General Education Committee Minutes

April 17, 2002

Present: Mark Hardt Curt Kochner – ex-officio

Randall Gloege Mary McNally – ex-officio
George Benedict James Nowlin – ex-officio

Pat Holman Barb Pedula

Presiding: Mark Hardt, Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m. in the Bridger Room of the SUB.

There was a quorum.

Mark Hardt reported that he spoke to Matt Benacquista of the Department of Biological & Physical Sciences. Dr. Benacquista stated that it would be advantageous if the credits remained as they are for labs. He stated that the faculty does not always get credit for all the labs they teach, but keeping the one credit lab separate from the course at least gives them some credit.

It was noted that the regulations of the Montana University System require a "hands-on" lab, so students could not just perform experiments on computers.

It was also noted that in the North West policy on Gen Ed, the courses should be taught by faculty who are "clearly appropriately qualified." Students have often complained that all Gen Ed courses are taught by part-time faculty. The question was then posed as to how qualified a faculty member must be to teach Gen Ed courses. North West requires that if Gen Ed courses are to transfer, they must be taught by a person with at least a Master's degree.

It was noted that Bozeman, Missoula and others have upwards of 200 courses to choose from in Gen Ed, and Bozeman requires several credits more than the MUS Transfer Core.

It was then stated that a good step forward for North West accreditation, which is coming soon, would be to assess the Gen Ed Program as it is now. The basis for assessment used could be the points listed in the Undergraduate Catalog (page 63 in the current catalog). We should assess how students are meeting these goals.

It was also noted that the Committee could assess the syllabi of Gen Ed courses to assure that the goals in the catalog are being addressed. It was also noted that most instructors say they assess their students by testing them. Is this enough?

It was decided that the North West requirements for assessment of Gen Ed should be brought to the next meeting to find out what exactly the committee must do. If the requirements are vague, the committee has a great deal of latitude to work with.

One method of assessment the University could employ would be to clarify how Gen Ed courses fit into the Gen Ed Program and then demonstrate what is done with courses that do not fit the program.

The question was then raised as to how it will be proven that students accomplish the goals listed in the catalog. One suggestion was a "sophomore thesis" writing course wherein the students would assess Gen Ed courses. The Gen Ed Committee would read these papers; however, money and time are required for this solution. It was noted, though, that North West states assessment should be *qualitative*, not *quantitative*.

It was then noted that a mission statement or a statement of the philosophy of Gen Ed should be composed at the next meeting.

It was then noted that if the number of courses offered in the Gen Ed Program was reduced, departments would have to create courses students could take as electives. The departments would have to attract students since the students are no longer required to take some of the department's courses as Gen Eds. It was then stated that if the number of courses offered as Gen Ed were cut, there would be a huge staffing program. Many students would be taking the same course, resulting in huge classes or multiple sections. A suggestion was offered that courses be capped, but ensure that enough Gen Ed courses are offered each year/semester so students could take another required course.

Goals of the next meeting (April 24):

- Discuss North West assessment requirements
- Write a Mission/Philosophy Statement of Gen Ed
- All committee members are asked to bring an undergraduate catalog

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe