

MEMORANDUM

TO: Karen Gipson, Chair of the Executive Committee of the University Academic Senate
CC: Scott Berlin, Interim Director, General Education Program
FROM: General Education Committee—Kirk Anderson, Chair
DATE: December 5, 2016
SUBJECT: General Education Committee Mid-Year Report

The General Education Committee (GEC) met 10 times this semester on Mondays from 2:30-4:30 p.m., and can report progress in the following areas.

Curriculum: We considered 17 course proposals, with several resubmissions. As of this writing, there have been 10 approvals, 1 denial, and six are in the process of being considered. Among the approvals, eight are Issues courses. Recently approved General Education courses can be found by visiting <http://www.gvsu.edu/gened/recent-changes-180.htm>.

Assessment: In fall, we reviewed and replied to 40 course assessment reports (CARs). We composed replies to each CAR, giving faculty and departments further insight into what portions of their response we valued most highly and what additional information we would most like to receive in the future. For the vast majority, we were pleased with the dedication to high quality instruction that was made clear by the author of the report. Only two of the CARs were deemed not adequate and sent back to collect better data.

UAS charges 2016-2017

1. Suggest additional Professional Development workshops that FTLC or others might host for teaching General Education Skills.

In fall, the Interim Gen Ed Director offered 30-minute assessment workshops on both campuses on various days and times. Faculty teaching Gen Ed courses were informed that they could drop in for assessment training; no registration was required. These workshops were scheduled in 2-3 hour blocks for a total of 38 sessions for the semester. For faculty who had time conflicts, sessions were held on an individual basis for an additional five faculty members. Faculty who were assessing either fall or winter came to the session. A total of 43 faculty attended the assessment workshops.

Kurt Ellenberger, Faculty Fellow, Pew FTLC, is facilitating a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) titled Collaborative Problem Solving. The intent is to share ideas on collaborative problem solving strategies in Gen Ed courses and to read and discuss the literature that deals with this and ancillary topics. This FLC is scheduled for the academic year. Twelve faculty members participated in the fall.

Christine Rener, Director of Pew FTLC and Vice Provost for Instructional Development and Innovation, plans to hold a series of Gen Ed skills workshops beginning on Jan 5th and continuing throughout next semester.

In winter 2017, Gayle Schaub and Cara Cadena of University Libraries will facilitate the Pew FTLC Faculty Learning Community "The Language of Information Literacy: Library Collaboration for Student Success." This community will meet four times during the winter semester to discuss and develop a shared understanding of information literacy, explore threshold concepts within disciplines, explore specifics, from terminology to large concepts and how to teach, and identify ways to collaborate with Library faculty to integrate skills into class planning.

2. Continue to monitor and improve the General Education assessment process:

a. Implement the new rubrics for the assessment of General Education courses.

As mentioned previously, the Interim Gen Ed Director offered assessment workshops in the fall semester. The new rubrics were a central focus.

Prior to the start of the fall semester, instructors scheduled to teach a Gen Ed course received an email message from the Gen Ed program, which included a short discussion of the revised rubrics. Instructors selected for Gen Ed assessment received an email message from the Gen Ed program, along with an attachment giving step-by-step directions. Both the email message and the directions discussed the new rubrics in detail, stressing that the rubrics should be used to give scores on an absolute scale. The scores should indicate where the student is for a particular skill at that point in time of their GVSU education, as opposed to a grade on a course assignment, which is on a relative scale.

b. Include an analysis of the GEP Report in the GEC's EOY report.

The Gen Ed program has created a report using the data from a complete (3 year) assessment cycle (2013-2016). The GEC has spent a considerable amount of time discussing the report and analyzing the findings. In winter 2017, the report will be disseminated to the campus community. The GEC end-of-year report will include a detailed analysis.

3. Continue to support the development of additional Issues courses by:

a. Encouraging the creation of new courses;

b. Investigating obstacles to transitioning Themes courses;

We are fast-tracking Issues courses in the sense that we always place the highest priority on Issues course proposals. Of the Issues courses approved so far this year, 2 were converted from Themes courses. Of the 118 Issues courses currently on offer, 67/118=57% were converted from Themes, and 51/118=43% are fresh creations.

c. Exploring ways to connect to the Design Thinking Initiative.

In winter 2017, Kathryn Stieler, Pew FTLC Faculty Fellow, will facilitate the Faculty Learning Community “Design Thinking in the Classroom.” This community will seek to expand understanding of and experience with design thinking as well as explore ideas for its application in the classroom.

The Interim Gen Ed Program Director has invited up to 4 GEC members to an AAC&U conference titled “2017 General Education and Assessment: Design Thinking for Student Learning,” to be held in Phoenix, AZ February 23-25, 2017. Details are being worked out, but we hope to have some members willing and able to go to this conference. Their report back to the GEC should be invaluable.

4. Meet with Career Services to explore ways to better incorporate practical skills into the GE curriculum.

Troy Farley, Career Center Director, was invited to the November 21 meeting of the GEC. He discussed how the marketplace has changed over the years, and how the Career Center has adapted to best help our graduating students. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Farley reviewed the Gen Ed program and shared with us that the skills employers want are synonymous with the Gen Ed skills. This is especially so for oral and written communication, collaboration, and problem solving. The key is to get students to realize this so that they take ownership of the Gen Ed component of their education at GVSU. In winter the GEC will discuss how to best convey this message.

5. Review GE Foundations categories, and make recommendations for changes if/as warranted. Include thorough justifications for any proposed changes

We have started discussion of this item and plan to focus on it in winter.

6. In an effort to engage more faculty in our shared governance system, prepare a mid-year progress report at the end of the Fall semester to be posted on the GEC website and disseminated to ECS/UAS and College Deans. (A full report is expected as usual at the end of the year.)

We plan to post this report on the GEC website.

Conclusion: The GEC would like to thank Interim Gen Ed Program Director Scott Berlin for his efforts and fresh insight this semester. We feel that he did a great job filling in for C. “Griff” Griffin and we really appreciate his willingness to serve in this manner.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirk Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kirk" and last name "Anderson" clearly distinguishable.

Kirk Anderson - GEC Chair, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Hsiao-Ping Chen, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Dori Danko, Seidman College of Business

Dawn DeVries, College of Health Professions

Gabriele Gottlieb, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

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Kimberly McKee, Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies

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Lindy Scripps-Hoekstra, University Libraries

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