GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
216th Meeting
Thursday, October 16, 2014

MINUTES
Approved

Present: D. Chakraborty (LAS/PHYS), B. Coller (EET/MEE), D. Gorman (LAS/ENGL), E. Klonoski (VPA/MUSC), M. Kolb (Ex-officio, Acting Associate Vice Provost), J. Kot (LAS/FL--/UCC), L. Lundstrum (BUS/FINA), B. Montgomery (HHS/FCNS), C. Parker (Ex-Officio, Director, Office of Assessment Services), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), C. Thompson (LAS/PHYS/UCC), K. Thu (LAS/ANTH), C. Vander Schee (EDU/LEPF/UCC)

The meeting was called to order by GEC chair Gorman.

I. Adoption of Agenda
Gorman asked if Old Business items B. and C. be switched in the agenda order. Thompson made a motion, seconded by Montgomery, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Announcements
A. Minutes from September 18, 2014, were approved electronically.
B. Gorman announced he attended a Blackboard demonstration a week ago. The demonstration was on the new iteration of Blackboard. E-portfolios were discussed, but who would be doing the assessments of e-portfolios at NIU was not part of the presentation.
C. Kolb reported on the general education survey done by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. The group rates general education programs at every institution across the county; NIU ranked as a D on national criteria.

III. Old Business
A. Disposition of remaining action items. Gorman noted that the list below are items that have been left over from other years. If PLUS goes forward, these items are moot. But if it doesn’t, the GEC will have to follow-up with the departments. It was clarified that all of these courses would still be a part of general education with PLUS, there would just be different goals to assess for. Thompson made a motion, seconded by Klonoski, TO TABLE THE ITEMS LISTED BELOW WITH OUTSTANDING DATA. Motion passed unanimously. Thu asked if departments would be communicated with regarding the motion to table and Gorman said that he will let them know.
   1. HIST 381 and HIST 382 (They needed to submit assessment data by spring, 2013.)
   2. Alternatives to MATH 101 (They were supposed to submit by June, 2015, nothing received to date.)
   3. ISYE 335. Coller was to follow-up with department to assist with revising the resubmission.
   4. There are other courses for which the GEC is still needing data (ANTH 210, ANTH 220, ANTH 230, ECON 160, ECON 260, ECON 261, POLS 150, POLS 220, POLS 260,
B. PLUS Task Force (Kolb). Kolb reported that the comment period for responding to the PLUS report is now closed. The GEC received an update of where the task force is with regards to changes to the proposal and the conversations they’ve had since last GEC meeting. Kot asked what happens once the task force has finished its deliberations; does the report go forwards as a final proposal? Kolb responded that different parts of the report will go to different committees. The general education changes will come to the GEC. Other sections will go to committees such as the APASC and CUC. Also, the budgetary part of the PLUS report is currently with Provost Freeman, and Kolb provided examples of items from the budget. Kolb asked that the GEC vote on the five key proposed changes for general education.

1. Five key changes in general education.

   a) i) The maximum number of courses taken from any single department used to fulfill the Knowledge Domain requirements changes from three to two; and ii) A maximum of two courses in the major department may be used to fulfill Knowledge Domain requirements as long as they are approved general education courses. Kolb explained that for the former, two courses were picked to ensure adequate breadth. Regarding the change allowing two courses in the major to count for general education if they are approved general education courses, Kolb said that there was quite a bit of feedback, especially from faculty, to make it possible to count some major courses for general education credit. Discussion followed regarding changing the wording from “courses” to “credit hours” as well as whether the wording throughout the PLUS proposal should be courses versus credit hours. It was decided to leave the wording here as two courses, since some courses carry four credit hours. However, the GEC decided that courses with an accompanying lab course should be counted as one course to offer more flexibility. It was clarified that major department refers to a student’s major department. Thompson made a motion, seconded by Thu, TO ENDORSE THE CHANGE THAT A MAXIMUM OF TWO COURSES IN THE MAJOR DEPARTMENT MAY BE USED TO FULFILL KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN REQUIREMENTS AS LONG AS THEY ARE APPROVED GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES, WITH THE CAVEAT THAT A COURSE WITH AN AFFILIATED LAB WILL BE COUNTED AS ONE COURSE. Motion passed unanimously.

   b) Thompson made a motion, seconded by Thu, TO ENDORSE THE REORGANIZATION OF EXISTING GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES INTO FOUR STUDY AREAS. The GEC discussed the proposed change in the description for the Nature and Technology Knowledge Domain. Committee members discussed the difference between nature and science. There was concern expressed that adding science to the title would take away from emphasizing STEM for students. There was also discussion on how to incorporate the need for scientific method/scientific literacy. It was noted that the chairs of the science departments have a strong feeling about including science literacy. Thu asked what do the SLOs say on science. Coller responded that there is an SLO that addresses quantitative and qualitative literacy. Kolb added that none of the SLOs address it specifically. Kolb also said that through the PLUS process, he is seeing the need to have the SLOs revised to address key issues, but that is a discussion for later date. The pros
and cons of adding “science” to the title of the Nature and Technology domain were discussed. It was noted that science is clearly covered in the revised Nature and Technology description and if science is added to the title, it doesn’t reflect the description. Thu made a motion, seconded by Thompson, TO ADD “SCIENCE” TO THE NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN. Thompson accepted this as a friendly amendment to her motion. Kolb observed that one of the goals of the task force was to keep the categories fairly broad, for example, the Creativity and Critical Analysis knowledge domain doesn’t specifically mention art. Discussion followed regarding the strong response to PLUS by the sciences versus responses from other disciplines. Klonoski said that by leaving the Knowledge Domains broadly defined allows for more involvement by other departments. He added that, with regards to his colleagues in V&PA, it wasn’t that they didn’t see the problem of not specifically defining creativity, but they understand what the task force is trying to do with broad categories. Committee members acknowledged the concerns of the science departments, but discussed further how to best address their concerns. Thu said he would be comfortable with withdrawing the friendly motion if the new definition would satisfy the concerns of the science departments. The GEC also discussed a memo from a group representing diversity and their request to replace the knowledge domain elective with one course in a Diversity Knowledge Domain. Kot asked what do the SLOs say with regards to diversity and Thu said that diversity should permeate through all of the domains. It was noted that adding a diversity requirement was attempted with the current program, but in practice students don’t seem to be getting what they need. Committee members also discussed the difficulty of defining diversity as well as how to include diversity and make sure students get the content. It was also noted that there is a very clear SLO on diversity: intercultural competencies of people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Klonoski said that there is also the possibility of a diversity Pathway. Committee members asked that their discussion of the science and diversity issues be communicated with the task force. Thu asked that the original motion go forward, adding that the task force be informed of the GEC’s discussion regarding the response to the science departments and the diversity groups. Motion passed unanimously.

c) Thompson made a motion, seconded by Montgomery, TO APPROVE THE GROUPING OF LOWER- AND UPPER-DIVISION KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN COURSES INTO THEMED PATHWAYS OF STUDY THAT OFFER OPTIONAL TRANSCRIPT DOCUMENTATION OF A THREE-COURSE FOCUS AND A SIX-COURSE MINOR WITHIN A SINGLE PATHWAY. The GEC discussed if a course could be in different Pathways. It was decided that the GEC could determine that on a case-by-case basis. It was clarified that there would be a Pathways coordinator who would oversee the particulars of the Pathways and to help convey information between the departments and the GEC. Kolb added that there are funds requested in the budget proposal to facilitate the Pathways. The GEC will have to decide how to appoint those, the length of the appointment, etc. Kot said that the minor is still an issue with some departments and that the Pathways minor could undercut minors in other departments. Kolb said that he received similar responses during the open comment phase. Thu said that as an institution NIU is responding to what students are asking for. There was concern expressed about the possible lack of rigor in the Pathways minor, but it was pointed out that students would be required to take three courses at the upper division. Other GEC members felt that the Pathways minor would not be any less rigorous than other minors with similar credit hour requirements (35% of NIU’s minors require 18 credit hours). There was also concern that there are some disciplines that may not be able to participate in the Pathways minor due to additional requirements for their courses (e.g., foreign
language and some of the sciences). Thompson pointed out that for many minors, students can get deep into a specific discipline, but that would not happen with the Pathways minor. There were some GEC members who also felt that the Pathways minor could serve as a gateway to other minors and it was noted that there would be no limit on the number of courses for each Pathway. It was pointed out that what resonated with students was that the minor would make general education more meaningful. The GEC discussed whether there could be a certificate rather than a minor and it was noted that a certificate could be as few as four courses, so a minor would be more meaningful and more rigorous. There was also some discussion about implementation with Registration and Records, but it was noted that that was not something the task force considered when approving the minor. However, Registration and Records has been open to working with the task force to implement anything that goes forward for PLUS. Many GEC members did say they sympathize with the positions presented in opposition to the minor. **Motion passed with two in opposition.**

d) Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Thompson, TO APPROVE A REDUCTION IN THE MINIMUM REQUIRED CREDIT HOURS FROM 39 TO 33 (13 TO 11 COURSES). The reasoning for this was to accommodate the programs that currently have an overburden due to outside agencies such as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) or accrediting bodies. Kolb added that flexibility was a key feature and a mandate from faculty and students. The ability for student to “double dip” is also a way to build even more flexibility. Building in flexibility gives room for requiring UNIV courses and writing-infused courses. Gorman asked if NIU’s general education program changed to 33 credit hours where would that place NIU with regards to its peer institutions. Kolb said that the average general education requirement in the state is 36 hours. Kolb added that according to IAI executives, there is no required number of general education hours, but NIU still has to accept compact benefits and course-by-course transfers. **Motion passed with one abstention.**

2. Implementation team for general education. Kolb reported that he and Vice Provost Birberick are working on different implementation teams that will consist of a series of work groups. The units that will be involved have been identified, but the individual team members have yet to be. Advising will be a key component of the implementation along with many other units. There will also be an e-portfolio work group. The GEC will be involved with the implementation teams in an advisory capacity or with members sitting on implementation teams. Kolb said that individual team members should be identified by the November GEC meeting. He asked GEC members to let him know if they have any suggestions for implementation or if they would like to be involved.

3. Forms for roll over and Pathways. Kolb distributed forms for existing and new general education courses. Existing courses will roll over into the new system; the forms are for departments to assign which knowledge domain those courses will be placed in as well as which SLOs they will assess. Existing courses won’t be required to be in a Pathway, but it is hoped that they will be. New general education courses will have to choose a knowledge domain as well as a Pathway.

4. Pathways call – RFP. This was discussed briefly. There was nothing decided on where the RFP will originate.

5. Pathways coordinators. The GEC discussed who would do this and what would be the process to appoint or elect coordinators. Kolb said the process needs to be inclusive and done campus wide. Discussion followed regarding the GEC’s role and one task could be Pathways management. The GEC needs to brainstorm an outline of how the Pathways would work. Kolb said he would work on the paperwork for the RFP for the GEC to review at their November meeting.

6. Catalog language. Due to time constraints, this was not discussed.
C. 2014-15 Resubmission (Humanities and Arts), update. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

IV. New Business.

There was no new business.

V. Adjournment

Thompson made a motion, seconded by Montgomery, TO ADJOURN. The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 3:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2014.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator