

General Education Committee

April 26, 2010 – HUB 123

MINUTES

Present: Lourdes Aviles, Samuel D. Brickley II (Chair), Christopher C. Chabot, Elliott G. Gruner, Jong Yoon Kim, Jillian Spring (student, voting), Corey J. DeGroot (student, voting), David Zehr [eight voting members]

Absent: Wilson A. Garcia, Mary E. Campbell (consultant, non-voting)

Vacant: Dean of the Academic Experience

Guests: No guests

Handouts: Informational handout on the Composition component of the first year experience (Elliot),
Outline of discussion items from general education program assessment document (Chris)

Recorded in the order in which the agenda item was discussed.

Sam called the meeting to order at 2:35 pm. (The room was occupied by a previous meeting)
He explained that Mary is at a conference and Wilson is teaching a class.

1. **Approval of April 12th minutes.** *Approved by general consent.*

2. **Course Proposals**

a. Early Review

None

b. Standard Review

None

(Sam) Two proposals were submitted within the standard review, but the department has asked for them to be held back for next meeting's early review. They will be circulated to the committee shortly.

3. **Reports**

At Elliot's request, items a. and b. (which were also in last week's agenda) were left for last and combined into one discussion in order to allow for as much time as possible without affecting other agenda items.

c. PPDI faculty focus group report— (Sam). Two sessions were held following the same format as the previous focus groups. Lourdes scribed. Besides the members of the general education committee, six more faculty teaching PPDI courses attended (four during the first day and two during the second day). There were good discussions and feedback during both days.

d. myPlymouth v. Faculty Governance Blog—update (Sam). After Scott Coykendall and Sam's meeting with the ITS group to discuss a more user-friendly way to access committee documents, Scott prepared a report which he sent to ITS and was greatly appreciated by them. They offered no timetable as to when this will be done, but the steering committee is hoping that it will be by the Fall semester. The blog itself will have to be kept, but the information will be a lot easier to access through a channel in the myPlymouth portal.

a. and b. Foundation course follow-up discussion (Elliot) and Assessment/Review of Guidelines (Elliott and Chris). Elliot started by referring to the document previously circulated (General Education Assessment Plan Guidelines). The document has a piece on assessing first year

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courses. The question arose during a previous meeting if it is the committee's responsibility to assess these courses and the answer seems to be, yes. Since there was not enough time to discuss the composition component during last meeting, Elliot provided a handout describing the course and various aspects of it. The course description in the general education handout and catalog has not changed, but it has changed at the department level (curriculum committee? scribe question) to better match the scope of the course. Most sections are taught by adjuncts, many of which are highly qualified individuals, some with masters in education from Plymouth State. Many assessment activities have been implemented (course-wide survey, monthly meetings with instructors teaching the course, focus groups and observations of various sections, discipline-specific sections, placement – to account for wide variety of abilities). Various changes are being considered (exploring linked courses, uniformity vs. diversity in content, four credits – three contact, one no-contact lab). There were various questions regarding the feasibility and impacts of a four credit composition course

Elliot then talked about what we learned from the reports from the two other coordinators. One of the issues seems to be the lack of availability of faculty to teach the First Year Seminar course. David commented that departments moving to 3-3 loads and the shift to colleges is putting even more emphasis on the majors' courses. Chris asked what can we do to improve this situation? There was some discussion about true curricular revision.

Elliot brought the conversation back to assessment. He believes that if faculty were more aware of the general education issues, they would be more responsive to teach general education courses. The idea was also brought up to have departments be assessed on their participation on the general education program (as part of the regular departmental review process). Lourdes brought up the fact that the review is done by an external reviewer who is an expert in the field and would be unfamiliar with our general education program, but the self assessment done by the program could be a good place to have a section on general education.

Chris handed out an outline of general education assessment items contained in the General Education Assessment Plan Guidelines document in order to discuss where we are at this moment and what needs to be done as we follow the guidelines. Elliot finds the document very useful, though we still need an implementation plan. Chris started going through the items in the list, but there was not enough time to cover all of them (ask professors to write response to student evaluations, standardized test to evaluate the program, see how assessment results have helped to change the program, course review evaluation activities) The basis of our current approval of courses is the syllabus, together with the general education form. The syllabus contains a description of the general education component as well as information on student assessment activities and how they tie to the component as well as to the skills associated with the component. Chris asked why are skills not specified for connection courses. There was some discussion about connections courses and expected skills to be developed in these courses, as well as speaking to them in the general education proposal/renewal forms. Lourdes said that, even though it makes sense that the skills will be part of the course, it is unclear if instructors are expected to speak to these skills in the renewal form.

Elliot requested that we continue going through the outline and continue discussing assessment during our next meeting.

4. **Announcements.**

There were no announcements, but there was a brief discussion about what needs to be done by the end of the semester. Sam asked for guidance about bringing up a motion to approve the updated

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proposal/renewal forms and said he would circulate the last version via email before the next meeting. Elliott will propose language regarding assessment to add to the proposal form for consideration at the next meeting. Also, Lourdes requested to add a clarifying statement about speaking to the skills for connections courses. She will also provide some language once the draft is circulated. The possibility of a summer retreat to work on items unfinished during the semester was also brought up. It was agreed that this would be discussed after deciding who the new chair will be.

The General Education Committee meets on the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 2:30 to 3:30 pm in HUB 123. The next meeting of the Committee will be **May 10th** when our regular scribe Mary Campbell, will be back. (Today's scribe did her best to follow Mary's format and quality minutes preparation, but knows that that is a goal worth striving for, yet not achievable.). This will be the last meeting of the semester, where next year's chair will be chosen. Newly elected members will be invited to this meeting and to vote on the chair election.

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lourdes B. Avilés
Member, General Education Committee

These minutes were approved May 10, 2010.