

General Education Curriculum Committee
Meeting of October 31, 2014, 2:30

Minutes

Attending (Voting): Bertacco, Bradley, Brueggemann, Cobourn, Desoky, Futrell, Pack, Reynolds, Rolph, Singleton, Song

(Non-Voting): Billingsley, Carden, Dietrich, Gilchrist, Wiggins-Romesburg

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of September 12, 2014, were approved and will be posted to the gen ed web site.

CD Petitions Update

Wiggins-Romesburg reported that four new study-abroad proposals were approved by the CD Petitions Subcommittee. These experiences took place in Japan, Spain, Ecuador, and South Korea.

Status on Spring 2015 General Education Assessment

Wiggins-Romesburg reported that 20% of the 102 course sections in Natural Sciences will be assessed in February. She is seeking more Ph.D. credentialed readers.

Spring 2014 WC Assessment Results – Next Steps

The GECC discussed the Spring 2014 Written Communication Assessment Report, using an overview document as a guide. Wiggins-Romesburg reviewed the mean (average), mode (most frequent answer) and standard deviation (level of performance) for each critical thinking, cultural diversity, and effective communication standard. She pointed out the level of inter-rater consistency and explained the range of scoring.

Regarding the cultural diversity component, the lower scores were discussed, especially for the specific standard, “Writer recognizes that cultural groups are internally diverse.” Dietrich suggested that the assignment may not have asked for this competency. The pattern of scores can be found in the table on page 6 of the report.

A question arose about the how target criterion were set, that is a score of 3 or 4 for 20% of artifacts for CD as compared to 60% for EC and CT. It is unclear whether the bar was set low for CD because it was historically low or if the numbers were arbitrary. The question is whether the goals are reasonable and how to continue.

Desoky recommended that the sample size and frequency be included.

Additionally, Desoky recommended using terminology about whether there is a “significant” difference in scores when comparing assessment cycles.

*RECOMMENDATION: Compare the significance of the changes between the two assessments conducted.

Given the expressed interest of chairs and faculty in the results, Dietrich asked if the WC report and summary could be released electronically. Billingsley mentioned the need for a feedback loop, although until now with the LiveText instrument and stable rubrics, only baseline data was available.

*ACTION: The GECC voted to share the results with the faculty, following a few minor edits by Wiggins-Romesburg (see posting to gen ed web site).

The next question is what departments are going to do to make improvements based on the assessment results, which is both a university and SACS requirement. One issue in the WC assessment is that communication standards are not the sole possession of the English Department. There is a limited sample without looking at the essays in other disciplines.

*RECOMMENDATION: Billingsley would like to explore how to capture writing samples across disciplines and also talk about the merits of cultural diversity.

Brueggemann had questions about next steps based on the WC assessment, in particular, and sought feedback from the GECC. She is interested in how teachers and students alike can do better. Also, although scores are not identified by department or course, Brueggemann thought that it would be useful to break up the data for each department since the departments are the engineers of change. Billingsley suggested that certain recommendations might be a project for another committee as part of the program review process. Nevertheless, he proposed a meeting with Brueggemann and interested gen ed members (Dietrich, Gilchrist, Singleton) to further discuss the WC results and how to think more broadly about effective communication. The ideas will be brought back to the GECC.

*ACTION: Carden will schedule the proposed meeting.

Billingsley brainstormed about how to convey general education goals to departments. An inquiry to departments could pose the question about what departments can do to improve performance in certain areas where a weakness has been identified. Helpful university resources might also be explored. Billingsley suggested looking back at SB and other disciplines under both CD and EC to see how those assessments line up with these scores and then conveying observations about which disciplines appear to have higher marks in EC, etc. The challenge is to look at all of the numbers and talk about the effectiveness of the general education program in helping students to become effective communicators and critical thinkers, and to develop a better understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversity. Dietrich recommended encouraging all faculty, not just those teaching gen ed courses, to adopt the goal of making CD part of their rubric. Already, the overarching goals are included in the SLO reminder that Billingsley sends to faculty teaching general education courses each semester.

Furthermore, Dietrich wondered if it matters that students enrolled in ENGL 101 and 102 (or ENGL 105) are primarily freshmen, whereas students in the HUM gen ed courses are probably more experienced writers. Billingsley suggested that this observation could be noted in the narrative; likewise, some courses may be comprised of a significant number of seniors.

Although gen ed assessment currently doesn't follow students through their senior year, Futrell commented that it might be more beneficial to assess after the first year rather than collecting artifacts before the freshman student completes the course. Also, he wondered if there's a filter that identifies whether the student has ever taken a composition course or any gen ed writing courses. The bottom line is assessing whether the course is doing what it is designed to do in terms of learning outcomes. Gilchrist reminded the committee that the CAP assessment for writing and critical thinking uses the same instrument for incoming freshmen and outgoing senior students to draw a comparison.

Similarly, Billingsley would like to see seniors included in general education assessment, starting with freshman composition, as part of a larger project for the university. Incorporation of the CUE courses could be useful. Furthermore, he thinks that Business School and Speed School need to be concerned about the overarching goals. Although gen assessment is now organized by topical headings, the focus on critical thinking, effective communication, and cultural diversity should be common in all courses.

Update on General Education Reform

Billingsley reported that several committees are being formed to look at what kind of reform needs to be done. Additionally, an outside workshop speaker will be brought in during the early part of the new semester to share ideas.

General Education and SACS Standards

Billingsley distributed a document outlining the three SACS Principles related to general education, calling attention to the three conditions under core requirement 2.7.3.

Search for New General Education Assessment Director

Billingsley announced that the new General Education Assessment Director was expected to be on board at the beginning of the year.

Upcoming Meeting

The next meeting was set for December 12, at 2:30 p.m., in the Jouett Hall Conference Room. The General Education Course Proposal Subcommittee will report at that time.

Prepared by Kathy Carden