Grand Valley State University

*General Education Subcommittee*

Minutes of 2/15/10

**PRESENT:** Deborah Bambini; James Bell; Susan Carson; Phyllis Curtiss; Roger Gilles; Lauren Kaercher; Sheldon Kopperl; Keith Rhodes; David Vessey; Kathryn Waggoner, Kari Kensinger; Paul Sicilian, Judy Whipps

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

**ABSENT:** Hugh McGuire; Dana Munk; Penney Nichols-Whitehead; Shelley Schuurman;

**GUESTS:** Roy Cole

| Agenda Items | Discussion | Action / Decisions |
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| **Approval of February 1 and February 8**  **Minutes** | Motion to approve; seconded.  Discussion: The point was brought up regarding the Themes conversations we have had during GES meetings over the past several weeks. Due to the conversations going on around campus, the Director suggested that perhaps the Chair write a short piece for the Lanthorn letting people know that we appreciate having the opportunity to dream the possibilities of what Themes could look like, but at this point they are still just discussion. | Approved as corrected. |
| **Approval of Agenda** | Motion to approve; seconded. | Approved. |
| **GE Assessment: Four CAR Reviews** | *Roy Cole has shared CARs and draft CAR reviews of four courses: ANT 111, ANT 204, ECO 100, and ENG 204. We will discuss his reviews in light of our February 1 discussion in order to further develop our sense of the committee’s goals when responding to the CARs. After reviewing these four draft reviews, we will discuss a plan for reviewing Roy’s future drafts.*  The Chair noted that while it makes the decision to come to consensus harder, it is great to have the entire committee as part of the conversation about CAR Reviews. We are trying to figure out a way to help Roy speak for the committee and have a general approach to share with others that may ask. Our job is to come to consensus on how our responses should look.  A committee member shared an alternative draft response with the group. He said he had concerns about the way our current CAR responses might be received. The people we are responding to may not even be the same person who does the next assessment. How can we best ensure that the *next* assessment round is as productive as possible?  The handout was a sample letter that could be sent to faculty thanking them for their efforts and listing some of the common issues that arose in the CARs. This could be a general letter in response to all CARs.  A committee member thought this was a good idea, but added that sometimes you want to address certain things specific to an assessment. Some of the listed items might not relate to them and some may need to have specifics pointed out.  The Director added that there is currently a generic cover letter that does out to faculty that included the philosophy of GE assessment. This letter would be a welcome addition to what we send to faculty, whether as an attachment or in the email. Some information is included in the assessment directions rather than a follow-up after. Maybe this information should be included in both pre and post emails.  A committee member added that maybe we need to be more strategic for specific audiences. One of those audiences is us – we need to know it ourselves, those in the future need to know it, and departments need the information in terms of drafting their actual assessment plans, and finally the person that actually did the assessment. We need to target the audience that needs the information.  Other committee members said that if we send a generic letter most faculty would never read it. We need to give some feedback in direct response to their work. The Chair added that perhaps we would specifically acknowledge their comments.  In the past we have done point-by-point responses This proposed letter would be more of a general form. The Chair suggested that we start with this form, but then add in specifics including things they bring to our attention. We can also try to cast what we envision for the future.  The Director and Roy will meet to come up with options to share with the committee. Roy will do another round of responses with these “tailored” letters in response to CARs as well as a cover letter.  The Chair added that we will add this for continued discussion at next week’s GES meeting. | The Director and Roy will meet to come up with options to share with the committee. Roy will do another round of responses with these “tailored” letters in response to CAR’s as well as a cover letter. |
| **LEAP GOALS/ GE Structural Revisions** | *Setting aside the discussion of Basic Skills, let’s discuss our current ideas regarding the keeping, reducing, revising, or transforming the Themes; agreeing on which current GE goals and which LEAP goals to include in the program; and distributing those goals through the proposed GE curriculum.*  The Chair stated that we need to talk about what type of upper-level component we want before we can talk about redistributing goals. He thought it would be helpful if we looked at a one-course possibility—something that was considered only briefly last semester.  A three-page handout was shared as a proposal to react to. It included the goals and overview, a sample syllabus, and a list of pragmatics for consideration of a GE capstone course. The Director presented the proposal and noted that we need to focus on what is best for the students.  Committee members reacted to the proposal:  A committee member stated that she had strong feelings about not having a one-course capstone. If we get rid of Themes we will be decreasing the number of GE credits that students take. Also, she fears that students would just take the course from faculty they know, and the course would quickly become non-multidisciplinary.  Another committee member expressed pessimism about the possibility of true multidisciplinarity in the course.  Another committee member said she liked the integrated/multidisciplinary direction of the approach. She added that it does come down to faculty. We are counting on students to bring interdisciplinarity, so we should also be able to expect this from the faculty. She could see some real benefits to this course.  Another committee member said he was still trying to picture what it would look like. If the course was about working to solve the same problem, what would be an example of a “multidisciplinary” problem? Many problems are best solved by, say, engineering. What, then, about the other disciplines? He also asked if there were other universities doing a similar approach. The Director mentioned a couple and said she would look for other examples to share. A committee member said that he would be interested in finding out what kind of faculty development they are doing for those teaching the courses and the type of commitment they require.  A committee member noted that it seems unfounded for us to assume that Themes are “broken” in the first place. Maybe we need to be referring to our assessments—or conduct more assessments.  A committee member asked if it is the goal to reduce general education. The Director responded that it is not our intention to make Themes go up or down in credit, but rather to adopt the LEAP goals of integration. When GE envisioned Themes ten years ago it was a much smaller campus. This proposal is looking at a way to combine the two and give purpose to integration. The Chair added that part of the GES charge this year is also to look at time to graduation, so that is a factor.  A committee member stated that student choice is very limited in the current Theme option. The biggest irony of GVSU being a liberal education school is that we limit students to a box for Themes. She really liked the proposed model and has seen it at other schools.  A committee member added that he liked the idea and thought it would also be great for marketing. Although perhaps we consider still taking two courses and the capstone.  The Chair closed by asking the committee to educate themselves on these options and when we meet next time, we can discuss where we all stand on the upper-level option. |  |
| **Director’s Report** | No report. |  |
| **New Business** | There will be several new curricular items over the coming weeks. |  |
| **Adjournment** | Motion to adjourn; seconded. | Adjourned at 4:29p |