

**General Education Committee
Retreat Minutes**

August 30, 2004

Present: Mark Hardt
 Connie Landis
 Noreen Lee
 Randall Gloege
 Michael Dennis
 Gary Amundson (for L. Steerey)

Absent: James Nowlin – *excused*

Presiding: Mark Hardt, Chair

Mark Hardt called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m. in the Chancellor's Conference Room.

I. Welcome and Review

This is going to be a long and difficult semester. At the end of last spring, the Senate gave the Committee provisional authority to move forward if some "homework" was completed by September 23, 2004.

II. Issues from Academic Senate

A. Meeting for Faculty—How to Submit Courses for the New Structure

This will be the easiest step. The Committee needs to meet with each department in Arts and Sciences and the other colleges one by one to discuss what is planned for this fall. This needs to happen as soon as possible, hopefully with the beginning-of-year meetings that are happening this week.

B. Discussion of Student Voting on the General Education Committee

- Motion by Michael Dennis, seconded by Connie Landis to recommend to the Academic Senate that students be involved in the General Education Committee as ex-officio members.

- Motion carried unanimously.

C. Assessment Tool for the Whole Program, Not Just Courses.

Quantitative assessment results in "teaching to the test," and qualitative assessment can be subjective and it can be difficult to maintain consistency. An assessment tool has to satisfy Northwest, be telescopic rather than microscopic, and address how we ensure academic excellence.

It was noted that the courses have to be evaluated before the whole program can be. It was noted that the matrix can be used to assess the individual courses, and concrete responses to that matrix are essential.

It was noted that consistency needs to be maintained among the sections of a given Gen Ed course. The objectives of a course should all be the same. How the instructor gets to those objectives is academic freedom.

It was noted that the students could be given the matrix, after the objectives for the course have been filled in, and the students could respond by stating whether the course achieved those objectives. The instructor of the course should also do a self-evaluation to discern whether those objectives were achieved. The instructor could also submit whatever additional materials she/he feels is important to the evaluation of the course (such as tests, papers, etc.).

It was noted that written comments by students will soon pile up to an unmanageable amount of information. A yes/no questionnaire or a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree would give more manageable information.

Something akin to the matrix could then be used to evaluate the whole program. What that tool will look like will have to be decided after the courses have been evaluated.

It was further noted that departments could use the matrix to make whole-scale changes to a course, rather than leaving changes to one instructor.

It was noted that instructors can be given the option of putting the matrix (filled out for their course) in the syllabus. Students would then see the objectives they are to achieve. However, this would be redundant if students see the matrix again at the end of the semester when they are asked to evaluate the course.

It was cited that the whole point of the matrix is to achieve consistency between and among the many sections of each Gen Ed/Academic Foundations course. Once a department accepts a matrix for a course, the matrix becomes the objectives for that course.

It was noted that we should start with just the instructors evaluating their courses with the matrix. The student component (which will require funding) can be added in a year or two.

It was noted that Northwest wants learning outcomes for the program. They are essentially already listed in the Committee's proposal under the description of each category.

D. Bumping of Stagnant Courses

It was noted that if courses are to be bumped for low quality, the Committee needs more than just a yes/no answer from students and/or instructors. A tool will have to be made that instructors can fill out that will give more information than just yes this was achieved and no this wasn't.

It was cited that if courses do score inadequately on this evaluation, we need to standardize a "probationary period" for the time given to the department to make changes to that course. Other areas of information for the quality of a course could be through faculty interviews, student interviews, and peer reviews. This gives many avenues to study a given course.

It was also noted that faculty members should be given due process, a chance to state their case for the Gen Ed Committee.

It was cited that courses cannot be removed from Academic Foundations unless it is a catalog year.

It was noted that if a course is under probation, the department will be given a year to make changes. The results of an evaluation will be received by the Gen Ed Committee after the end of a semester. A department would then receive a “warning” for a course, and the department would have one year starting from the date of that warning.

It was further noted that there has to be a specified time that the assessment tool is distributed to students or instructors. It must be at or near the end of the semester.

- Motion by Randall Gloege, seconded by Michael Dennis to approve the following resolution:

The learning outcomes (requested by Northwest) are stated in the General Education Committee Proposal (specifically, page 10). Those outcomes will be assessed using the matrix through a faculty self-assessment and student evaluations for use in the quality control of Gen Ed/Academic Foundations courses. Courses that fail to meet their stated objectives will be given a warning, and then put on probation for one to two years before action is taken (depending on the catalog schedule). It is the department’s responsibility to remeliorate the course, and that department has the right to defend the course to this Committee.

- Resolution approved.

E. General Education/Academic Foundations Proposal

It was cited that the Global Skills category needs to be clarified as to which kinds of courses students will have to take. Subcategories will have to be added to the category list.

F. Double Counting

It was noted that the absolute no double counting rule will not fly. It was noted that if a student ends up doubling on the same subject matter (i.e. a Biology major taking BIOL 101), perhaps that requirement in Academic Foundations could be waived. It’s already happening in some departments with the current system. It was noted that problem areas will have to be negotiated.

The meeting adjourned at 1:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.