GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
198th Meeting
Thursday, April 19, 2012

MINUTES
Approved

Present: A. Birberick (Ex-officio, Vice Provost), B. Coller (EET/MEE), C. Douglass (Ex-officio, Assessment Services), D. Gorman (LAS/ENGL), A. Keddie (HHS/NURS/UCC), E. Klonoski (VPA/MUSC), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), J. Umoren (HHS/FCNS), M. VanOverbeke (EDU/LEPF), K. Wiemer (LAS/PSYC/UCC), J. Wilson (LAS/GEOG, for W. Luo)

Guests: V. Cassidy (Vice Provost for Academic Planning), D. Macdonald (ENGL/Chair HLC Self-Study)

I. Adoption of Agenda

Coller asked if New Business A could be the first item on the agenda. Gorman made a motion, seconded by Wilson, to APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Announcements

March 22, 2012, minutes were approved electronically.

III. General Education Coordinator’s Report

A. General Education Coordinator Search Update. Birberick reported that two candidates were interviewed and the paperwork for Human Resources will be sent within the week.

IV. Old Business

A. Assessment Plan.
   1. Annual Update Report. Douglass pointed out items of note from the report. For the last five years there has been 100% compliance (all the programs have provided data), including the past year where all the reports were submitted through Blackboard.

B. GEC Assessment of Goals B, C, and D. Birberick explained that this has to do with the draft report (also discussed in V.A. below). In a 2007 report to the HLC, the GEC promised to assess goals A, B, C, and D, as well as technology use. Goal A has been assessed, but none of the other goals were done. The GEC brainstormed what could be done to assess goals B, C, and D, including what other data are already being collected. The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) was suggested. Douglass responded that data collected from the CLA deal mostly with goal A, but they could be looked at to see which of the other goals could be addressed. Other suggestions for data included University Writing Project; Faculty Development workshops feedback; analysis of capstone projects; alumni survey;
feedback on Student Involvement and Leadership Development programs; International Programs; Vision 2020 report; URAP, USOAR, Research Rookies and similar programs; courses in the curriculum map that say they are addressing goals B, C, and D; data generated from testing the new baccalaureate student learning outcomes; data from the NSSE, service learning, and experiential learning; data for goal A.i.-iv that match up with B, C, & D. Birberick said that she also needs to add to the report what the GEC has already done to address concerns, e.g., hiring a general education coordinator. Klonoski suggested she add all the conferences GEC members attended.

C. Resubmissions. Nothing more to report.

D. EPFE Submissions. Coller reminded the GEC that these were approved at the last meeting, but that additional information was requested, which was provided to GEC members for this meeting.

E. Revisions to bylaws and APPM. Nothing more was discussed at this time.

F. General Education website updates. It was reported that Smith now has access to the General Education website. Please let her know if you have any suggestions.

V. New Business

A. Higher Learning Commission Self-Study Steering Committee (Virginia Cassidy and Doris MacDonald). Introductions were made. MacDonald is leading NIU’s self-study, which is the big document that is prepared prior to the HLC’s site visit for accreditation. Cassidy stated that every accreditation process starts with a review of findings from the previous review. In 2004, part of the findings were that NIU had to respond to assessment of the general education program. In 2007, NIU responded to those findings, and stated that assessment of the four general education goals would be done before the next self-study. One result of looking at ways to assess general education is the University Writing Project. However, other things the GEC said they were going to do to assess general education have not been done. Cassidy added that if there were findings in the past, that will be the focus of the upcoming accreditation. A handout of the third (out of five) criterion for HLC accreditation, part of which specifically addresses general education, was distributed. What Cassidy and MacDonald need from the GEC is a valid implementation of a plan to assess general education goals and evidence of assessment. Cassidy reported that NIU is now administering the CLA as part of Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), and information from that assessment will be important for the GEC to take into consideration. So there are processes in place (e.g., CLA, University Writing Project), that the GEC can use. Birberick reported that she has drafted a General Education Assessment Status Report, which is a few years behind schedule. There are some data that can be added to the report; however, there are several blank areas to fill in. She also needs to add to the report a plan for moving forward. This report will be included with the materials that will be submitted to the HLC with the self-study. MacDonald thanked Birberick for the report and noted three initiatives: ongoing course resubmission, initial course submissions, and cyclical goals review (A has been done, but need to do B, C, and D). Other items of evidence could be an annual summary report and curriculum map of all general education courses. MacDonald added that they also need major program assessment of student learning outcomes. It was clarified that with resubmissions the GEC either accepts or asks for revisions by a particular deadline. MacDonald said that the HLC will want to know what the GEC does with the data that are collected. Birberick noted that the
appointment of a general education coordinator will help with the evaluation of assessment data; a lot of that person’s time will be spent on that task. The lack of assessment data collected by departments was discussed. It was noted that there aren’t consequences for departments if they don’t submit resubmissions, data, and/or course redesign after data are analyzed. Cassidy responded that the HLC is a consequence. Committee members added that this isn’t an immediate concern for departments. MacDonald suggested that the GEC needs to work on getting better buy-in from departments. Birberick stated that the GEC has reached out and there are tools, sample resubmissions, on the General Education website. Coller added that the GEC has improved communication with departments that have courses up for review. Cassidy stated that the original intent for assessing the four general education goals was to see what goals were well covered with course offerings and what goals weren’t covered as well, and to encourage new course offerings for the goals that were weak. It was suggested that the GEC could invite departments with courses up for review to attend an orientation that would inform them of what the GEC is looking for with the resubmissions. For MacDonald and the self-study, she will be looking for what the GEC does to help prepare departments for resubmissions and what the GEC does with data they receive. Birberick stated that the GEC not only needs to consider how to assess what has been done, they need to look at how to proceed in the future. She said that updating the GEC bylaws is one example. Cassidy said that it’s important to show that the GEC has data and a means to collect more as well as methods for assisting departments in data collection. Coller responded that the GEC has been addressing some of this, for example, with the new streamlined re/submission forms. A broader discussion followed regarding the importance of general education and getting buy-in from faculty, advisors, and staff; and communicating the importance with students. General Education goals need to be added to syllabi; students need to know they are in a course that fulfills a general education requirement and why that is important. Lastly, a timeline was discussed. MacDonald stated that the site visit is spring, 2014. Prior to that, the university needs to submit the self-study, and she hopes to have a penultimate draft completed by spring, 2013. So she would like the GEC’s report by December, 2012.

B. Course Revisions. Course revisions for CHEM 210 and MATH 110 were discussed. It was explained that any time a course from the general education program is being revised or deleted it comes to the GEC for approval. It was also noted that because MATH 110 is adding a “C or better” requirement, that revision also went to the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee (APASC). Gorman made a motion, seconded by Wiemer, TO APPROVE COURSE REVISIONS TO CHEM 210 AND MATH 110. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Next meeting. The GEC decided to meet on April 26 to further discuss the report for the HLC and ideas for collecting assessment data.

D. Elect chair for 2012-13. Gorman volunteered to serve as chair for 2012-13. At this time in the meeting, there was no quorum, so it was decided to solicit additional volunteers and nominations and hold the election electronically.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:35.

The next meeting will be April 26, 2012, Altgeld 225.