approval process.

It was noted that the administration may not want a big overhaul to Gen Ed, but rather a shift to a more integrated model, with many of the same courses.

It was stated that using the four themes from the purpose statement would be entirely too general. That statement was not designed to form the structural elements of the program.

It was suggested the GEC could hold another focus group with students, so we can dig into the reasons students don’t understand Gen Ed.

Do our faculty know and believe in the purpose of Gen Ed?

When we do roll out any updated Gen Ed program, messaging to students, through faculty, is essential. Our message will be critical to students’ understanding. What can instructors do to get student buy-in on the purpose of Gen Ed? It was suggested that faculty could hold sessions to discuss ways to get that student buy-in. Also, asking instructors to gather artifacts of student work this semester will spur instructors to think about how their students relate to Gen Ed.

It was noted that we have heard nothing about the MUS Gen Ed Council. As far as we know, they met once in early Fall 2019, and have not met since. The Provost supplied the two suggestions which came from that one meeting: a core of 12-15 credits or a themed structure. It was stated that waiting for the MUS Council will only hinder our efforts; we should move on without them.

Kathleen Thatcher stated that she has found a book which would be a good resource for the committee as we review other universities’ Gen Ed programs: *General Education Essentials: A Guide for College Faculty* by Paul Hanstedt. She will provide the first two chapters, electronically, to the committee. If anyone would like a copy of the book, she will order it by Monday.

## **B. Removing Courses Not Offered from Gen Ed**

Communication & Theatre and English have both discussed cleaning up old courses.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.