

Council on General Education Minutes
February 12, 2019
10-11:00 a.m., Stevenson Hall 140

Presiding: Rocio Rivadeneyra

Present: Brian Aitken, Rebekka Darner, Amy Hurd, Carla Pohl, Rocio Rivadeneyra, Kimberly Schneider, Jean Standard, Benjamin Stiers, Chad Woolard, and Chris Worland

Guests:

Derek Meyers, Assistant Director, University Assessment Services

Rivadeneyra called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Action Items:

1. Approval of December 4, 2018 Minutes

The question was called. Darner made a motion to accept the December 4, 2018 minutes. Pohl seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The minutes were accepted.

2. Minor in Entrepreneurship

The proposal was tabled from the last meeting so the proposal's authors could revise and re-submit the proposal.

Rivadeneyra noted the proposal had been revised and was easier to understand, especially in regards to the proposed use of e-contracts.

The question was called. Stiers made a motion to approve the revised proposal for the Minor in Entrepreneurship. Darner seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion passed.

Simmons will inform Drs. Mark Hoelscher and Laurie Merriman-Thompson of the Council's decision.

3. General Education Assessment – Derek Meyers

A draft of a proposed *General Education Student Survey* was distributed to Council members prior to the meeting for review.

Meyers informed members the first, formal assessment of the General Education program began in 2008, and since then, students have not been surveyed. During the fall semester, Meyers worked with Dr. Gina Hunter to create the survey. Their research found that there is not an abundance of literature regarding general education surveys. The first set of questions adapted from the literature is broad in nature and focuses on opinions regarding the overall philosophy of Illinois State's General Education program. The second set of questions focuses more on opinions regarding the goals/outcomes of the program and allows students to indicate the extent to which they feel the program has helped them develop in those areas. The third set of questions provides opportunities for students to list the strengths, areas for improvement, and additional comments regarding the program.

Meyers explained students could be required to login with their ULID to access the survey. This requirement serves two purposes in that it will exclude multiple logins by the same user and will allow

University Assessment staff to utilize University data associated with individual logins in their assessments. Meyers assured Council members University Assessment would follow Institutional Review Board (IRB) research protocols and that all student responses would remain confidential. The target population for the survey is still under discussion.

Darner pointed out that many of her students, if asked what courses count toward General Education, would not know, so they may not know how to respond to the questions. She questioned if there was a way to include individual students' course schedules into the survey and identify the General Education courses the student has taken. Aitken thought that may be difficult as several courses, such as MATH 120, are considered major courses for some students, in addition to being General Education courses. He agreed with Darner that many students do not know much about General Education and felt that the program may have lost its direction.

Woolard mentioned he taught several General Education courses, such as COM 128, and thought students may connect courses more toward their major or the department offering the course as opposed to the course being in General Education. Hurd asked how the course was taught and wondered if it was tied back to the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) so students understood how the course was related to General Education or if there was more of a Communications focus. Woolard responded while the tie back to the GECC was mentioned on the syllabus, the focus, at least for COM 128, was geared more toward Communications. Darner added the General Education objectives were listed on her syllabus. Aitken believed the vast majority of faculty includes the objectives on their course syllabi.

Rivadeneira pointed out it may be difficult for juniors or seniors taking the survey to remember back to when they took their General Education courses. Darner asked how often University Assessment planned on conducting the survey. Aitken suggested the survey would need to be offered on a regular basis to assess programs correctly and hoped it would help reveal the "skunky" classes currently in the program so they could be assessed.

Woolard asked how the survey would be distributed to students. Meyers responded the survey would be emailed to students with a subject along the lines of "Tell Us What You Think about General Education." He would like to utilize *Announcements* on ReggieNet but believed most students would not look at it. Hurd asked if students would be offered any incentive to take the survey and Darner suggested assigning an early registration date/time. Aitken added the Academic Advising Council currently has a random drawing among students who complete their advising survey and five students are given early registration privileges. He added any student who already has this privilege is pulled out of the drawing prior to selection. Rivadeneira asked Aitken if the Council had noticed any differences in their survey respondent population to which Aitken replied they do not break that information out.

Aitken asked Meyers what the target date was for the survey release. Meyers hoped to send the survey out to students within the next several weeks. Aitken pointed out the advising survey had gone out and wondered if it would compete with this one. Meyers thought it could and noted a student health survey was also going to be released.

Meyers liked the idea of pulling in students' current schedules. When results from the previous General Education assessment reports were examined, Council members seem surprised by the amount of juniors and seniors who were still taking General Education courses. Standard replied it was not unusual

as some majors load up students early so that students in those programs then have to complete those courses in their later years.

Aitken noted transfer students could be enrolled inadvertently in General Education courses which may skew survey results. He suggested Meyers target those students who were in the GE14 student group in Campus Solutions. Those students may have already completed their General Education courses but they would at least be in the correct program.

Rivadeneira suggested adding a definition of what General Education is to the survey. Meyers mentioned he and Hunter had thought about doing it. He also suggested adding a question along the lines of "Do you know what General Education is" to the survey.

Standard questioned the following item: "General Education courses are easier than courses required for my major." She pointed out juniors and seniors who are taking 300-level major courses would have a different perspective than those students who have only taken 100- and 200-level courses. Woolard asked if all General Education courses were 100-level courses. Standard replied they were not and that the majority were 100- and 200-level courses. She suggested tweaking the wording along the lines to "General Education courses are easier than introductory courses required in my major."

Woolard asked if University Assessment looked at faculty evaluations as a source of student feedback. Rivadeneira suggested adding a General Education question component to the evaluations. Standard noted faculty evaluations are part of the ASPT process and was not sure about those boundaries. Meyers agreed and responded the faculty evaluations would not be used and the focus was to put more emphasis on students describing what they learned.

Standard added that is why University Assessment collects artifacts as part of the assessment. Meyers agreed and noted that faculty indicate the outcome(s) individual assignments address when submitting the artifacts. Rivadeneira asked if faculty teaching General Education courses could opt in to have students respond to the survey or if a more holistic approach was desired rather than a class-by-class approach.

Meyers believed the class-by-class approach could be included as part of the information gathering process each semester and could follow the course category rotation schedule. He added University Assessment could do a pilot this year and believed some General Education instructors may volunteer to participate. Aitken asked if instructors should send out the survey rather than Meyers. Meyers responded if the instructor was comfortable doing so; it would be alright for them to send it out.

Meyers asked anyone who had any further suggestions to let him know. He will revise the survey draft and send to the Council for feedback at its next meeting.

4. Misc. Item—NS/SMT Lab Requirement

Darner asked Council members where to find more information regarding the lab requirement for Natural Sciences (NS) and Science, Math, Technology (SMT) courses.

Darner noted, not including Natural Science Alternatives (NSA) courses, Biological Sciences only had one course designated as a NS course. Upon reviewing other course descriptions, Darner felt they seemed to be similar to other NS courses but were given the SMT designation and questioned what the

distinction between the two categories was. She believed the difference is that NS courses have labs while SMT courses do not and added Biological Sciences could offer more NS course options if courses currently being designated as SMT courses were re-categorized.

Standard confirmed the inclusion of lab was the distinction between the two designations and was carried over from the original General Education program categories. She did not know where to find the documentation but suggested Sally Parry would most likely know where to find it. Darner asked if all the NS courses had labs to which Aitken responded they all had linked lab sections. However, he could not comment as to if those labs were more paper-based or experimental-based in nature.

Darner pointed out the information should be more readily available. Rivadeneyra and Standard agreed, with Standard adding the same issue has come up in University Curriculum Committee (UCC) as well in regards to an AMALI paper trail. General Education and AMALI are nebulous in the system and do not have clear documentation. Many times the only paper trail available is by reviewing old committee minutes. Standard mentioned this lack of documentation was going to be part of an upcoming discussion at UCC.

Hurd added the lack of documentation has caused discrepancies in the catalog, minutes, etc. and it is time to look at procedures. Aitken mentioned AMALI courses would just appear in front of the Council without a proposal. Standard responded those requests were now handled by UCC and were previously vetted by Jonathan Rosenthal. UCC is now seeing requests that are not clear and there is not always an AMALI expert on UCC.

Hurd did not believe there was any review of courses once they were accepted into a General Education designation with Aitken adding the same was true of the AMALI designation. Standard agreed that there is no systematic assessment of courses.

Darner asked if it was true that students must take a pre-requisite prior to taking a SMT course. Aitken said it was not and the Council had located the difference in writing last semester. Darner mentioned it would be easier to write new courses if this information was available. Aitken asked if the Rosenthal had the information in his files. Hurd responded she believed Parry had the information.

Aitken made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pohl seconded.

Meeting adjourned: 10:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Soemer Simmons