

**General Education Curriculum Committee 2003-04
Meeting of April 19, 2004 - 3:00 p.m., Strickler 126B**

Minutes

Voting Members Attending: Berman, Boyd, Brown, Crim, Dugger, Gray, Holloman, Johnson, Kolers (Chair), Nahata, Schultz, Williams. *Others:* Billingsley (non-voting), Carden (staff), Huot (guest).

1. The minutes of March 22 and April 5 were approved.
2. Brian Huot, outgoing Director of Composition, gave an overview of the assessment proposal. Oversight of the general education curriculum is proposed through several methods.

Huot suggested keeping the assessment process simple in the beginning to determine if the course meets the outcomes. Rubrics could be built to rate them; however, this does not entail a ranking of the courses but a determination of adherence to the criteria set when first proposed. If a course does not satisfy the requirements, documentation will be necessary.

Billingsley was concerned not just with reporting the percentage of courses that did not meet the criteria but with what to do with them (how to fix them). Accrediting bodies, require that report card results be used to improve the program. The new SACS guidelines are based on the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) principle, which is focused on student learning. In addition to assessing the course, the University must look at the baseline status of the students; that is, where were they when they started and what quality was added? If changes are made for the benefit of the students, it is believed that the accreditation will be improved. All results must be documented. Some argue that what needs to be measured cannot be and what can be measured is not needed. There was concern about students not taking assessments seriously, whether a senior or a student in a particular class because the desired class was closed.

Pulling in faculty and student feedback on their experiences will also be valuable information in looking at the effectiveness of the overall general education program. This approach, coupled with the course review, involves three different sources of information to prepare an assessment report. Hearing about recurring problems from several venues is an indication that there is a need for improvement. A culture of inquiry about the program itself needs to begin. The first step is to develop a process.

What the committee asks will depend upon the questions it has. Some propose that the purpose of general education is to prepare students for the majors; others focus on the more general educational experience. Huot observed that students oftentimes write well in the first-year course but then need additional skills for writing a lab report. Writing across the curriculum is necessary. Some large schools test writing.

Huot pointed out that a weakness of the proposal is the lack of focus on student performance. Another method of assessment would be to review a sample of student work (electronic course portfolios). Standardized measures are less time-consuming and expensive; however, the more labor-intensive portfolios are more revealing. Perhaps a modest portfolio approach could piggy back on a modest assessment with continuous documentation (parceled out over time). Kolers questioned whether there would be a justifiable difference in results if an in-depth analysis was chosen over a general survey of each course. An audit approach, like the program review cycle, was discussed as a possibility.

The concern about posting exams in a “secure” spot resulted in a proposal to, instead, post exam information in terms of what students would be expected to know.

In the past, when a small group of faculty (Huot, Johnson, et al.), collected general education course information (syllabi, assignments, tests, portfolios) and assessed it, they were compensated. The importance of continuing this practice was stressed.

Although assessment is expensive, the issue is pressing. The general education program was set up on the premise of outcomes assessment and student learning, yet has not been successfully measured. To complicate matters, faculty members and even the CPE, cannot agree on the definition of “general education.”

3. The Dakan four-hour course proposal was briefly discussed. Brown reported that Education opposed the proposal, hands down. Big issues included the course matchings for transfer students, the effects on instructors of four-hour courses, and the timing due to budget cuts. There seemed to be a general consensus that the structural factor alone would squelch the proposal. Positive comments included Boyd’s experience with four-hour courses during his undergraduate years, the opportunity to teach more content, and the possibility of reducing the unmet student demand (tabled). Some felt that the rationale for the proposal should be based on research.

4. The Registrar’s Office has posted two types of unmet demand reports to <http://docushare.louisville.edu/dscgi/ds.py/View/Collection-1157>. Billingsley asked the committee to review the numbers for discussion at the next meeting. However, there was a caution in reading the numbers: the more sophisticated student has learned how to find web information on closed classes which progressively reduces the number of requests. Note: There is one log-in count for a continuous course request.