

**GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**254<sup>rd</sup> Meeting**  
**Thursday, February 20, 2020**

**MINUTES**

Present: E. Klonoski (AVP), R. Caughron (BC, Chair), J. Hathaway (BC), C. Maher (BC), J. Pendergrass (BUS), P. Smith (EDU), R. Sinko (EET), B. Montgomery (HHS), V. Garver (LAS/H), I. Pearson (Student/CLAS), M. Pickett (Director Academic Advising Center), D. Halverson (CC/CE)

The meeting was called to order by Rod Caughron, Chair. A brief discussion of process for Pathway evaluation ensued.

- I. Adoption of Agenda:** Montgomery made a motion for adoption. Garver seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
  
- II. Approval of Minutes:** Pendergrass made a motion to approve. Montgomery seconded. The January 16, 2020 minutes were **APPROVED unanimously.**
  
- III. Announcements:**
  - A. Ian Pearson was the designee for Sabrina Self at the 02.20.2020 meeting.
  
- IV. New Business:** The discussion of the hurdles to success and the future of the Pathways was the focus of the meeting. It was decided that the remaining new business items would be managed by electronic vote and reported on at the March 19, 2020 meeting.
  - A. Student engagement/Awareness was a key hurdle discussed with the following notable concepts discussed in detail.
    1. Montgomery and Maher both stressed that intentionality was necessary for success but reaching students with this message is a challenge. Maher indicated that introduction with follow up will be critical as there are multiple engagement issue that hinder intentionality.
    2. Garver stated that students don't engage because they don't see how it is different than a minor or a certificate. Additionally, those options seem to have more marketing value for students. How do we sell the utility of the Pathways?
    3. Sinko reminded members that there are 12 minors that automatically result in a Pathway Focus completion. Klonoski agreed that the two programs are not in competition.
    4. Klonoski stressed that employers want to see evidence of communication, teamwork, and networking skills; the Pathways give support to that type of cross-domain learning. Montgomery concurred and added that providing a framework to discuss the intentionality of choice with general education courses is a good marketing strategy for students in interviews.
    5. Maher indicated that NIU needs to have an education model for general education and not a product model. Pathways are a tool to have meaningful conversations about the role of general education with students. A Pathway is

not right for all but it can benefit many. Klonoski concurred and stated that for success NIU needs to move away from a Pathway model that can work for all students. He added that the Pathways are a good tool for undecided students, first generation students, and those in programs with less structure. Key will be making students aware of the Pathways at the right time.

6. Hathaway agreed that timing awareness is a critical piece of the success puzzle. Pickett stated that the second semester advising meeting would be the ideal time for starting the conversation. Pickett added that without structure, students won't engage. Expanding she added that without a set structure, some students don't want to take the time to figure out how to make it work. Klonoski agreed, mentioning again that this won't be a good educational package for all. We need to reach those who can benefit from it.

Montgomery *made a motion* to discuss keeping the Pathways program, in some form. Pickett seconded and the **Motion Passes Unanimously**.

Caughron stated that he understands the concept, but what is the true value? Would the value of the education offered at NIU be less without the Pathways? If no, why should we keep them? Garver stated that general education course requirements can be hard for students to meet, so they need to be meaningful. Hathaway expanded that if the goal is to make general education more meaningful this is a format that will work for many students. Klonoski stressed again that if it will work for some students it has value, but we need to reach those students.

Montgomery called the question for a vote. Maher seconded and **the VOTE to keep the Pathways was 6 in favor and 4 against; MOTION passes**.

- B. Faculty Buy-In – as the discussion shifted to the possible elimination of some of the Pathways, the need to bring faculty in, as partners in the decision, dominated the conversation.

1. Garver expressed the need to bring the faculty in to the conversation. If a decision to alter the Pathways occurs, without the opportunity to voice an opinion, there will be anger amongst those who have engaged by applying to have their courses in a Pathway.
2. Klonoski concurred and stressed that this is a critical item that has yet to be discussed. Without communication, there will be anger and dissatisfaction and that will only hurt the relationship GEC has with faculty.
3. Garver felt that the department chairs should also be included in the conversation, as they work to get the courses on the schedule.
4. Both Montgomery and Garver stated that communicating this in a positive voice is critical. Drive the conversation to priorities of the department and how this fits in with the Pathways. Garver stated that faculty are a powerful force in helping students make decisions and this could be harnessed in revamping the program.

Caughron made a motion to communication with the faculty and department chairs as the Pathways are re-structured. Pearson seconded. Klonoski suggested that a survey could be sent out with Caughron and Klonoski spearheading the distribution. **The MOTION passed unanimously**.

- C. The oversight hurdle was the next to be discussed.

1. Caughron stated that one frustration is that this program seems impossible for successful oversight with the current structure. Montgomery stated that a point person will still be necessary for success, this can't be done by committee.
2. Klonoski suggested that if a point person is selected, they will need to have a fair amount of cultural capital, as networking and communication will be the key drivers to managing the change and building for success.
3. Pendergrass indicated that no one is going to do this without compensation. Is that in the package? Klonoski felt that the GEC should put that in the proposal and see what is available when the Provost's office reviews the recommendations from the GEC.
4. Maher stated that the coordinator should be given more leverage to get the approved Pathways courses on the schedule, as this has been a critical issue in student completion. Garver stated that chairs are in charge of scheduling most general education courses, as per APPM, and, due to programmatic and personnel reasons, they may sometimes be resistant to scheduling courses that coordinators request.

Garver made a motion to eliminate the current coordinator framework and role. Montgomery seconded and the **MOTION was approved unanimously.**

The three outcomes are as follows:

1. The GEC voted to keep the Pathways in some form.
2. It was decided that the faculty and department chairs, impacted by Pathways reform, would be notified and asked for feedback. This will be done by Rod and Ed via email.
3. The GEC voted to eliminate the Pathways Coordinator Role in its current format.

The GEC members were charged with:

1. Ideas for ways to reduce the number of Pathways to make oversight reasonable.
  - What metrics should determine which Pathways are considered viable?
  - What campus culture/politics will factor in to this analysis?
  - What should the communication/PR strategy with students/faculty/administration look like?
2. Ideas to build a framework for a reduced coordinator role.
  - What elements are necessary for success?
  - Who should fill this role – faculty, chair, advisor, administrator, etc?
  - How will this role be funded? Amount/type of compensation?
3. What metrics will be used to determine success?
  - What is the assessment plan?

D. The following items are to be delivered to the GEC committee **via electronic vote.** The outcome will be reported at the March 13, 2020 GEC meeting.

1. SCL 200 – Application to the Society and Culture Knowledge Domain.
2. HIST 323 - Application to the Nature and Technology Knowledge Domain.
3. LATS 101 – Application to the Creativity and Critical Analysis Knowledge Domain.

## **V. Old Business**

- A. There was no time to discuss the framework for deleting an inactive course from the General Education roles.

**VI. Adjournment** – Montgomery called for a motion to adjourn 2:58 pm. This motion was

seconded by Maher. The motion was **APPROVED unanimously**.

The next meeting of the General Education Committee is scheduled for March 19, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Denise Halverson, Curriculum Coordinator/ Catalog Editor.