GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
210th Meeting
Thursday, January 16, 2014

MINUTES
Approved

Present: D. Chakraborty (LAS/PYS), B. Coller (EET/MEE), D. Gorman (LAS/ENGL), J. Johnson (EDU/SEED), M. Kolb (Ex-officio, Acting Associate Vice Provost), L. Lundstrom (BUS/FINA), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), K. Thu (LAS/ANTH), J. Umoron (HHS/FCNS), K. Wiemer (LAS/PSYC/UCC)

The meeting was called to order by GEC chair Umoron.

I. Adoption of Agenda
Thu made a motion, seconded by Chakraborty, to APPROVE THE AGENDA. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Approval of Minutes
Coller made a motion, seconded by Thu, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 21, 2013, MEETING. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Announcements
There were no announcements.

IV. Old Business
A. General Education Visioning Task Force, moving forward, timeline. Kolb reminded the GEC that the General Education Symposium is on January 29. The task force will be discussing some of its findings and putting them out for public comment. He invited GEC members to attend. The task force has had a number of important meetings, including one with President Baker and Interim Executive Vice President and Provost Lisa Freeman. It was useful to hear their feedback and words of support. They will be kicking off the symposium. There will also be a guest speaker, Thomas Steen, from the University of North Dakota, who will give the keynote address, followed by a panel discussion by the task force. As a result of the meeting with Baker and Freeman, the task force developed an executive summary. The main categories in the summary include some of the research and benchmarking done by the task force, as well as five key areas for improvements. The task force also had requests of Baker and Freeman. They asked to have the name of the task force changed to better reflect the work being done to transform general education at NIU. This name change, NIU PLUS (Progressive Learning in Undergraduate Studies) will be announced at the symposium by Baker and Freeman. The task force also asked for a marketing campaign to reach out to the university community and let them know about the symposium and the work done to date. Therefore work will be done on a marketing campaign. Thu asked about the length of the commission for the task force and Kolb said until the final report is submitted. Thu also asked if the task force has discussed assessment at all, and/or have they read the general education assessment report. Kolb said that would be something the task
force will discuss once they have a conceptualization of the models. Discussion followed regarding the format of the symposium and whether or not the GEC should endorse one model over the other as presented. It was suggested that there could be a subcommittee of the GEC that could look in-depth at the models developed by the task force. This will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

Kolb reported that when he corresponds with students he has been asking them to provide any ideas/feedback they have on general education. He added that the task force wants to keep the breadth of education that general education can provide students. The GEC also discussed lower enrollments and one reason is because many students are now choosing to take their general education courses at a community college because the costs are lower. This is partly where concept of NIU PLUS is coming from—so that NIU can control its own environment, who is admitted, and how students are tracked. Umoreen added that what NIU PLUS is saying is that there is value added with NIU general education courses.

The GEC also discussed Kolb’s recommendation to the HLC and that it needs to have support from the GEC. There was one suggestion that the GEC should look at moving from course-based to program-based assessment. Coller said that when the GEC is discussing the assessment of general education, it’s important to consider what the HLC requires of the university. They almost always require course-based assessment as well as a program-based assessment. The principles spelled out in the HLC guidelines for the visit in March suggest this. It was suggested that Carolinda Douglass could be invited to a GEC meeting to discuss what’s needed for HLC.

B. 2013 General Education Assessment Plan. Kolb encouraged the GEC to consider the recommendations in his assessment plan report (see also above).

C. Humanities and Arts Catalog Language. Umoreen reported that she will send a note to the College of Education inviting them to provide catalog language that could address the fact that there are now two College of Education courses available for general education credit in the Humanities and Arts section.

D. Follow-up for courses not yet approved.

1. CSCI 205. It was reported that CSCI 205 was approved by the GEC last year pending the receipt of a sample assignment. Thu said that it looks fine. Wiemer said she wasn’t clear how it fostered writing. Coller said it is meant to highlight subgoal, a iv., “Students are able to access and use various information resources.” Wiemer said that the assignment is acceptable in that case. Coller said that despite the department stating that they haven’t taught the course long enough to reflect on the data, he thought there were moments the department could reflect on. Wiemer agreed, stating that it looks like there is consistently a large proportion of students who don’t satisfactorily complete the course and that the department should look at what can be improved. Coller said that the GEC’s response could be to ask the department to reflect on the data provided by the assignment and how they can improve the course. Thu made a motion, seconded by Wiemer, THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE BE CORRESPONDED WITH REGARDING HOW THEY CAN IMPROVE CSCI 205 BASED ON THE DATA COLLECTED FROM ASSIGNMENTS. Motion passed unanimously.

E. Core Competencies Resubmissions
1. Alternatives to MATH 101. A memo will be sent to math on this issue.

2. COMS 100 evaluation. It was clarified that the GEC is evaluating this resubmission together as a calibration for when they work in subcommittees. Kolb asked that the online electronic
rubric be used for the final report. The GEC discussed whether or not the assessment method was measuring the goal they stated the course was to address. It was also noted that under modifications they don’t say how they improved the course. Coller said that it looks like all they submitted for assessment is the course evaluation. He added that if the goal is to communicate verbally, and they require students to do four or five presentations, there should be rubrics to assess those presentations and data on how many have met the goals. Gorman said that there seem to be a lot of sections that they are not assessing. Umoren asked what the response from the GEC to the department should be. Coller said to be consistent, this would be one of those cases where we ask them to submit direct assessment. The correspondence to them could state that the GEC noticed that they require students to do presentations, and that there must be a rubric for evaluating those presentations, so could they by the fall 2014 semester show the GEC how students perform with the data they’re already collecting and reflect on those data in some sample of the sections. The reflection should include ways of improving the course if the data show that improvement is needed. Wiemer added that any correspondence should include that the GEC appreciates the data they did submit. Gorman pointed out that they mentioned that a couple of years ago they revised the exam to do various things that would assess higher order thinking. Can they speak to why they did that? Thu suggested that since the task force is in process of revamping, it may be prudent to send them a letter regarding what the GEC wants under the current program, but to also note that changes are coming. Should the GEC expect them to implement a new procedure since general education is in a period of flux. Umoren responded that assessment needs to be done no matter what happens to the general education program. Coller said that they should have been collecting the data under the current procedures; it is a matter of looking back and reflecting on data already collected, not looking forward. The GEC needs to check to ensure that procedures are followed. The HLC looks backwards as well, i.e., what have you done the last 10 years since our last visit. There was a brief discussion regarding what the HLC is looking for. Chakraborty asked if there is resistance to assessment or just a lack of knowing how to do it; can the GEC be more proactive and offer assistance with doing assessment. Wiemer noted that the GEC has talked about posting examples of exemplary resubmissions and Umoren said that those are on the general education web page. Kolb said he would follow-up with the department. He will ask them if they have the data to please submit as soon as possible. If not, then they would have until the fall 2014 semester to submit. Coller made a motion to not accept as is, but to express to them under current rules we need direct assessment of one of the general education goals. Thu suggested that the GEC just ask them if they have data. Wiemer made a motion, seconded by Chakraborty, TO TABLE THE RESUBMISSION OF COMS 100 PENDING FOLLOW-UP BY KOLB AND RECEIPT OF ASSESSMENT DATA. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Subcommittee assignments. Smith explained how she does the assignments, that she tries to keep GEC members from evaluating resubmissions from their own college, but when that is not possible, to try to keep GEC members from evaluating resubmissions from their own disciplines. She also tries to ensure that there is at least one experienced GEC member on each subcommittee. She added that the subcommittee assignments may change depending on the response from the Department of Mathematics. But subcommittees A and C can get started and be ready for the next meeting. Kolb reminded them to use the online form.

V. New Business
There was no new business.

VI. Adjournment
Chakraborty made a motion, and it was seconded, to ADJOURN. The motion passed by acclamation. The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

The next meeting will be February 20, 2014, Altgeld 225.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator