MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS
Access & Excellence

General Education Committee
Minutes

February 15, 2017

Present: Don Wilathgamuwa   Bernie Quetchenbach
              Melinda Tilton   Jim Barron
              Brent Finger   Emily Arendt
              Leanne Gilbertson   Patricia Nichols
              Ken Miller   Scott Harris
              Elizabeth Fullon   Megan Thomas
              Matt Redinger (ex-officio)   Florence Garcia (ex-officio)

Absent: Matthew Queen*   Tom Regele*
              John Roberts*

                        *excused

Jim Barron, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:17 p.m. in the SUB Missouri room.

The minutes of January 18 were accepted as presented.

I.   DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Vice Provost Report/Assessment Update & Report on Academic Senate Approved Proficiency Profile Testing Requirement

The ETS exams have been ordered and delivered. Last week, we sent out letters to students, one for "local" students in the Billings vicinity, and one for online students. It turns out that the Admissions Office cannot differentiate between online and on-site students. So, we sent the "local" letter to students in and around the Billings area. Any student farther than Columbus, we sent the online letter. The letters ask students to take the ETS test, and they will be given back the $50 they paid for the graduation fee. This letter went to students who will be graduating Spring 2017 or later. The numbers were about 250 local students and a little under 100 online students.

Dr. Barron is the contact person, and he has received seven responses for on-site students. The online students are to contact him for a code, which they can use at the ETS website to take the test, which is timed. He has not heard from any online students yet. He hopes to get maybe 150 students taking the test this Spring. If we get less than 80, the data will not be helpful. If a lot of

students take the test and the $50, it will cost the Vice Provost's Office quite a bit, but if we don't get a big response, that just strengthens our argument to make the test required of all students.

It seemed that the Senate wanted to see this Spring's data before we can require anything or put requirements in the catalog. So, the earliest a requirement could be put into the catalog at this point is Fall 2018.

For the on-site testing, we do need people to staff the six sessions. Dr. Barron will be present for at least four of the six. Mostly what is required is checking the students' IDs, giving instructions, administering the test, and gathering the finished tests. A sign-up sheet was passed around.

It is acknowledged that making the ETS test required of all graduating students will be problematic, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. We may learn something from testing all our students that we would not get from testing a sample and comparing them nationally.

B. Report on ePortfolio Conference & continued ePortfolio Discussion

The level of student engagement from using an ePortfolio is amazing. Universities using them got way more out of them than they ever expected. Unfortunately, the conference was corporate sponsored, so there was a lot of promotion of their product. The main concern with an ePortfolio requirement is that it will work well for students who are already reflective, but for those students who are just here to get a degree—to get in and get out—the ePortfolio will probably not work as well. The latter type is most of our graduates. The ePortfolio could be a very powerful qualitative assessment tool for us. It's also a great place for students to archive work electronically. It was suggested that even if we don't have students write a reflection on each Gen Ed course, the ePortfolio will still be an illustration of their pathway through Gen Ed and MSUB. The business and medical coding programs at City College are currently doing this hard copy, so the D2L ePortfolio will be very useful to them.

If we are to make a recommendation to the Senate about ePortfolios, what should we recommend?
- Students required to upload at least two artifacts from each Gen Ed course, chosen by students but can be recommended by the instructor
- Students required to write a paragraph-long reflection about what the course did for them
  - Criteria will be needed so we don't get course evaluations—AAC&U's learning outcomes could work
- Require instructors of Gen Ed courses to make this part of their course
  - Can we do this or does it infringe on academic freedom?
  - Course not acceptable for Gen Ed if instructor does not include ePortfolio
  - Gen Ed courses reviewed by Chairs Fall of odd years—Use this evaluation to ensure compliance
- Review of the artifacts: Who will do this, and will it be all of them or a sample?
- How does this become data? Does it become data?

We will also need to explain why we want to do this. The bottom line is: having students reflect on their Gen Ed courses is good for students. Does it matter if it provides data or not?

It was cautioned that the COE tried a portfolio system about ten years ago, and it proved to be incredibly cumbersome and work-intensive.

We need to answer some basic questions like why we are using the ETS test and why Gen Ed needs to change. We should get input from chairs and faculty on using these methods to assess Gen Ed. We need to have a rationale for everything we propose. It was argued that the Committee has been discussing and receiving feedback for years. We need some kind of outside assessment like the ETS test because our internal assessment a few years ago was a massive failure.

We need a good rationale, and that also means rewriting our explanation of Gen Ed and the learning outcomes.

This is not about defining Gen Ed; it's about making our students better.

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.