

**General Education Committee
Meeting Minutes for February 7, 2020**

Committee members attending: Janis Brickey, Lando Carter, Joey Gray, Ryan Korstange, Aliou Ly, Theresa McBreen, Tammy Melton, Greg Nagel, Ryan Otter, Deana Raffo, Karen Reed, Connie Schmidt, Laura White, Ryan Otter, Melissa Lobogeier, Jim Pierkarski

Ex-officio members attending: Chris Brewer, Peter Cunningham, Leah Lyons, Steve Severn

General Education Design Team members attending: Michelle Boyer-Pennington, Keith Gamble, Soraya Nogueira, Brian Frank

SGA student representatives attending: Samuel Blumer, Preston George

Guests attending: Mark Byrnes

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 2:03 PM by Aliou Ly.

Announcements & Reminders: Susan Myers-Shirk, Director of General Education

- Susan stated that this is a new phase of the committee: we have some changes today such as name tents for voting members. The leadership team met this week to talk about how to better facilitate conversation and so we have a new arrangement: the center table will be for voting members, and other members (such as ex-officio, design team, guests, etc.) will be seated at the perimeter tables.
- All of the committee's information is on our website; it is your duty to read this information and come to meetings prepared.
- Susan stated that voting procedures will have to be amended soon, but right now, we need to work on the models. We hope to work out our voting procedures later in this academic year. If you would like to serve on the procedures subcommittee, let Susan know.
- The Provost has said that our work is the most important on campus right now, and Susan agrees.
- Mark Byrnes is here today to answer your questions/concerns.

Q&A: Provost Mark Byrnes

- Mark stated that the redesign is the most important thing we can do right now, in terms of the health of our institution as well as providing meaningful course offerings to our students. It is important to get this done right, rather than quickly.
- Mark was asked what he perceived to be the sense from the university community. He responded that he felt that much of the community has not yet fully engaged with it as these models are still just theoretical; however as we get further along, it will become more real.

- Mark was asked what has driven Cope to say we need to redo the General Education. Mark responded that we've had the same structure for 50 years, and it was time for a change. But Mark emphasized that these changes were not a Cope-driven process but rather reflected the changing needs of our students. Currently more than half of our students are transfer students, and we want to be able to entice more students straight from high school. Because the purpose of Gen Ed is not clear to many incoming students, we need to think of how to make it more meaningful to them. Susan emphasized that the redesign is an opportunity for students and faculty, rather than trying to fix something that is broken.
- Janice Brickey discussed some of the issues involved with incoming students who bring in a lot of high school AP credits.
- Ryan Otter asked Mark what constraints on our proposed models would be a non-starter for him. Mark stated that we cannot tell incoming students that their transfer credits won't count. Susan stated that we've been very cognizant of the transfer issue, and that whatever we do will have to map onto their degree program. Mark also stated that the other non-starter would be if the proposed changes were cost-prohibitive.
- Tammy Melton said that it is not inconceivable that the new program could eliminate one area, and so we could possibly not need the faculty to support that area. So how much does the administration want to balance the budget on the back of a program that we don't need anymore? Mark answered that while we want to do a minimal amount of disruption, that cannot be the primary goal or else we won't be able to make meaningful change. Next year is when this process will get tough, when the model has been selected and the committee must decide which courses will go into it. Mark said that he would be against any proposal that called for eliminating tenured or tenure-track faculty; instead, it may be possible to move people around to fit the new model (for example, possibly teaching Freshman Seminar). Peter Cunningham said that any change has to happen very gradually because we have students who entered under the current catalog, and we have to graduate them first.
- Ryan Korstange asked Mark to elaborate on the connections between Gen Ed and the Quest for Success/2025. Mark answered that they are both about making a better learning environment for our students. The primary measures of the Quest are retention and graduation. Gen Ed redesign isn't explicitly about retention and graduation, but it's a piece of it. Gen Ed redesign is about improving the experience for students on campus.
- Jim Piekarski asked if there has ever been any talk about bringing in the outside community (such as employers and alumni) into the redesign process. Susan referenced prior research regarding what employers value. Mark stated that the university's values line up with what we've heard from the business community; however he agreed that it would be a good idea to listen to alumni.
- Mark thanked the group for what they were doing.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes for the meeting of January 24, 2019 were unanimously approved.

Discussion of General Education Redesign Models: Design Team

- Susan turned the discussion to an in-depth examination of each model. She gave some background regarding the work previously completed by the design team, and stated that certain model components are in direct response to faculty concerns/ideas.
- The committee was asked to list one pro and one con for each model on a color-coded index card.
- Model I: (used blue cards for comments).
 - Brian Frank stated that this was the most conservative model by far: there is minimal change but new opportunities for high-impact courses and practices.
 - Students would have the opportunity to take some smaller classes, which are linked.
 - Susan said this model does not address flexibility or global awareness/cultural competence.
 - There was some discussion of the first year seminar (FYS) component. Ryan Otter stated that doing a models discussion before the class discussion was complicated, and asked if the FYS's were the same as UNIV 1010. Keith Gamble answered that it could include UNIV 1010, but they're supposed to be done as small Gen Ed classes. Connie Schmidt asked if a department wanted to offer a course as a FYS, could they offer some as FYS and some as regular courses? Brian Frank answered that this would be departmental decision, and that FYS is a designation.
 - Ryan Otter asked for greater explanation of pathways. Keith Gamble explained that it is a suggested path through the Gen Ed curriculum. He elaborated by saying that students complain about the current disconnected classes, but if you're interested in a particular idea you could complete a Gen Ed pathway of courses related by topic. Brian Frank said that a pathway wouldn't have to be all 41 hours, and that there are specific examples from courses we current have. Michelle Boyer-Pennington said that pathways would be marketed, like MT Engage courses or EXL. Tammy Melton said that the term pathways almost implies a chronology of courses in which students must take the courses in a prescribed manner. Keith Gamble said that that would be one way to do it; there would be the possibility of concurrent courses over time but that they shouldn't have to be sequential.
 - Finally, Keith reminded the committee that these models aren't all or nothing, but modular.
- Model I-A (used green cards for comments).
 - Susan and Brian explained aspects of this model.
 - Committee members were interested in the Connections component. Melissa Lobogeier pointed out the STEM literacy aspect, and asked if these were newly designed classes or current courses in the sciences. She also asked about outcomes for these courses. Susan said that faculty with a stake in that category would determine the courses and their outcomes. Keith Gamble said that he saw possibilities for the Connections courses to be team taught.

- Greg Nagel asked what specifically distinguished I-A from I. Brian Frank said that Model I limits opportunities for new courses or partners in Gen Ed, and I-A confines the major transformation to the Connections courses.
- Tammy Melton asked how to distinguish Foundations from Explorations. Brian Frank said that students can place out of Foundations courses if they meet the competency (for example, through AP credit) whereas Explorations courses cannot be placed out of.
- Model II
 - The committee members quickly pointed out a typo on Model II, regarding the hours for Student Explorations.
 - Keith Gamble explained that this model offers a lot of student choice under the Student Explorations section; however, the 1 credit hour FYS with a linked 2-hour capstone was logistically complicated.
 - Ryan Otter asked whether the FYS/capstone could be changed into a 3 credit hour integrative critical analysis class. He also said that students might not have the background in critical thinking skills to complete this course early in their academic careers, and that it may be better to require this course later in their degree programs. Keith Gamble replied that this was absolutely a possibility.
 - Steve Severn noted that this model took away from the required literature course, and it's possible we could lose faculty as a result.
 - Preston George stated that the student perspective regarding capstone projects is that they are widely disliked, and students who are required to do more than one capstone in their degree program are put at a workload disadvantage.
 - Samuel Blumer said that he liked the idea that this model opened up in encouraging departments to innovate with their course offerings to attract students.
- Model III (used pink cards for comments) and Model III-A (used purple cards for comments)
 - Susan explained Model III and Model III-A in the same discussion. There are minor differences between the two: Model III-A has Certificate Pathways with clear designations for disciplines, whereas Model III's Pathways are more interdisciplinary.
 - Steve Severn asked if something from the Foundations area could count toward a Pathway, and Keith Gamble stated not in this version.
 - Ryan Otter expressed a concern regarding the Scientific Literacy and Quantitative Reasoning components of the Foundations: he wondered how these would be defined, and stated a concern that a student could graduate from college without having a math or science course.

Adjournment 4:03 PM