

**General Education Committee  
Minutes**

December 12, 2016

<b>Present:</b>	Don Wilathgamuwa James Barron Emily Arendt Patricia Nichols Megan Thomas	Melinda Tilton Brent Finger Leanne Gilbertson Elizabeth Fullon Tara Haupt (ex-officio)
<b>Absent:</b>	Bernie Quetchenbach Tom Regele* Ken Miller Matt Redinger (ex-officio)	Matthew Queen* John Roberts* Scott Harris*
	*excused	

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Jim Barron, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:18 p.m. in McMullen 305.

The minutes of November 14 were accepted as presented.

**I. ITEMS – FIRST READING**

**Item 26** Gen Ed Course: M 130 Mathematics for Elementary Teachers I. Submit for category I.A. Mathematics.

**Item 26.a** Gen Ed Course: M 131 Mathematics for Elementary Teachers II. Remove from category I.A. Mathematics.

These items will be postponed until someone can be present to talk about them.

**II. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Peer Practices – Report on Research Assignments**

It appears that many of the universities on our peer list have very similar Gen Ed programs. Cameron University, Lewis-Clark State College, Auburn University at Montgomery, Missouri Southern State University, and Louisiana State University-Shreveport all seem to have very similar programs, with categories and lists of courses. Armstrong Atlantic State University seems to be the main contender for a different program. Armstrong has a required First Year Seminar (FYS), but

students are grouped into cohorts and there is another Gen Ed course linked to the FYS. The courses most often linked to the FYS are either English or information literacy, building important skills right off the bat. After this FYS and linked course are completed, Armstrong's program is basically the same as ours. They also require an exam covering Gen Ed before a student is allowed to graduate.

It was noted that our FYS course is doing some career exploration stuff now. It might be a good idea to contact Armstrong and see what their FYS course includes, since that information is not available on their website. However, this is an idea we could begin to do here, linking our FYS to a writing course, or the LSCI 125 Research in the Information Age information literacy course. Another option would be to require the FYS course of all incoming freshmen. It will increase costs, but if it increases retention, the costs would be offset. We could also divide up our FYS course by major, and even have different sections for non-traditionally aged students.

It was noted that in the process of research, a website was discovered that rates or grades Gen Ed programs. This website has seven requirements, and MSUB meets 3 of them, so we got a C grade. Both Bemidji State University and MSU-Bozeman received D grades.

The University of Southern Maine has a very clear, coherent vision statement about their Gen Ed curriculum, with references to developing personal investment in education. Their program is very interdisciplinary, and it appears this has been years in the making, as they started in 2009. Maine uses thematic clusters, where a student takes three courses, two of which are from the same prefix and one is from a different prefix, so students approach an issue from different viewpoints. They also require that students complete a FYS, college writing, and quantitative reasoning before they can proceed in the rest of the Gen Ed program. It was cited that the University of Southern Maine considers a D- a passing grade! It was noted that we are required by the Board of Regents to consider a C- the lowest passing grade.

Midwestern State University has a program very similar to ours. However, they have a number of assessment mechanisms, including writing proficiency exams, the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency, and the National Survey of Student Engagement. They work with other universities to collaboratively review their Gen Ed program and offerings, and they assess all of their Gen Ed courses to align with category goals. It was noted that this is the multi-tiered assessment Vice Provost Redinger is endorsing.

It was noted that all the universities are doing the same type of Gen Ed as MSUB, using a list of courses. However, it seems that Armstrong Atlantic State University and University of Southern Maine are doing things on top of that list of courses—things that we could emulate. We could also follow Midwestern State University's example on assessment. Coupling the FYS with a Gen Ed course seems like such a good idea and it should help with retention. Honors courses could be an option for the linked courses. We would need options for students right out of high school and students who have been away from school for some time. We also need standardized outcomes that are easy to understand and measure, to articulate the skills a student should take away from Gen Ed.

**B. Discuss “General Education Transformed” by Paul Gaston**

One of the simplest ideas gleaned from “General Education Transformed” is that we can add some of these ideas to our Gen Ed program without totally altering its structure. Anything we can include will add value to the program. One idea is a “signature work” for students. In the FYS, students would come up with anywhere from two to four ideas for a project they could do—not that the project must be completed. Students would then create a plan to navigate Gen Ed to fit their signature project, and justify that path. If students change their minds, they come up with a new plan and a new signature project. The point being, students would think about and discuss how Gen Ed would help them with their signature work. This whole idea relies on a required FYS for all students, unless we put the burden on the Advising Center to make sure all students do this work. This idea dovetails nicely with linking a writing or information literacy/research course to the FYS course. This plan would give students support initially, so they don’t just choose whatever Gen Ed course fits in their schedules.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.