Grand Valley State University

*General Education Committee*

Minutes of 10-17-11

**PRESENT:** Kirk Anderson, Deb Bambini, Jim Bell, Jason Crouthamel Chris Dobson, Emily Frigo, Roger Gilles, Gabriele Gottlieb, Gary Greer, Paul Jorgensen, Penney Nichols-Whitehead Keith Rhodes, Paul Sicilian, David Vessey

**ALSO PRESENT:** C. “Griff” Griffin, Director of General Education, Krista McFarland, General Education Office Coordinator

**ABSENT:** Susan Carson, Alisha Davis, Ruth Stevens, Judy Whipps

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| Agenda Items | Discussion | Action / Decisions |
| **Approval of**  **Oct 10 Minutes** |  | Approved as submitted. |
| **Approval of Agenda** |  | Approved. |
| **Announcements** | Penny reported on the AAC&U Personal and Social Responsibility conference that she attended.  The GEC is way ahead of the curve in many ways. Many of the issues that have been previously discussed by GEC are topics that came up at the conference.  A couple of take aways:   * Always keep in mind what the purpose is. This was a big issue at the conference and everyone struggles with “what does AAC&U mean by this” for description * Keep in mind that was everyone is ultimately aiming for is to make sure our students are actively engaged in the democratic way of change making. A lot of people got hung up on service learning – the consensus after discussion is that ultimately we are saying it needs to lead to actively engaged. * Keep in mind that whatever you do, you have to bring it to scale, so really think about if you are going to require service-learning in the community. You have to think about organizationally fatigue and the implications of the effects if you have a scale of 24,000 students. * A lot of people doing 2 semester or 1-year projects. Usually in groups and facilitated or led by faculty. Got thinking that GE 4xx could be an option as a 6 credit, 2 semester course. * The other thing that kept coming up was volunteerism. There is a notion that volunteering is the same as service-learning, but this is not the same thing as students being actively engaged in changing their world. Rather the idea that students could be agent of change rather than the fixers of the rest of the world.   Penney has hard copy materials that she will share from the conference. |  |
| **Quantitative Literacy as a Separate GE Skills Goal** | ***We will discuss the recommendations by the ad hoc Science group (proposal attached) and the ad hoc GE work group (e-mail attached). Both groups recommend the separation of quantitative literacy from information literacy.***  ***If we decide to support the groups’ recommendation, we will discuss how we want to integrate the recommendation into our November 1 draft proposal.***  Two documents were distributed for review – one from the GEC subgroup and one from the Science group. Both groups are recommending that we separate quantitative literacy.  If we do separate the goal, we are technically adding 4 new goals to the GE program.  The committee continued to discuss options:   * A committee member asked why we wouldn’t still leave it as information literacy and expand the description to say it includes quantitative literacy. The Chair responded that information literacy is most commonly seen as library research. * A committee member shared feedback he received from a colleague that every big 10 college requires computer literacy, so we might want to also consider that. * A committee member noted that in health care, information literacy is really about numbers as well as other kinds of literacy. * A committee member added that one exception is in the sciences lab. * A committee member thought that all disciplines need quantitative literacy. They should know what solid research or statistical information is and how to approach what is good and what is not. Quantitative is not just math and economics.   The Chair followed up that what GEC would be saying is that we are requiring students to get quantitative literacy through the GE curriculum.  A committee member added that the courses will also have to teach and assess this goal. The Chair said that this goal could be looked at during next week’s GEC meeting; we will look at survey results and assign based on the responses.  The Chair asked for group consensus to separate out the goal in the GE program. There was committee consensus to separate the two goals.  The Science group has pretty much supplied the materials that can put on the website. Is there anything in science group that should not be included as explanatory? A committee member generally supported the document but suggested some subtle wording changes, for example removing the word “accurate” from calculations in the bulleted list.  The Chair proposed to update the Science document with a list of things that “students would be able to...” that could later be turned into a rubric, as well as a list of objectives to use. The Chair will send out the revised draft by next week’s GEC meeting for everyone to review.  A committee member wondered if even though we try to make it work for all of the disciplines if it will still be primarily for math and science courses. Would this weaken information literacy?  The Chair liked the idea of keeping the goal as open as possible and making feasible for all courses. Quantitative Literacy is used in other realms so it would be our hope for students to also see that.  A committee member was also an advocate of creating a definition that is most inclusive. It is a territory that does assume math and science, but this shouldn’t exclude us from making it inclusive. A committee member agreed that if the objectives are more general that it leaves an opportunity for more classes to include.  A committee member thought it would depend on whether it is assigned to an entire category. The Chair noted that an interesting distinction for adding is to the GE Program we are asking courses to teach and assess the goal. The goal is at  least within the grasp and realm of every discipline; it is not specialized and courses can still look at and think about integrating into class even if they are not teaching and assessing in GE.  A committee member asked if we have ever decided to what we expect for teaching and assessing for upper-level vs. lower level courses. The Chair explained that the only goals in both upper and lower will be problem solving and integration. The adopted definitions were created for lower level. These are conversations we will continue to have, especially in January.    The Chair will email the draft document around. The goal will be to finalize a description and list of objectives by November 1. | The Chair will email a draft document on quantitative literacy for GEC to review. The goal will be to finalize a description and list of objectives by November 1. |
| **Preparing for the October 26 and 27 Forums** | ***Last week, Griff presented a draft transition plan and timeline, the details of which we need to clarify prior to the forums. We will discuss the details.***  The Director distributed handouts of the draft timeline, transition plan, and an article from the Chronicle of Higher Ed.  The proposed transition plan was reviewed. No transfer classes will count for upper-level Issue credit. An Issues course can is a unique course that can only be taken at GVSU. There will not be any waivers for this. The courses are not about content, they are about pedagogy. Transfer courses will still get GVSU course credit; they just won’t get GE credit.    The above will not affect transfer courses for Foundations and Cultures; students will still receive both course and GE credit.    We are calling 2013-14 the magic year. All courses –both Themes and Issues—will be included in one big list. For example, if there are 187 Theme courses and 24 Issues courses that year than students can pick any two from that list (they still need from 2 disciplines and only one course can be at the100-200 level). The rationale for this is that the program will need to be brought to scale. GEC will need to incentivize students’ to take Issues courses and for faculty to create courses. The other options are for students to change their catalog year, or GEC could ask the Provost to suspend the catalog year for GE because some programs will have changes (Nursing for example), or for there to be a choice of GE Program without having to change the catalog year. Ultimately, we need to fill Issues courses before Themes courses.  A committee member asked if during the “magic year” students could do one course from a Theme and one course from and Issue. The Director responded that she did ask about this, but MyPath can’t code for this. The Chair added that this option would be for students enrolled before Fall 2013. The Director added that catalogs are guaranteed for 6 or so years for students before they have to select a new catalog year.  A committee member asked if the option to have the full list of courses will become a problem with Banner. The Director responded that Banner will code all 200+ courses, but list won’t be in MyPath – it will be a link from MyPath to a full list of the courses on the GE website.  A committee member asked if students will have trouble completing a Theme if courses start to disappear. The Director responded that Records also worries about students getting stuck, but this option gives them other choices to take.  We will be growing to demand, so we can’t predict whether we will see enrollment go up or down in courses. What’s more challenging is if everyone decides not to take environmental ethics, for example, and they still offer 6 sessions. The Chair added that most departments will err on the side of offering too few sessions. The Director noted that we are already seeing an impact on sections from the change in requirement of 3 to 2 Themes courses, so departments are already watching these changes, but we will also have another 2 years to watch before the change happens.  The Director shared two scenarios for transition – a “slower” version and a “faster” version, with the slower version having a year in between for transition.  A committee member felt that the “faster” version was a lot cleaner and raised fewer questions about the transition. The Director responded that her worry was bringing the program to scale quickly and how to incentivize the changes. This would require figuring out how to dismantle a very large program and create a new one. The committee member responded that an overlapping year may cloud this rather than saying you have two years to switch your course and get up and running; this provides a definitive deadline.  A committee member asked what the review process would be for the course to come through GEC. If there are a lot of proposals will there be capacity to review them all. The Director responded that there have been conversations about this and the discussed plan would be to have three groups running parallel that would be comprised of members from GEC, UCC, CLAS, etc. Robert Adams and UCC have said that this sounds reasonable.  A committee member asked about the concerns with incentivizing. A committee member responded that the commitment from the Provost to provide funding will be very helpful. Faculty that commit upfront to creating an Issues course can get the money in 2014, otherwise they might wait a few years to change their course without the money option being available. The Director added that there are faculty that do want to teach these courses now and not wait until 2014.  A committee member asked if the courses submitted during the faculty summer training sessions will automatically get their courses approved. The Director responded no, the courses will still need to be scrutinized to meet the criteria; we don’t want to fast track that part of the process.  A faculty member commented that there are a large number of faculty that teach the same courses. What if one faculty member wants to teach and Issues course and other faculty teaching the same course don’t. The Chair responded that it would need to be a new course then; you can’t have the same course taught as both and Issues and non-Issue course.  The Director noted that we have to get courses approved and to the unit head’s before October 1 so they can schedule for the following year. We will have to do everything we can to get faculty to come to the trainings this summer. Those that do will be the ones that see the process as opportunity, as well as those units that are already feeling effects because of the reduction from 3 to 2 required courses to complete a Theme.  A committee member through that one of the big issues with the transition is course scheduling. Right now we are scheduling for next fall and winter; this could really add to the confusion. He has received feedback from faculty worried about their Theme courses and whether they should continue to teach them, which also creates concern for students that still need to take those courses. The Director responded that there will be a substitution option for those students, especially in small Themes. This is something we are already seeing because of the reduction from 3 to 2 courses required for a Theme. The “magical year” of 2013-14 students will also be able to choose any two Theme courses. Faculty will also still need full teaching loads, so there still will be courses needed on both sides.    A committee member asked if some courses could be both a Theme and an Issues course at same time. The Director responded yes, in some cases departments are going to make the transition and not change course number.  A committee member asked what the time table is for GEC to commit to approve applications for new courses. A time table handout was distributed for review.  In Jan/Feb 2012 there will be a call out for faculty, there would be a transition over summer 2012, governance would give approval, 2012 to work on scheduling, and then offer courses in Fall 2013.  The Chair asked why the transition couldn’t happen for everyone in Fall 2013 since the transfer students are the only ones that would really be affected. The Director responded that if GEC feels certain that they could come to scale, based on the number of transfer students, than it could go live at that time. Coming to scale would equal 400 sections. It doesn’t matter the number of courses, but rather the number of sections. You could consider skipping a transfer year and going live in 2014.  The Chair asked for a quick response that could be used for explaining the transition:   * Students who are in Fall 2012 take Themes * Student entering in Fall 2013 take either Themes or Issues * Students beginning in Fall 2014 must take Issues   A committee member asked if Themes courses will be phasing out does that also give incentive to departments to change to Issues courses and potentially affect students taking Themes. The Director responded that for the purpose of transitioning students there will have to be options. If student doesn't know that a Theme course, especially in a small Theme, is not going to be offered they might keep waiting to register for it. This could be an issue for the small Themes. A committee member asked if we would combine Themes for the first year. The Director responded that we could put an asterisk next to the small Theme courses and say to email the GE Director if they are having trouble getting into a Theme courses. We won’t have to combine Themes, the Director will be able to review student requests and make substitutions as needed. We have always done this; it will just be more transparent.    The Chair asked if the committee was in agreement to extend the option of including an asterisk for the small Themes and allowing the Director to make substitutions for the 2012-13 catalog. There was committee consensus.  ***We will also discuss the role of Study Abroad in the revised proposal, in case that issue comes up at the forums.***  We received one comment on discussion board about Study Abroad. We know that in current program we have 22 Themes and Study Abroad. Students have to show on their courses will meet.  The Chair asked the committee if it is their will to continue with having the Study Abroad experience fulfill the Issues requirement.  The committee was torn and discussed concerns about including Study Abroad.   * If the Issues are about skills (integration, problem solving, and collaboration) rather than content, we can’t be assured that students will get. We don’t know they will get those types of experience in SA. We don’t have that assurance any longer. * Study abroad is valuable and should be encouraged. * Students will still get the skills goals, just in a different way. * The Director said that the Padnos International Center does require a reflection. * We are not making the case for an identical experience. * A committee member asked if the course could be an independent study. * A committee member thought that the intention of the exposure should be included. * A committee member commented that while he values Study Abroad and what is learned through the experience, can GEC really say that it is relevant and comparable enough to replace taking and Issue. We need to be careful about opening the door for Minors, for example, to also make the case.   A committee member suggested the option of Study Abroad students getting credit for one of the two required courses, so they would still take one Issues course at GVSU.  The committee agreed to continue the conversation and to invite Mark Schaub from Padnos International to the next GEC meeting.  ***Finally, again based on last week’s discussion, we will discuss the possibility of proposing a course-enrollment cap on upper-level Issues courses.***  Ideal group sizes are 4-6 students, so an ideal number of groups in class will be 5 groups, so 30. The Director responded that right now the average is 30. It will be difficulty for departments that have class sizes of 60+. Committee members responded that 30 might be too low and perhaps 36 will be better. Courses can have less, but we would be saying that 36 is the most they could have.  The Chair stated that next week GEC can make a formal motion to have an enrollment cap, so everyone should start to think about it before then. The Director will supply additional information on the current numbers. | The committee agreed to invite Mark Schaub from Padnos Int’l Center, to the next GEC meeting.  There was committee consensus to extend the option of including an asterisk for the small Themes and allowing the Director to make substitutions for the 2012-13 catalog  Next week GEC can make a formal motion to have an enrollment cap, so everyone should start to think about it before then.  The Director will supply additional information on the current course numbers. |
| **Cleaning Up the Themes** | ***At some point, we should discuss putting a moratorium on course-change and new-course proposals while the full revision proposal is under consideration by faculty governance.***  ***Also, we need to make a plan to deal with low-enrolled Themes, which are likely to become even lower-enrolled as the Issues courses become integrated into the curriculum.*** |  |
| **Adjournment** |  | Meeting adjourned at 4:25 pm |