GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
233rd Meeting
Thursday, November 17, 2016

MINUTES
Approved

Present:  A. Forgue (LAS/Student), R. Hunt (EDU/ETRA/BC), E. Klonoski (Ex-officio, Acting Associate Vice Provost), L. Matuszewich (LAS/PSYC), B. Montgomery (HHS/FCNS), M. Pickett (Academic Advising Center), A. Polansky (LAS/MATH), M. Quinlan (VPA/ART), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), R. Subramony (Office of Assessment Services), L. Zhou (BUS/FINA)

Guests:  S. Richter (Faculty Development)

The meeting was called to order by GEC Chair Zhou.

I.  Adoption of Agenda.  Quinlan made a motion, seconded by Matuszewich, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA FOR THE NOVEMBER 17, 2016, GEC MEETING.  Motion passed unanimously.

II.  Announcements

A.  Minutes from the October 20, 2016, were approved electronically.

III.  Old Business

A.  Assessment Plan.

1.  Faculty Development.  Klonoski explained that the GEC had asked for a demonstration of the online rubric process in Blackboard.  Stephanie Richter, assistant director for Faculty Development, made the presentation.  She said she adapted the rubric for written communication and critical thinking for Blackboard and has been working with the Division of Informational Technology (DoIT) to add the rubric to Blackboard.  It will automatically be in Blackboard courses for instructors to access.  There are options as well for faculty who do choose to use it.  They can decide whether or not they want students to see it as well as whether or not it will be incorporated into student’s grades.  The online rubric will also enable instructors to provide students feedback, at the course level or at the IT level.  If the latter option is used, the data can be aggregated across courses.  She then demonstrated the different ways instructors can use the rubric.  The demonstration further illustrated the rubric’s flexibility.  It is a fairly quick point and click process.  A discussion followed regarding ways in which instructors can use the rubric for collecting assessment data.  Richter demonstrated how the rubric can be used for specific assignments and how one assignment can have more than one rubric attached to it.  She also demonstrated how to run some reports that can be created with rubrics.  Committee members discussed how the rubric could be altered and Klonoski said that the third level of proficiency has to remain constant.  Polansky suggested that there needs to be instructions for using the rubric, not only for using it in Blackboard, but for how much (or little) it can be altered for general education assessment purposes.

It was noted that instructors also need to be informed that this rubric is optional. If they are using other assessment tools and can submit their assessment data with those tools...
that is acceptable. Richter added that any of the rubrics that were developed for the Student Learning Outcomes can be preloaded to courses in Blackboard. The goal is to make it as easy as possible to collect assessment data. Quinlan asked if it was possible to upload a shell rubric that instructors could modify and Richter said they should be able to do that. Subramony said that the rubric should be standardized enough that it’s a valuable rubric and assessment tool. Quinlan said it should be communicated to instructors that the GEC is not expecting students to be achieving above a certain level, especially if they are in 100-level courses. Matuszewich suggested that there be a column in the rubric labeled NA so that the whole rubric can be presented and then instructors can choose NA if there’s a row that doesn’t apply to a specific assignment. There was discussion regarding whether or not completing the rubric would be extra work. And while many GEC members said that it would take additional time, they also agreed that it is part of teaching a general education course. Zhou observed that there are two issues for the GEC to consider: the rubric itself and then how is it to be used. He said that Blackboard seems an efficient way to use it. Klonoski agreed that he was hearing that the Blackboard route seems worthwhile to pursue and to move forward on.

2. Assessment Plan. Klonoski said that he needs to submit an assessment plan for general education to the University Assessment Panel and that one question still remains: how should the GEC collect data? Should it be collected every semester, then harvested on a rotating cycle? Or should it be rolled out depending on the SLOs being assessed, starting with written communication? Zhou replied that if cost is not a concern, the GEC should try to collect data all the time and to get as much data as possible. Quinlan agreed, saying that she would prefer to be required to do it every year because then it would get easy after a while and instructors would then make it a routine part of teaching a general education course. Klonoski said it’s very easy for DoIT to put all the SLO rubrics on Blackboard. Klonoski also reminded the GEC that if assessment is done every semester for all the SLOs, then instructors will most likely be doing assessment for two SLOs every semester. Subramony said it would be helpful to have a course map see which courses are feeding into all of the SLOs. Klonoski said he can share this with the GEC at the next meeting. Several GEC members emphasized that no matter what the approach is, instructors needs to have clear instructions of what is expected of them and what their options are for collecting data. Committee members also shared what they are already using in their classrooms for data collection, such as pre/post-tests, and Klonoski said that any methods that instructors are using to collect the data on the assignments attached to the specific SLOs are acceptable. There was also discussion on making sure instructors understand what their data are being used for and to ensure them that they will get feedback on the data. Zhou asked if the GEC needed to decide on the assessment plan at this meeting and Klonoski responded that they did, that he needs to submit the report. He said that it sounds like in the spirit of growing assessment for the general education program, the rubrics need to be identified for the specific courses and loaded into Blackboard and that there will be an ongoing assessment of general education courses. Committee members agreed with the plan and reiterated that there be constant instruction on what is expected of instructors and how to use assessment tools that they are either already using or that are being made available for them and that there will be data provided back to the instructors and departments. Klonoski asked for volunteers to vet the rubrics that have yet to be tested at NIU. Montgomery said she would be happy to read them through. She added that if they were added to the online group, then any GEC member could review them and let Klonoski know if there are any issues. Klonoski asked GEC members to make any edits online in the O365 group.

B. Pathways Coordinators. Klonoski reported that he attended one of the Pathways meetings. He has also created a list of all the instructors teaching the courses in the Pathways for the
spring, which he has shared with the coordinators so they know who to contact. He met with some of the other coordinators and they have been in contact with their faculty and are ready to move forward in the spring. He has one more meeting planned with the remaining coordinators to get them moving forward.

C. Publicizing Pathways. Klonoski reported that publicity has launched. He gave GEC members brochures on PLUS and reminded them of the three components of NIU PLUS: Academics PLUS, Jobs PLUS, and Engage PLUS.

D. ENGL 340. It was noted that the GEC looked at this proposal at the last meeting, but decided to wait to vote on it until the Pathway application has been received. Smith reported that she has yet to receive an application to add ENGL 340 to any of the Pathways. Committee members discussed whether or not to go ahead and approve this course for the general education program. Polansky made a motion, seconded by Matuszewich, TO APPROVE ENGL 340 FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN. Motions passed unanimously.

E. MUHL 431. Committee members were reminded that at the last meeting, the GEC agreed that the faculty who proposed MUHL 431 for general education and the Global Connections Pathway needed to clarify the status of a proposed course revision and they needed to give the GEC the description that’s on the books for now. They also need to clarify the two assignments that were included in the application and explain how the video project fits in with the signature assignment and the collaborative assignment. Montgomery suggested that they also need to be specific about which of the larger question(s) from the Pathway MUHL 431 is planning to address. Smith said that a revised application was received and shared with the GEC. Matuszewich observed that there are still problems with the concept of the assignment. They are saying every individual would provide a film, but then students would also be working collaboratively on films. Pickett asked what they need to do if they plan to revise the catalog language. It was explained that they need to submit a course revision through the curricular approval process. Klonoski explained that the GEC needs to consider two parts of the proposal. First, is it acceptable as is to be part of the general education program and, second, does it fit in with the society and culture knowledge domain. Zhou said the GEC should table until a course revision comes through. Montgomery said there is enough in the application to move forward with approval. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO APPROVE MUHL 431 FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE SOCIETY AND CULTURE KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN AND FOR THE GLOBAL CONNECTIONS PATHWAY. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. New Business

A. Catalog changes from the colleges. It was noted that most of these changes are routine. Zhou said he didn’t understand the rationale for the change for FLRU 261. Klonoski said that what the GEC considers here are whether or not the changes being made would make a course unacceptable for the general education program. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Matuszewich, TO APPROVE THE CATALOG CHANGES FROM THE COLLEGES. Motion passed unanimously.

B. ANTH 240. This is an application for ANTH 240 to be added to the Origins and Influences Pathway. There were questions why if this isn’t a new general education course it was submitted on a new general education course application. It was also noted that it’s already in that Pathway. Klonoski said it looks like they are submitting the application to have the course title changed. No action is needed. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Hunt, TO REAFFIRM THAT THIS COURSE BELONGS IN THE NATURE AND
TECHNOLOGY KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN AND THE ORIGINS AND INFLUENCES PATHWAY. Motion passed unanimously.

C. FINA 115. This is an application for a new general education course for the Society and Culture Knowledge Domain and the Sustainability Pathway. Zhou did get approval from the Pathway coordinator. Zhou described the course. Matuszewich made a motion, seconded by Montgomery, TO APPROVE FINA 115 FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE SOCIETY AND CULTURE KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN AND IN THE SUSTAINABILITY PATHWAY. Motion passed unanimously.

D. Change in hours for Quantitative Literacy/Foundational Studies. It was explained that there is a combination of courses that some students have to take for Quantitative Literacy that add up to 6 semester hours and there was a suggestion from an academic advisor to change the hours that are required from 0-3 to 0-6. A number of GEC members expressed concern that if the hours are changed, students will think they need 6 semester hours, when all they really need is 0-3 semester hours. There was discussion that students who end up with 6 semester hours will have met the requirement, but the requirement shouldn’t be changed in order to not confuse students who only need to take 3 semester hours. There was also discussion on why the catalog says 0-3 when students really need 3 semester hours. It was explained that students can get AP credit for the requirement. Forgue agreed that it could be misleading if the wording is changed to 0-6; students would think they need 6 hours. It was also noted that advisors know the current system and it would lead to more confusion if it was changed. Zhou made a motion, seconded by Montgomery, TO LEAVE THE REQUIREMENT FOR QUANTITATIVE LITERACY AS IS AT 0-3 SEMESTER HOURS. Motion passed with one vote in opposition.

V. Adjournment
Forgue made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO ADJOURN. The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 2:20 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2017.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator