GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
191st Meeting
Thursday, September 22, 2011

MINUTES
Approved

Present: A. Birberick (Vice Provost), D. Chakraborty (LAS/PHYS), B. Coller (EET/MEE), E. Fredericks (BUS/MKTG), D. Gorman (LAS/ENGL), A. Keddie (HHS/NURS/UCC), E. Klonoski (VPA/MUSC), Wei Luo (LAS/GEOG), E. Muether (HHS/Student), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), J. Umoren (HHS/FCNS), M. VanOverbeke (EDU/LEPF), K. Wiemer (LAS/PSYC/UCC)

Introductions were made.

I. Election of Chair
Chakraborty, Coller, and VanOverbeke were each nominated as GEC chair, with Chakraborty and VanOverbeke declining their nominations. Coller was elected as GEC chair by acclamation.

II. Adoption of Agenda
A. Gorman made a motion, seconded by Luo, to APPROVE THE AGENDA. Birberick added the following items: Add III.F. Vice Provost’s Announcements, and move V.A.4 to V.A.1. Motion passed unanimously as amended.

III. Announcements
A. Electronic approval of minutes from April 28, 2011.
B. UCC Meeting Schedule 2011-12.
C. GEC Membership List.
D. GEC Bylaws.
F. Vice Provost’s Announcements.
   1. General Education Coordinator. Birberick announced that Greg Long has stepped down as General Education Coordinator due to increased responsibilities in his college and school. So there will be an official, internal search for this position beginning in October. She has done a draft of the position notice with input from Long and Dave Changnon, and included the duties outlined by the GEC last year. She has tentatively set the application deadline at October 21, 2011, with a start date of January 1, 2012. The position is 50% general education coordinator and 50% appointment in the individual’s department. She asked how committee members felt about being the search committee for the position. Recently the Honors Committee served the same role for the search for the Director of the Honors Program, and it makes sense since all the colleges are represented on the GEC. The consensus of committee members was that this was acceptable. Birberick added that she needed to identify the search committee for Human Resources when she submits the paperwork for the position. Chakraborty asked about the term and Birberick responded
that it is a three-year contract. She asked GEC members to consider applying for the position and to encourage their colleagues to consider it as well.

2. General Education Faculty. Birberick reported on the work that was done towards compiling a list of instructors who teach general education courses. She worked with Changnon and Brian Brim over the summer and pulled a list of faculty who taught a general education course in either fall, 2010; spring, 2011; and/or fall, 2011. The list is 25 pages long and she will continue to work with Brim to look at the different ways to organize the data and to make them more manageable. Then she will bring that information to the GEC to decide how best to use the information.

3. Baccalaureate Goals/Student Learning Outcomes. Birberick reported that Phase 2 of this process is beginning this semester. There will be eight small teams of two-three faculty members that will work to develop rubrics for one of the eight student learning outcomes. Each team has representation from different colleges. Birberick and Changnon will be leading this process. The kick-off event is September 23, and there will be training for team members on how to develop effective rubrics. There will be a speaker, Wendy Garrison from the AAC&U, October 5, and GEC members are invited to attend. Once the work of the small teams is complete, the university community will be asked for feedback. At this point the GEC will be involved and asked to evaluate how the general education program will fit in with the new student learning outcomes.

IV. General Education Coordinator’s Report

No report due to the vacancy of the position.

V. Old Business

A. Assessment Plan.
1. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Letter. Birberick provided new members with an overview of the issue from last spring. Early in the semester, chairs of all the departments with at least one general education course were sent a request from the GEC chair, provost, and vice provost to provide the GEC with assessment data, and were informed that the GEC would continue to request assessment data on an annual basis. Later in the semester the GEC received a letter signed by the CLAS chairs and program coordinators that they were not going to comply and listed a number of reasons. To keep the conversation going, Birberick met with the CLAS Senate earlier this month. She gave them background on what led to the GEC’s request, including what came out of the Strategic Plan with regards to the general education program and making the general programs desirable for students, as well as the need for more assessment data with the HLC accreditation coming in a couple of years. She reported that some CLAS Senate members are willing to meet with the GEC as an ad-hoc committee if the request from last spring is off of the table. The ad-hoc committee would consist of a representative each from the humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, and the academic centers; in addition to four members from the GEC. Birberick would chair the committee as a neutral party. She told them she would need to consult with the GEC. Discussion followed, which touched on a number of issues. Those issues included what were the responses of other colleges (there were about half-dozen assessment reports submitted and one college said they could do it, just not by the deadline set out in the initial letter from the GEC); could other colleges be involved in this ad-hoc committee (was determined that the purpose of the ad-hoc committee at this time is for the CLAS and GEC to come to an agreement, so no other colleges would be involved at this time); and the timing of meeting
with CLAS (Birberick said she needed to get back to CLAS Dean Christopher McCord by the end of September with GEC’s response). Also the reasons for the initial request were discussed. These reasons included getting departments used to the idea of submitting assessment data on their general education courses on an annual basis and to try to change the culture of assessment at NIU, get at least some data on the books to comply with what NIU reported to the HLC that they would do with regards to general education assessment, and to fill in the missing data since many of the recent resubmissions do not have decent assessment data, if any. Reasons for the CLAS response were also discussed and several GEC members had problems with taking off the table the fact that CLAS stated that the GEC had no authority to make the requests that it made. Birberick responded that as chair of this ad-hoc committee she would make sure all members were aware of the GEC’s authority. The committee members also noted that the request for annual assessment data was a policy voted in by the GEC and approved by the UCC when they accepted those minutes. So to take this request off of the table, the GEC would need to vote to rescind the policy, and this would be for all of the colleges. Committee members noted that this was not an acceptable option. They did agree that meeting with CLAS representatives and having a conversation was a good idea, just not willing to take the initial request out of the discussion.

Regarding the need to collect assessment data, Birberick noted that there is some data that is only two-three years old from the resubmissions that were sent in according to the review cycle. She added that accreditation should not be the main purpose behind requesting annual assessment data and this is confirmed with Virginia Cassidy. The HLC probably will not be pleased with the lack of assessment data for general education, but the university will not lose accreditation over this. She added that moving forward she would like to continue to make the resubmission process simpler by providing examples of how to do embedded assessment and to get faculty/instructors excited about general education. She wants to eventually change how general education is perceived at NIU and make it a rich and vibrant program that both students and faculty alike are excited about participating in. Fredericks proposed that four of the returning members of the GEC be on the ad-hoc committee since they are familiar with the issues from last year.

Gorman made a motion, seconded by VanOverbeke, THAT THE GEC SHOULD SET UP AN AD-HOC COMMITTEE WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES TO EXPLORE GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT WITH VICE PROVOST BIRBERICK FACILITATING. Motion passed unanimously. Volunteers for the ad-hoc committee are Coller, Gorman, Klonoski, Luo, VanOverbeke, and Wiemer.

Other issues that came out of the discussion were the need to revise the submission form (align it with the new resubmission form) and the need to assess general education under two programs, the old program and any new program that is developed after the new student learning outcomes are further defined.

2. 2011 University Writing Project. Douglass took GEC members through the report, which includes the history of the University Writing Project, evaluation rubric, methods, and results. Regarding the results, Douglass pointed out that, as in past years, all the subscores have met expectations with the exception of presentation. She also noted that every year feedback from faculty is welcomed, and based on the feedback received through the years, they are planning to revise the rubric; possibly tailoring it to specific disciplines. Discussion followed regarding comparing the 2011 report with previous years as well as with other universities. The committee also discussed what steps are being taken to
improve the presentation scores. Douglass responded that faculty are encouraged to send students to the University Writing Center for assistance and adding more writing assignments to courses. Douglass asked GEC members to send any comments they have to the Office of Assessment Services’ website.

3. 2011 First Year Composition Assessment Report. Douglass explained that samples for this report are taken for the same students at the beginning of ENGL 103 and at the end of ENGL 104. This assessment uses the same rubric as the University Writing Project. She noted that initially students do better on the first assignment, and this is not an anomaly, these have been the same results since they have been doing this assessment. One explanation for this could be that the expectations for the final paper in ENGL 104 are higher. She also pointed out that with this report as with the University Writing Project, presentation scores do not meet expectations.

4. Speaker. Douglass distributed information on a speaker, Dr. Helen Barrett, who will be speaking about eportfolios on October 21. The morning session with be a workshop and the afternoon session will be a discussion on implementing eportfolios.

B. Subcommittees and resubmissions. It was reported that letters were sent to departments with general education courses in the social sciences area. Luo asked about resubmissions in the math and sciences area, which are up for review in 2012-13, and could the resubmissions for the labs be combined with the corresponding course. Smith will look into this (APPM guidelines and past resubmissions) and get back to Luo. He also asked if it was OK to submit these early and the consensus of the GEC was that it was OK, but there was no guarantee that they would get evaluated this year with the social sciences being the priority.

C. Submission of new course HIST 170 for general education credit (on hold until after subcommittees report on resubmission). This item remains tabled, but needs to be considered at the next meeting.

D. Baccalaureate Review Process and Update and General Education Goals. See Vice Provost’s report above.

E. General Education Website. Birberick reported that the website up, but that it may need to be updated.

F. GEC meetings. Smith reminded the GEC that this was on the agenda last year, to consider the possibility of adding more meetings to not only take care of regular GEC business, but to be able to have readings and discussions in general about general education. Birberick added that these discussions are important and would like to see them continue, but she would prefer to wait for a general education coordinator to be named for further guidance.

VI. New Business

A. Submission Form. VanOverbeke noted that there are a number of departments in his college interested in submitting courses for general education credit and asked if the GEC is accepting submissions and what is the possibility of streamlining the submission form; aligning it with the revised resubmission form. It was agreed that this should be on the agenda for the next meeting.
VII. **Adjournment**

Gorman made a motion, seconded by VanOverbeke, to ADJOURN. Motion passed by *acclamation*. The meeting adjourned at 2:45.

The next meeting will be October 20, 2011, 12:30, AL 225.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator