

General Education Committee Minutes: 12/11/2018

Present: Victor Piercey (Director), Jimmie Johnson, Paul Zube (FNTFO), Kathryn Wolfer (Senate Liaison), and Dawn Schavey (EIO)

Absent: John Scott Gray (CAS), Emmanuel Jahev (COHP)Debbie Dawson-Gunther (CET), Clifton Franklund (Assessment Coordinator), Kristy Motz (FLITE), Jacob Pollack (COEHS), Angie Mishler (Academic Counselors and Student Affairs and Leonard Johnson (Academic Affairs).

1. Approval of Agenda

Approved unanimously, with the “special topics courses” item below added.

2. Consent Agenda

Minutes

Approve Collaboration: ENGL 260

Approve Collaboration: ENGL 416

Approve Natural Science: PHSC 190

Table Communication: CARE courses (pending discussions between the subcommittee and the proposer)

Approved unanimously, including two electronic votes.

3. Updates

- The Problem Solving proposal for CARE 102 has been withdrawn.
- Meetings for Spring Semester have been sent, with no meetings during final exam week (which will be future practice).

4. Proposals

None.

5. Policies and Procedures

None

6. Running Annual Agenda

- Gen Ed Minors Pilot Program

The committee discussed a memo outlining a general education minors pilot program. Concerns raised (and as appropriate responses offered parenthetically) were:

- Are alternative mechanisms besides courses allowed for general education? (Yes, the 2013 task force report envisioned cocurricular activities counting for gen ed, and other institutions offer general education minors, notably Virginia Tech)

- Might general education minors create competition for existing minors and potentially kill them off? (Unlikely. The minors envisions may save students credit hours that could be put toward another minor, and existing minors could be refashioned as gen ed minors).
- What are rules for overlaps between minors and general education, if any? Might this cause problems for accreditors such as ABET or ACBSP? (Worth looking into for HLC. Other limitations might just mean certain programs won't be able to participate)
- Some programs may allocate the credit hours removed from the general education bucket into their own programs, and is this desirable?
- The timing of introductory classes and capstones will be tricky if this is brought to scale, and will require very careful advising.
- Might there be a risk that Ferris degrees are weaker as, for example, students are only envisioned taking one science class if they take a gen ed minor. We might have to require more classes outside of the minor. In some sense, the MTA is a statement of what the state thinks is important and valuable in a degree, so what does it say about our degrees if we don't meet the same standards?
- Consider limiting to honors as an early starting point. That way if we like what we see, we can look closer into the issues raised above. If we can't accomplish with honors, it won't work with a more general population.

Next Steps: The Director of General Education will discuss the proposal with the Director of the Honors College, and will speak with the chairs of the subcommittees about a process. In addition, the Director of General Education will let the Director of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning know that there may be a faculty learning community related to this topic proposed for next year.

- Special Topics Courses

Honors would like to create special topics courses that are preapproved for general education. A special topics course is a course whose content varies based on who is teaching the course, usually involving a proposal and approval process. Special topics courses are typically based on a common discipline (ex.: Special Topics in Mathematics) or a theme or problem.

A special topics course that is preapproved provides the flexibility to offer these types of courses to honors students.

Suggestions for information to be submitted for approval were a set of common assignments that are flexible in terms of content as well as a set of common course outcomes, such as the general education outcomes for a given competency. The goal is to demonstrate a commitment to meeting the general education needs of the student.

Next Steps: The Director of General Education will discuss this issue with the subcommittee chairs and based on their input, prepare a procedure and forms for approval.