

**General Education Committee  
Minutes**

March 23, 2011

<b>Present:</b>	Bernie Quetchenbach Tom Regele Neil Jussila Brent Roberts Tasneem Khaleel (ex-officio)	Matt Redinger Mark Fenderson Elizabeth Fullon Becky Lyons (ex-officio)
<b>Absent:</b>	Neil Suits Michael Scarlett Melinda Tilton – <i>excused</i>	Mike Havens  Kurt Toenjes – <i>excused</i>
<b>Guests:</b>	Ben Barckholtz	Jessica Smothers
<b>Presiding:</b>	Matt Redinger, Chairperson	

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Matt Redinger called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m. in the Missouri room.

The minutes of January 26 were accepted as presented.

I. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

**A. Alignment of MSUB Learning Outcomes with the Montana University System's "Essential Learning Outcomes"**

Dr. Redinger noted that we have not been tasked by anyone to make any changes to our outcomes. However, it might be useful to compare and perhaps use some of the MUS ELOs. It was cited that there are many different outcome lists floating around for Gen Ed, including the FLOC lists for the transferability initiative, the ELOs, and the outcomes list created by AACU adopted by the MUS.

It was noted that each category of the MUS ELOs lists several things which can only be described as "methodology" for a course, followed by the outcomes for a course. It was cited that the AACU outcomes should also be included in our comparison.

Dean Tasneem Khaleel stated that AACU is trying to begin a similar movement to No Child Left Behind, but without the abrupt implementation. AACU has begun their LEAP program (Liberal Education and America's Promise) to help programs beyond teacher education create outcomes. It's a good bet that the Commissioner of Higher Education will sign the Montana University System up to be in the LEAP program.

It was noted that the first MSUB outcome under Fine Arts is worded very strangely. Perhaps we could use some of the verbiage from the ELOs to refine our outcomes.

## **B. Gen Ed and the Freshman Seminars**

Guests: Jessica Smothers, Student Success Coordinator  
Ben Barckholtz, Director, Academic Support Center

It was noted that the Freshman Seminar is enjoyable to teach and valuable for the students, but the real issue is where to go from here. Do we make it mandatory for all students? If so, how? Should it be included in Gen Ed?

Ms. Smothers stated that this is a two-year pilot project, but we need to be making decisions about what happens after next year. The course is designed to help students transition into college and also includes a service learning component. The students learn college skills as well as read a novel. What should be changed about the course? Do we want to keep it? We need to decide the next steps.

It was cited that we hope to see some data regarding retention of students who have taken the course. Ms. Smother noted that among the students who took the course in Fall 2010, there is an 8% higher rate of retention into the Spring 2011 semester. However, the Fall 2010 to Fall 2011 retention data will be of the greatest value.

Mr. Barckholtz noted that this course does a lot of good in many different ways. The issue is where will it “count” if we choose to keep it. Should it remain general or be a major-specific course? Also, if this is going to become a formal course, we need to have it in the Academic Senate curriculum process by this time next year.

Dean Khaleel noted that we already have data supporting keeping the course; we must simply decide if this is a practice that is good for our students.

Ms. Smothers stated that we offered 14 sections of the seminar, equaling 285 students enrolled, last Fall. That was out of approximately 600 main campus freshmen. It was noted that if the course becomes mandatory for all freshmen, we will need two-and-a-half times more sections, and therefore two-and-a-half times more faculty to teach the course.

It was noted that if the course is offered as major-specific, it rather defeats the purpose of the course. Students may be better equipped to decide their major after taking the seminar. There is also the problem of who would teach the major-specific type of course.

The question was raised as to what other Universities are doing. Ms. Smothers noted that the courses at Bozeman and Missoula are fundamentally different from ours. Missoula offers “freshmen interest groups” where students choose by topic. Bozeman’s course is pretty intense and is more of a “great books” course.

It was suggested that a freshman seminar course could be created for each Gen Ed category. Students would only be required to take one. It was noted that students would then be giving up a regular Gen Ed course to take that course, which will not make the faculty happy.

It was suggested that there really is room for Gen Ed to be increased by 1 credit, to 38 credits. We could add the freshman seminar course to Gen Ed without causing problems in most majors. In the next meeting, we should examine how many majors would be affected by a 1 credit increase in Gen Ed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.