GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
229th Meeting
Thursday, March 24, 2016

MINUTES
Approved

Present: F. Bryan (LAS/COMS), B. Coller (EET/MEE), D. Gorman (LAS/ENGL), E. Klonoski (Ex-officio, Acting Associate Vice Provost), B. Montgomery (HHS/FCNS), C. Parker (Ex-officio, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes, Assessment Services), A. Polansky (LAS/MATH), M. Quinlan (VPA/ART), K. Thu (LAS/ANTH), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), C. Vander Schee (EDU/LEPF), L. Zhou (BUS/FINA)

The meeting was called to order by GEC chair Carolyn Vander Schee.

I. Adoption of Agenda
Gorman made a motion, seconded by Quinlan, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA FOR THE MARCH 24, 2016, GEC MEETING. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Approval of Minutes
The minutes from the February 18, 2016, GEC meeting were previously approved.

III. Announcements

1. New A.S. degree. Klonoski reported that there is a new A.S. degree in the state with a reduction in the number of requirements in humanities and social science courses, but with an increase in the number of math and science requirements. The change is to better prepare students for STEM fields. Therefore, the new degree does not meet General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) standards. So transfers students may have to complete their general education requirements at their respective four-year institutions. However, because of the change to general education at NIU, these new requirements do meet NIU’s general education requirements, so students transferring to NIU with this new A.S. degree would not need to take additional general education courses.

2. Curricular Approval Process Update. Klonoski reported that seven Pathways have been approved through the curricular approval process and will be in the 16-17 catalog. In addition, 263 writing infused courses were approved through the college curriculum committees for the 16-17 catalog. Regarding changes to the curricular approval process, the first reading to streamline the process went to the University Council (UC) earlier this month. The proposal would eliminate the Undergraduate Coordinating Council (UCC) and merge the Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC) and the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee (APASC). The second reading will be at the April 6, 2016, UC meeting. In addition, the UC approved revisions to the university’s bylaws regarding the number of votes needed to make further revisions to the constitution and bylaws. Bryan confirmed that the change in voting requirements still meets Roberts Rules to pass an amendment to the constitution
and bylaws.

IV. Old Business

A. New course applications: HIST 389--update. Vander Schee reported that she talked to History Chair Schmidt and he will coordinate with faculty in his area and will resubmit the application. Any submission at this point would have to be considered for a future catalog, not the 2016-17 catalog.

B. Assessment Plan. Parker made a presentation on the assessment plan. He said that NIU is moving toward an outcomes-based assessment strategy. He gave an overview of what an assessment plan could look like, including what it would look like overall at NIU, e.g., longitudinal assessment of baccalaureate SLOs and the objectives of assessment.

The GEC discussed how to communicate the assessment plan to instructors who are teaching general education courses. Klonoski said that the plan is for those instructors to use a rubric based on what were identified as signature assignments and SLOs for their respective courses. Klonoski added that the Pathway coordinators will also be helping to facilitate the process. Thu said that the expectations of the Pathway coordinators should be clear.

Parker continued by saying the plan is do do the assessment of general education courses in phases. The first courses to be evaluated will be the ones that are addressing SLOs for which there is a better handle on how to assess them, i.e., for which there are already rubrics. The first courses will be the ones addressing critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, collaboration and teamwork, and quantitative reasoning. All of these SLOs align well with the courses in foundational studies. Then the next phase would be to move on to the more abstract SLOs, e.g., synthesis, intercultural competence, global interconnections, and human relations with the natural world. Subject matter experts have been asked to develop rubrics to assess those areas, but with the idea that the rubrics could be shared across campus. The rubrics being developed need to be consistent. The use of consistent rubrics can unify language and provide consistent messages and a common structure for feedback. The rubrics can be altered based on the discipline, but some elements need to be the same across all, such as number of levels and what level indicates proficiency.

Parker shared some sample rubrics with the GEC and a brief discussion followed. There was positive feedback that the rubrics would be useful. There was a discussion on who will be evaluating assessment data on general education courses and how that will happen. It was noted that no specific procedure has been established to date.

Parker showed the University Writing Project as an example of how assessment of a particular program is done. He concluded the presentation with an overview of the current status of general education assessment. There is a set of rubrics for specific discipline areas already available to disseminate to community. The courses that have indicated the SLOs for which there are already rubrics need to be identified. Klonoski added that the GEC needs to think about how to manage the number of SLOs and the number of courses per SLO varies greatly. For example, for oral communication, there are only the COMS courses, for critical thinking, there are close to 60 courses.

C. Pathways Coordinators

1. Applicants. Vander Schee reported on the applicants for the Pathways coordinator positions. There is at least one applicant for each Pathway and she listed the dates when
they e-mailed her back. Several of the applicants are instructors and the GEC discussed whether or not the Pathways coordinators should be tenure/tenure track faculty. While this stipulation was not included in the invitation for Pathways coordinators, the GEC decided that the positions should be held only by tenure/tenure track faculty. Concerns about having instructors in the position included concern about lack of long-term appointments and that the duties of a Pathways coordinator would take away from their other departmental duties or vice versa. Klonoski added that the GEC needs to be mindful of collective bargaining agreements with the instructors. It was noted that there are instructors who applied to be the coordinator of two specific Pathways and one instructor who was interested in any of them. The GEC discussed the two applicants who are interested in the Social Justice and Diversity Pathway. It was noted that one of the applicants, Laura Vasquez, spent a lot of time developing this Pathway, so in fairness to her, she should be the coordinator of that Pathway. This is despite the fact that the other applicant is an instructor, so would not be qualified based on the earlier discussion. The GEC then looked at the applicants for each Pathway one-by-one. Thu made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO APPROVE SARAH MARSH AS THE PATHWAY COORDINATOR FOR CREATIVITY, INNOVATION AND CHANGE. Motion passed unanimously. Thu made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO APPROVE ABU BAH AS THE PATHWAY COORDINATOR FOR GLOBAL CONNECTIONS. Motion passed unanimously. Polansky made a motion, seconded by Thu, TO APPROVE STEVE HOWELL AS THE PATHWAY COORDINATOR FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS. Motion passed unanimously. The coordinator for the Learning Pathway was put on hold due to the fact that the only applicant is an instructor. Klonoski will follow-up with Wei-Chen Hung, who developed this Pathway, to discuss other options for the coordinator. Quinlan made a motion, seconded by Bryan, THAT THE PATHWAY COORDINATORS NOT BE INSTRUCTORS. Montgomery made an amendment to the motion, seconded by Polansky, THAT PATHWAY COORDINATORS BE TENURE/ TENURE TRACK FACULTY. Motion passed unanimously. Thu made a motion, seconded by Vander Schee, TO APPROVE JIM SCHMIDT AS THE PATHWAY COORDINATOR FOR ORIGINS AND INFLUENCES. Motion passed unanimously. Gorman made a motion, seconded by Thu, TO APPROVE LAURA VASQUEZ AS THE PATHWAY COORDINATOR FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DIVERSITY. Motion passed unanimously. Coller made a motion, seconded by Zhou, TO APPROVE MIKE KONEN AS THE PATHWAY COORDINATOR FOR SUSTAINABILITY. Motion passed unanimously. There was a discussion that it’s important that the Pathways coordinators understand their responsibilities (see next agenda item). Vander Schee will communicate with all of the applicants the GEC’s decisions.

2. Contracts. Vander Schee said that the GEC needs to develop a job description for the Pathways coordinators, which will include the expectations of duties to be performed and who they should report to. Quinlan suggested the invitation that was sent out could be used as a starting point. Vander Schee asked for volunteers for a subcommittee to draft the document with specific expectations. Gorman, Klonoski, Quinn, and Vander Schee will work on this. The timeline for when this should be completed was discussed. Klonoski said that ideally the Pathways coordinators should arrange at least one meeting yet this semester with the participants to let them know the Pathways will be effective this fall. The GEC decided that once the subcommittee has a draft, the GEC could approve the job description via e-mail prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

D. Publicizing pathways/student feedback. Klonoski reported that he has been working on getting some materials together to publicize the Pathways and to take to resource fairs during new student and transfer student orientations. These should be ready in time for the Transfer
Student Open House on April 15. Vander Schee will reach out to the GEC for volunteers to work at the open house.

V. New Business

A. Deleting KNPE 301. Smith explained that she received an e-mail from Steve Howell asking that KNPE 301 be deleted from the general education program and the Health and Wellness Pathway. The rationale is that the department recently added a corequisite. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Zhou, TO DELETE KNPE 301 FROM GENERAL EDUCATION (SOCIETY AND CULTURE) AND FROM THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS PATHWAY. Motion passed unanimously.

B. COMS 426--reevaluate. It was noted that COMS 426 has prerequisites that are not in the general education program, including a portfolio review. These prerequisites would prevent any student who is not a COMS major from taking the course, so it probably should not be a general education course. Thu made a motion, seconded by Vander Schee, TO DELETE COMS 426 FROM THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS) AND FROM THE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DIVERSITY PATHWAY. Klonoski added that this decision is in line with the decision not to include a couple of courses in the School of Art that have portfolio reviews. Motion passed unanimously. Smith added that the deletion of COMS 426 and KNPE 301 will not be effective until the 2017-18 catalog.

C. ANTH 302. It was explained that the application for this course to be a general education course and in the Social Justice and Diversity Pathway was never received for the 2016-17 catalog and that is why the application is being presented at this time. So this course will not be able to be added until the 2017-18 catalog. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO TABLE ANTH 302 UNTIL THE NEXT GEC MEETING. Motion passed unanimously.

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

The next meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2016.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator