General Education Committee
Minutes

October 15, 2021

Present:	Bernie Quetchenbach	Melinda Tilton
	Josh Hill	Emily Arendt
	Mara Pierce	Scott Jeppesen
	Rachel Schaffer	Jason Comer
	Sarah Friedman	Jeff Willardson
	Cori Day	Brian Gurney
	Lance Mouser	Sep Eskandari (ex-officio)
Absent:	Tien Chih	Megan Thomas*
		*excused
Guest:	Anne Cole	Jennifer Lynn
	Kathleen Thatcher	Austin Bennett
	Cheri Johannes	

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m. in COE 323 with some members attending via webex.

I.   ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The minutes of September 17 were accepted as presented.

II.   ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Academic Senate approved our Gen Ed program outcomes, and the outcomes will be listed in the catalog. It was agreed that the category outcomes will stay in the catalog, and the program outcomes will be added.

Kathleen Thatcher, Director of Assessment & Accreditation, noted that they just wrapped up the mid-cycle NWCCU review today. One of the things the reviewers emphasized is outcome accessibility for students, so it's probably a good idea to have all the outcomes listed in the catalog, with a clear explanation of program outcomes and course-level outcomes.

III.   DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Polishing Language in Gen Ed Purpose Statement
Guest: Austin Bennett, City College Gen Ed
Mr. Bennett noted that he is a Senator and did approve the Gen Ed Purpose Statement last year, but has since moved in the direction of equity in language. The idea that students are empty vessels when they come to us is an old, misleading idea. Students come to us *already* participants in the ongoing accumulation of knowledge and understanding, *already* productive and responsible members of their community.

The following changes were suggested:
> General education at MSU Billings is designed to ~~initiate~~ **advance** students as participants in the ongoing accumulation of human knowledge and understanding. General education courses promote the development of respect for diversity, along with skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and communication necessary for students to **be** ~~become~~ productive and responsible members of their communities.

B. WICHE "Interstate Passport" program
Guests: Provost Sep Eskandari, Registrar Cheri Johannes, & Senate Chair Jennifer Lynn
Provost Eskandari stated that the idea of helping students transfer is not new, but WICHE is seeking to expand intra-state transfer. Students would complete Gen Ed on one campus and transfer a "passport" to another, which has already agreed to accept their Gen Eds as complete. If we sign on, we will both grant passports and accept them.

Dr. Lynn noted that this passport will not affect our accreditation or Gen Ed assessment. We will use our outcomes and criteria; we are not obliged to use the passport's. The big question of this project is the timeline. The passport will be discussed at the October 21 Senate meeting.

Dr. Thatcher noted that she has faculty colleagues in Wyoming (at similar sized schools to MSUB) who have implemented the passport who would be happy to answer our questions.

It was noted that the passport includes 9 categories and 63 outcomes, some of which we don't even have. How can we be "in alignment" with a passport that includes areas our Gen Ed does not?

Further, there are a huge number of roles to be filled as part of the passport program, as well as a large team on campus to be assembled. All of this will also need to be done fairly quickly, as the anticipated date the passport would be effective is Fall 2022.

The question of fees was raised. It was responded that the annual cost is about $5,000, but OCHE has a grant which will cover the first two of the five mandated years. The steps to sign-on include a letter of intent, agreement, and mapping of our courses to their outcomes. The mapping could probably run into Summer 2022, if we hope to implement for Fall 2022. Also, as the project progresses, OCHE could decide to back the program, moving the cost to the System level.

Cheri Johannes, Registrar, noted that the Montana University System has not joined as a group, but that may be WICHE's eventual intent. The passport will also take advantage of the current systems already set up, like Common Course Numbering.

The question was raised as to what kind of reporting we will do to the passport system. Ms. Thatcher noted that we will likely have to report assessment data, which we would have already gathered anyway.

It seems that the passport idea is growing in popularity across the country, and soon students will expect it.

It was cited that we should find out what institutions joined passport and then *left* after the mandatory five years—and *why* they left.

It was noted that the 63 outcomes seems like an about-face from the direction we have been moving. It was responded that we do not have to use their outcomes. It's most likely that we are matching our courses to their outcomes, but that is all.

The question was raised as to exceptions. Students who take their Gen Eds elsewhere will encounter issues with joining a teaching program, because state requirements are very strict on which Gen Ed courses teaching majors take.

Any questions for the Wyoming schools should be sent to the Co-Chairs and they will discuss and report back to the Committee.

The decision to join will likely have to be made before the November GEC meeting.

C. Curriculum Mapping
Ms. Thatcher stated that, using the spreadsheet she put together, each course can be mapped to the program outcomes, according to whether that outcome is *introduced*, *developed*, or *achieved*. There may be overlap of *develop* and *achieve* within the same course. The intent is to learn which outcomes are saturated and which outcomes are perhaps not being addressed in courses. The Committee should speak with course instructors because what student work is being done is a great point to capture assessment data. There may be inconsistency between different course instructors, as well. One course will not fit cleanly into any category, but the overall picture is what we're after.

D. Revisit criteria for New Gen Ed courses
There are already faculty contacting the Co-Chairs about proposing new Gen Ed courses, so the criteria need to be set soon. The Committee must decide what is required and what is preferred.

It was noted that we need to clarify whether courses should meet category/course outcomes or program outcomes.

The meeting adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.

Prepared for: MSUB General Education Committee
Prepared by: Austin Grant Bennett, Vice Chair, Academic Senate
Date: October 15, 2021

General Education Purpose Statement:
Aligning Language with Purpose

Background

- Good faith
- General Education Purpose Statement Approved by Senate Spring 2019
- MUS Teaching Scholars Program (2020-2021): Equity and the Syllabus

Current Purpose Statement

General education at MSU Billings is designed <u>to initiate students as participants</u> in the ongoing accumulation of human knowledge and understanding. General education courses promote the development of respect for diversity, along with skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and communication necessary for students <u>to become productive and responsible</u> members of their communities.

Assumptions

- <u>To initiate students as participants</u>
  - o Are students "non-participants" prior to General Education?
  - o Are students "empty vessels" which must be filled?
  - o Who holds the keys to knowledge and understanding?
- <u>To become productive and responsible</u>
  - o Do students completely lack respect for diversity as well as transferable skills?
  - o Are students not productive and responsible?
  - o Who defines what is productive and responsible?

Mixed Message

Does the current general education purpose statement communicate a mixed message?

Suggestions

Possible inclusive language:

- o Facilitate
- o Support
- o Strengthen
- o Foster
- o Continued growth/ongoing growth
- o Partner with

Radical Suggestion

General education fosters student growth in respect for diversity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication which is useful in academics, the workplace, civic engagement, and everyday living.