

**General Education Curriculum Committee
Meeting of April 27, 2012, 2:30 p.m.**

Minutes

Attending (Voting): Bernstein, Biles, Futrell, Koerselman, Leichty, Mansfield-Jones, Maron, Martin, Menezes, Reynolds, Singleton, Wolfe, Zimmerman.

(Non-Voting): Bays, Billingsley, Carden, Dietrich, Karega-Mason, Reed

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of February 24, 2012, were approved.

Modified Assessment Rubrics

In follow up to GECC recommendations approved at the November 11 meeting, scoring headings for the Critical Thinking Rubric were revised and applied to all five rubrics as follows:

- 4 – Clearly Evident (revised from always evident)
- 3 – Usually Evident (revised from occasionally evident)
- 2—Minimally Evident
- 1 – Not Evident
- Not Requested (new category)

The rubrics are posted on the general education web site, and copies were distributed.

Course Catalog Revisions

Carden submitted approved course catalog editorial changes concerning the 1) Pass/Fail Policy and 2) CD Credit Petition Policies. The updates become effective summer 2012.

Spring 2012 Assessment

Karega-Mason reported that all readers are lined up for the assessment scheduled for May 19. Training will take place in the ERTC on May 15.

Syllabus Review Project

Karega-Mason thanked the four volunteers (Mansfield-Jones, Bays, Reynolds and Martin) who reviewed syllabi. She gave an overview of the pilot project report—a 25% (94) random sampling of fall 2012 general education course syllabi—including the following components:

- Purpose (introduction)
- Methodology (assessment process and criteria)
- Results (trends and graphed percentages)

The questionnaire was redesigned in response to concerns expressed at the February 24 GECC meeting and allowed for more interpretation rather than yes/no answers. Reviewers could describe in 1 of 3 ways whether there was a specific statement of/strict adherence to the general education learning outcome language (24%), a broad statement/same meaning and intent but not a direct content-specific statement (45%), or no statement at all (25%).

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Additionally, a simple yes/no response indicated whether the assessment methods supported the general education learning outcomes (63% yes, 5% no, 26% not applicable). If a syllabus did not include the general education learning outcomes, the reviewers were instructed not to review the assessment methods (approximately 25% of the syllabi).

A sample of the range of broad learning outcome statements was discussed. Note: The original questionnaire was designed not to incorporate various levels of interpretation by the reviewers.

The syllabi also were reviewed for statements about critical thinking. These results were encouraging (42% direct statement, 33% indirect statement, 24% no statement).

In determining the usefulness of the assessment results and the direction that the GECC wants to take, feedback included the following:

- Bays (a reviewer) noted several model syllabi that could be shared with faculty to demonstrate how the “explicit” outcomes and assessments are connected.
- Dietrich was concerned that some of the broad statements tell you nothing about what outcomes are being fulfilled (they are bypassed).
Example: Just stating that the course fulfills a general education requirement but not qualifying how it is done is not sufficient evidence.
- Leichty suggested a “paraphrasing” option rather than a broad statement for each learning outcome, and he mentioned the importance of articulating course content and expectations to the student.
- Maron suggested using technology that highlights problem areas in one color and solutions in another color, and recommended making the model proposals available.
- Futrell, when reviewing departmental syllabi, looks at the whole syllabus, including the material to be covered for each class—more concerned about content than format. Also, he believes that it is easier to do this in the familiar discipline rather than across disciplines.
- Wolfe wondered about the minimum level of compliance.

Karega-Mason commented that she designs her course syllabi with the agreed-upon general education learning outcomes in mind, including how the objectives will be accomplished. She reminded the GECC that the syllabus review is part of the whole assessment endeavor. The rubrics are tools used to review real student work, but the syllabus is a way to find out what is being taught.

Billingsley pointed out that the GECC actually may be doing work that anticipates requirements from the state (HB160) regarding the mapping of UofL’s general education requirements and SLOs to a common alignment between institutions. He will attend a CPE meeting in Frankfort where representatives will try to arrive at a method of assessment to assure compliance to the learning outcomes. The purpose is to assure comparability for transfer purposes. State institutions are being asked to validate the “contract” with the students—that is, that they will be sufficiently prepared when transferring if they take certain classes. Every general education course is to address each stated SLO. If not in the syllabus, there is no means to validate this fulfillment without going into the classroom. UofL already has the template of approved learning outcomes that was designed and implemented in 2004. The first step in the framework is determining the content of the current general education syllabi based on the SLOs. A reasonable goal is to encourage faculty to move in the direction of incorporating the approved SLOs in the syllabus. For the past two years he has sent

notices to faculty through the Provost's service account reminding them to do this, and he always receives a favorable response or note of thanks from those who were never told about the general education syllabus guidelines.

Bernstein, a new faculty member, confirmed that this information is helpful to part-time and full-time faculty members alike for establishing the core content of the syllabus. He compared it to "bench marking and best practices." Any personalized objectives beyond the core could be added.

Aside from institutional and state-wide assessments, three broad statements (to think critically, to communicate effectively, and to understand and appreciate cultural diversity) were central issues with SACS in 2007.

To wrap up the discussion, Karega-Mason asked the GECC if they wanted to re-design the questionnaire based on the standards: 1) specific, 2) paraphrased, and 3) no statement). Also, she indicated that she is willing to review all of the general education courses based on decided criteria. Moving forward will provide data prior to the fall semester. Based on that data, the GECC could decide whether there is a need to go to the department.

Koerselman cautioned about how to approach departments using language such as "It is unclear to the evaluators how these learning outcomes are being met." He recommended an ongoing sampling each year to gather data on how many syllabi are meeting standards and how many are not. He was content with the representation of a 25% sampling.

Karega-Mason expressed concern about a small sampling that may not be taken seriously and questioned whether those numbers would be forceful enough to make a shift toward the benchmark.

Futrell stressed that it is the departmental chairs who do not want to lose general education courses and can take action based on shared information.

Bays commented that research institutions are accustomed to random sampling assessment methods. She suggested that the current report serve as an "alert" but that the next sample assessment be done more specifically by department. The intent is to get faculty on board so that the percentages of compliance rise within the goal of a specific time frame; that is, 100% compliance within two years, giving departments time to adjust.

Billingsley recommended that the GECC try this approach, rather than a full assessment at this time, to see how it works. Koerselman indicated a willingness to meet with the deans and chairs.

*ACTION: Karega-Mason was asked to use the representative sampling to share with faculty after the numbers are adjusted for accuracy. Bays offered to assist with reviewing the 45 syllabi that assessors determined included a broad statement of the approved general education learning outcomes.

Next Meeting

The end-of-year meeting was set for May 9 at the University Club. Lunch will be served at 11:30 in the first-floor board room.