

**General Education Committee  
Minutes**

March 15, 2017

|                 |                            |                     |
|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Present:</b> | Don Wilathgamuwa           | Bernie Quetchenbach |
|                 | Melinda Tilton             | Jim Barron          |
|                 | Brent Finger               | Emily Arendt        |
|                 | Leanne Gilbertson          | Ken Miller          |
|                 | Elizabeth Fullon           | Megan Thomas        |
|                 | Matt Redinger (ex-officio) |                     |

|                |               |                   |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Absent:</b> | Matthew Queen | Tom Regele*       |
|                | John Roberts* | Patricia Nichols* |
|                | Scott Harris  |                   |

\*excused

**Guest:** Lance Mouser

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Jim Barron, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:19 p.m. in the SUB Missouri room.

The minutes of February 15 were accepted as presented.

**I. ITEM – FIRST READING**

**Item 58.a** Gen Ed Course: M 140 College Math for Healthcare. Submit for category I.A. Mathematics.

- Motion by Bernie Quetchenbach, seconded by Melinda Tilton to **approve Item 58.a on first reading.**

Lance Mouser, City College Gen Ed, stated that the nursing program is currently requiring college algebra as their math course. The statewide review of nursing programs resulted in the recommendation that algebra is not meeting the students' needs, so this new course is being proposed. This is a Common Course Numbered course, and Great Falls College, Flathead Valley, and Missoula College are or will be offering the course as well. It is helpful to have this designated as a Gen Ed course not only for the nursing program, but for students who switch out of nursing majors, since they can still count this course as meeting their math requirement. The new M 140 is definitely more appropriate to majors.

- Motion carried.

- Motion by Bernie Quetchenbach, seconded by Melinda Tilton to **waive second reading of Item 58.a.**

- Motion carried.

## II. ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Dr. Barron reported that out of the 340 students who were sent letters about the Proficiency Profile test, about 66 have committed to taking the test. Of those, about 30 will be taking it online. The on site students (about 30) are spread across all of the 6 sessions we are offering; the most in any section is 11. So, we probably don't need more than one person to run each session. Therefore, Dr. Barron will run all of the sessions, except for the April 1 times, which will be covered by those who volunteered. About half of the students who wanted to test online were actually too far away to test in person, but several more requested the online testing for other reasons. It seems that the convenience of online appeals to our students a great deal, and our best bet for future testing will likely be testing entirely online. It was suggested that we offer a larger incentive for testing in person, such as \$50 to students who test on site, and \$25 for online testing. It was noted that the size of the incentive doesn't seem to make a lot of difference.

Our lack of response from these 340 students is really a win-win for us. If we had a huge response, then we would get the data we sorely need. However, this low number of responses is just further evidence that we need to require the Proficiency Profile of all of our graduates.

If we do go with required testing of all students, offering the test exclusively online, we should probably preface the test with a short introductory video. The video would be similar to the speech we give to students in a classroom about why we need this data and it's important students make an effort on the test.

The main issues with requiring the Proficiency Profile test are that we seem to be assessing our students to death and that faculty don't know exactly what the test is assessing in their discipline. We need to reinforce that the purpose of the Proficiency Profile is to measure the outcomes of Gen Ed, and to use that information to make decisions about our Gen Ed program and move forward. Gen Ed is hard to assess.

## III. VICE PROVOST REPORT

Dr. Redinger noted that our main issue with the report due to NWCCU is that we don't have the three years of data we said we would. So, we can tell them the things we have tried and this is the plan we have now, because we can show we are taking action to fix the situation. The clearest message received from NWCCU is that we must distribute ownership of the report. Everyone should share in writing it and know what's in it. The GEC will be asked to help write the narrative on how we are assessing Gen Ed. It will include what we did, what didn't work, and where we are going from here.

#### IV. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

##### **A. Report on AAC&U General Education and Assessment Conference: Design Thinking for Student Learning**

It was noted that many of the presenters at the conference were much further along in the process than we are. We are unusual in our use of ETS testing. Most of the presenters identified core learning objectives and then have faculty report on how their students perform on those objectives. This approach requires a lot of faculty investment. It was noted that we tried this approach, and it's very much like the fox guarding the hen house. Faculty can make sure that students know ahead of time exactly how to answer the test question that assesses a given Gen Ed outcome.

It was responded that the key is a well thought out plan in place before assessment begins. We can rebuild Gen Ed not by talking about what's wrong, but building on the good ideas we have. Our purpose of Gen Ed and outcomes are not written in a meaningful way. We need to re-evaluate our core idea of Gen Ed and then build on it by re-writing our poorly written outcomes. We need outcomes that we can then clearly align each course to. It was suggested that we could survey students and employers about what they want from Gen Ed. There is actually a lot of research from AAC&U about what employers want their students to know, and it's things that are covered in their Essential Learning Outcomes (Inquiry and analysis, Critical and creative thinking, Written and oral communication, Quantitative literacy, Information literacy, Teamwork and problem solving). However, these ELOs don't cover anything about math or history or any specific discipline, so we can't simply adopt them as our own.

For the next meeting, it was agreed that the members will research the Gen Ed core statements of purpose from our peer institutions. We will then discuss what our students should have after they have completed Gen Ed.

The meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.