

**General Education Committee
Minutes**

November 9, 2017

Present:	Bernie Quetchenbach Jim Barron Tom Regele Cori Hart Scott Harris Megan Thomas Tara Haupt (ex-officio)	Melinda Tilton Matthew Queen Leanne Gilbertson Rebecca Muller Lance Mouser Brenna Beckett (student)
Absent:	Tien Chih* John Roberts*	Emily Arendt* Shayla Garman (student)*
	*excused	

Jim Barron called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. in the SUB Missouri room.

The minutes of October 12 & electronic vote October 27 were accepted as presented.

I. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Item 16.e ARTZ 105 Visual Language-Drawing. Change course description.

- Motion by Scott Harris, seconded by Melinda Tilton to **accept Item 16.e for information.**
- Motion carried.

II. ASSESSMENT UPDATE

When the Committee last met, discussion of the recommendation by the GEC to require the ETS Proficiency Profile test of all students was ended. The Provost would not agree to testing all students, but rather a sample. Dr. Barron and Ms. Tilton sent a memo to the administration, forwarding the GEC's recommendation for testing for all students anyway. The recommendation was bolstered by: testing a sample of our students makes it unfair for all students; asking for volunteers doesn't work; and volunteers do not make up a random sample, therefore calling into

question the validity of the data. The memo recommended mandatory testing and then emphasized that the Committee will be looking into other methods of assessment to be used in addition to the ETS test that we do not have time to implement before our accreditation report is due.

Vice Provost Matt Redinger responded to this memo, noting that he had recently gone to a conference about ePortfolios, and they are a great idea, but have so many moving parts and so much buy-in from the faculty is required. He agrees with the need for the ETS test data as some kind of assessment of Gen Ed. Dr. Redinger then noted that the Provost wants to know what the plan would be if a Gen Ed category were found to be underperforming on learning objectives. Dr. Barron had responded via email that the Committee could put into place a protocol for asking all department chairs involved in an underperforming category (if one is identified) to submit syllabi and written justification as to how the courses currently meet outcomes, and how courses will be modified in future to attempt to improve performance on some metric. This is exactly what the Provost is looking for, so Dr. Hoar seems to be in favor of mandatory testing if an underperforming protocol is created.

So, the Committee needs to create a protocol for underperforming categories, and we need to give departments a chance to respond in case the problem lies in the assessment, rather than the courses. Also, we should not create strict criteria. The GEC is preparing to ask department chairs to review their Gen Ed courses, and that process would enable any department with underperforming courses to discuss what may be happening in the courses and how the issues may be fixed. Basically, we need to provoke discussion with departments. A protocol could be as simple as (1) notification to departments with a course or courses in an underperforming category, (2) ask the departments to respond, to give them an opportunity to reexamine the curriculum, and (3) move forward with those recommendations. It is really not our responsibility to move forward with the recommendations, but rather to hand them off to the administration.

It has been suggested that, if we do mandatory testing, we could offer paper, in-person testing a couple times on campus, and if students wish to test online they can, but they must bear the cost of the proctoring fees. ETS can help students find a proctor no matter where they are, and it would be helpful to have a specific vendor students can use. True distance students are used to paying additional fees anyway, and this may motivate students who are living in Billings to take the paper test. It was noted that if financial aid can be used to pay this fee, it would be great.

Cultural Diversity Questions in the ETS Test

We reviewed the ETS test to pick out questions appropriate to our Cultural Diversity category. Dr. Barron then took those questions to ETS and asked for an average score on that particular subset of courses. ETS said they don't do that. However, ETS then said that for a small additional fee per year (\$450) we can get the "full package" that allows us to see question-by-question results, both national averages and for our MSUB data. So, ETS won't do the analysis for us, but they will give us the results for each question and we can do the analysis ourselves. Once we have 50 tests completed, we can get these results from ETS for our students.

III. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Template/Guide for Biennial Review of Gen Ed Courses

Dr. Barron and Ms. Tilton will write this up and send it to the members for review before it goes out to department chairs.

It was noted that the reviews could easily result in departments asking for the Gen Ed category outcomes to be revised, which the Committee would welcome.

B. Crafting a Gen Ed Core Statement/Purpose, Using Borrowed Language from Peer Institutions

It was noted that the current learning outcomes in Gen Ed were put together very quickly. They need to be revised, but we need to review or create anew our Gen Ed statement of purpose, which will then guide the outcomes. We need our students to know why they are taking Gen Ed. Employers want students with a broad knowledge base, so while we may not want to explicitly talk about employers in the Gen Ed statement, this fact can be recognized.

It was agreed that writing the core statement may not work well mid-meeting. This document will take time, and should be available to all to work on when the inspiration hits.

C. Student ePortfolios and Other Options for Gen Ed Assessment

The ETS test is just one facet; we need other ways to assess Gen Ed. The ePortfolios are a great idea, but will require a huge amount of work to build, and ongoing work to review.

It was noted that D2L now includes a portfolio and reflection component. As the Committee discussed before, students could be asked to upload one or two artifacts from each Gen Ed course, and write a reflection on how that course impacted their college careers. It was cited that we will need to teach students how to write those reflection pieces, and to emphasize that they are not intended as reviews of the course or the instructor. The GEC will likely need to write a guide. It was noted that instructors of all Gen Ed courses will not have to grade these reflections, but they will have to make sure the reflections are completed. The only enforcement we can propose is to remove a course from Gen Ed if the instructors are not maintaining the completion of the reflections. The reflection pieces will likely have to be reviewed by the Gen Ed Committee.

It was suggested that student focus groups could be a productive means of assessment. Students would prefer to discuss a course than take another test. Food could be offered as incentive!

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.