GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
186th Meeting
Thursday, February 17, 2011

MINUTES
Approved

Present: D. Changnon (Acting Associate Vice Provost), D. Chiros (EDU/Student), B. Coller (EET), C. Douglass (Assessment/ex-officio), G. Gordon (BUS), E. Klonoski (VPA), G. Long (Acting Coordinator for General Education), W. Luo (LAS), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), M. VanOverbeke (EDU)

Guest: N. Lindvall (SACLO)

I. Approval of Agenda

VanOverbeke made a motion, seconded by Gordon, to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Announcements

A. Electronic approval of minutes, January 20, 2011.

B. Introduction of Student Advisory Committee on Learning Outcomes (SACLO). Long introduced Nora Lindvall who was in attendance and added that another member, Eric Niemi, was unable to attend. Lindvall is a junior in English and Political Science and helped to form this group, which came out of her work on the University Assessment Panel (UAP). She noted that members of SACLO are very passionate that learning outcomes are communicated clearly to students. She added that SACLO would be willing to work with the GEC on student focus groups. Klonoski added that it would be helpful to get their input on the GEC website. Douglass stated that SACLO has their own page at the Office of Assessment Services (OAS) website as well as a Facebook page.

C. Douglass made two announcements.
   1. The Assessment Expo is February 18, 2011.
   2. Joan Hawthorne will be presenting a workshop on March 25, 2011, and Douglass provided GEC members with additional information.

III. General Education Coordinator’s Report.

Long reported that additional information for collecting assessment data was sent to curricular deans and chairs. He is also working on filling in the blanks on the assessment spreadsheet provided to the GEC previously. Long reported that he has met face-to-face with all the curricular deans to clarify the process of collecting assessment data and they all seem to be receptive to the process. However, in the responses he has received so far, it’s clear that many departments simply are not collecting any assessment data. He pointed out the 2007 Higher Learning Commission (HLC) report, and a lot of things the university said they would do haven’t happened, so he is in the process of evaluating what in that plan can be accomplished before the next HLC review.
Long provided GEC members with a list of assessment tools that might be used, including results from standardized tests, past course resubmissions, and student focus groups. Discussion followed regarding how to get students to participate in focus groups. Lindvall suggested that the GEC contact the Leadership Academy. Chiros noted that, in his experience, students tend to be more involved in extra-curricular activities when it’s part of their course work. Long noted that he has also met with Brian Brim, Project Manager for MyNIU, and Dan House, director of Institutional Research, to discuss additional resources for creating a list of instructors and collecting data. He also has a student doing an independent study project for him who has been working on a history of general education at NIU.

IV. Old Business

A. Subcommittees and resubmissions.

Klonoski reported for Subcommittee A. For one course, it was noted that they used embedded assignments, but they provided only one sample. Klonoski asked the GEC if they should request more samples. It was clarified that there were no data included and Douglass stated that the department should at least provide some data. Klonoski wondered if the GEC could be more direct in its response regarding the resubmissions, even if this information wasn’t requested upfront. Discussion followed regarding changing the format. Douglass suggested that the GEC consider the format and try to avoid confusion with other assessment processes on campus. This could be through using a different format (but not necessarily the current one) or coordinating with the other data collection processes. Klonoski suggested the GEC could move to an online form with drop down boxes with embedded, pointed questions. VanOverbeke added that he had similar concerns after reviewing the resubmissions for his subcommittee; that departments state what they are assessing, but aren’t providing any data or evidence of those assessments.

Discussion followed regarding how to approach departments and it was determined that it’s important that departments can illustrate how they are assessing the general education goals they have listed and how they are responding to data. It was also decided that departments who are not assessing their courses at all for general education goals need to be instructed to target those goals directly rather than indirectly. It was suggested that examples of acceptable, if not exemplary, resubmissions should be provided when the request for resubmissions is sent out, as well as examples of direct assessment. Long agreed that sending the message regarding direct assessment is important and asked GEC members to send him ideas for direct assessment.

It was also suggested that if the GEC is providing samples of direct assessment, that a syllabus template could also be provided, including a paragraph on the importance of general education and goals that are being addressed. There was debate on whether or not the university’s statement on accommodations for students with disabilities should be included in the template, and whether or not this is the purview of the GEC, with no decision being made on either issue. Long stated that he will work on the template to be provided to the GEC for their review/approval. It was clarified that anything approved by the GEC would be submitted via the committee’s meeting minutes to the Undergraduate Coordinating Council for approval.

1. Volunteers for remaining resubmission on hand. Postponed until subcommittees make their initial reports.

B. Assessment Plan. See the General Education Coordinator’s report above.
C. Baccalaureate Review Process and Update. Long reported that he gave Gip Seaver and Virginia Cassidy the final report and asked them to provide feedback by February 18. The report includes three recommendations: 1) align general education goals with the baccalaureate goals; 2) develop an assessment process that incorporates data across programs, general education, and the co-curriculum; and 3) identify strategies to embed goals into the fabric at NIU. Once Provost Alden receives the report, it is Long’s hope that Alden will provide the charge for another task force to align general education with the baccalaureate goals.

D. BIOS 105 and BIOS 107. This was not discussed due to time constraints.

E. General Education Website. Long provided GEC members with a rough mapping of the website. When the website is available Long noted that he will ask GEC members for their feedback.

F. Faculty Development, review articles. This was not discussed due to time constraints.
   1. “What is a generally educated person?”
   2. “Universal design”

G. Submission of new course (HIST 170) for general education credit. This is still on hold until subcommittees report on resubmissions.


I. GEC Meetings. No report.

V. New Business

A. GEC Task List and Priorities. Long explained that since the position of General Education Coordinator is so new, and since so much needs to be done (e.g., collecting assessment data for accreditation reports), he developed a prioritized task list. Discussion followed after review of the list. Lindvall asked if there is a plan to better communicate to students the need for general education; most students don’t see the value added. Long responded that it is on his list; that a context needs to be created for faculty and staff to understand the importance of general education, then this can be communicated to students. Long asked for GEC members to give him feedback on the list and to let him know if there was anything they would be willing to help with.

VI. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to ADJOURN. Motion passed by acclamation. Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:40.

The next meeting will be February 24, 2011, 12:30, AL 225.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator