

MEMORANDUM

TO: Karen Gipson, Chair of the Executive Committee of the University Academic Senate
CC: C. Griff Griffin, Director, General Education Program
FROM: General Education Committee—Kirk Anderson, Chair
DATE: December 7, 2015
SUBJECT: General Education Committee Mid-Year Report

The General Education Committee (GEC) met 13 times this semester on Mondays from 2:30-4:30 p.m., and can report progress in the following areas.

Curriculum: We considered 14 course proposals, with several resubmissions. As of this writing, there have been 12 approvals, we are waiting to hear back from one, and one is in the process of being considered. Among the approvals, four are Issues courses and four are Honors courses. Recently approved General Education courses can be found by visiting <http://www.gvsu.edu/gened/recent-changes-180.htm>. In addition to these 14 courses, we also reviewed and approved a proposal for a special topics CMB course for Issues credit in the winter semester.

Assessment: In fall, we reviewed and replied to 33 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 three of the CARs were deemed not adequate and sent back to collect better data.

After a careful review of the skills goal choices for each of the foundation categories, along with an assessment of student exposure to each goal, we identified the most appropriate areas to offer a third skill option. Historical perspectives courses may now choose among written communication, critical & creative thinking, or oral communication as the first goal, and among problem solving, ethical reasoning, or information literacy as the second goal. Physical sciences courses may now choose among written communication, quantitative literacy, or information literacy as the first goal. Social and Behavioral Sciences courses may now choose among critical & creative thinking, quantitative literacy, or information literacy as the first goal, and among problem solving, ethical reasoning, or oral communication as the second goal. In response to this announcement, we received and subsequently approved revised course assessment plans (CAPs) for eleven courses, all of which now teach and assess information literacy.

UAS charges 2015-2016

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

In September, a survey was sent out to faculty asking which of the Gen Ed skills they had interest in attending a workshop on. Since there was interest in all nine, it was decided to hold workshops for all skills. The survey results were used to prioritize the order in which to offer them. Workshops for the top three choices, critical & creative thinking, collaboration and problem solving, will be held on two campuses for a total of six sessions on December 16 and 17. The workshop facilitator is Christine Rener, Director of the Pew FTLC and Vice Provost for Instructional Development and Innovation. These workshops will also include instruction in techniques for teaching and assessing the skills with large class sizes. In winter 2016, workshops for the remaining six skills will be offered.

In fall, the 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 3-hour blocks for a total of 25 sessions for the semester. For faculty who had time conflicts, sessions were held on an individual basis for an additional ten faculty members. One department requested a visit from the Director to give assessment training. Faculty who were assessing either fall or winter came to the session.

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

a. Work with the Director of the General Education program to ensure timely communication with faculty and to clearly articulate the rationale for General Education assessment of specific courses to faculty in the relevant units.

The General Education program now asks unit heads to identify sections/instructors for assessment two weeks ahead of the fall semester. For this academic year, the enquiry was sent out August 18. The message to instructors with assessment instructions was sent out September 2. The message to all faculty (nearly 550 instructors) teaching Gen Ed courses was sent out August 10. This is the message which includes a link to Gen Ed syllabus attachments. For winter 2016, we sent letters to all faculty teaching Gen Ed courses on December 8. Winter assessment instructions will go out after final exam week.

b. Streamline the rubrics for the assessment of General Education courses.

We are in the process of addressing a common concern about the assessment rubrics for the skills goals – that they are too wordy, unwieldy for instructors to use, and potentially overwhelming to students. For each of the nine skills, we are working to streamline the rubric so that it is much simpler to use. We nearly completed this task in the fall semester and are planning to put the finishing touches on the revised rubrics in January.

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

The Gen Ed program will create a report using the data from a complete (3 year) assessment cycle. This academic year (2015-16) is the 3rd year of the cycle, but we have already begun discussing how best to disseminate this information.

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 cooperation with other curriculum committees (UCC and CLAS/Brooks CCs). Unit heads were alerted to the fact that Issues course proposals would be considered ahead of all other course proposals.

Special Topics Courses in Gen Ed can now be created through a department or through the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies. These courses can be numbered 180, 280, 380, or 480 and be Foundations, Cultures, or Issues courses. For more information, refer to <https://www.gvsu.edu/gened/proposing-a-course-181.htm>.

The Gen Ed Director met with several individuals and departments about converting Theme courses to Issues courses or creating new Issues courses. The Gen Ed website has been overhauled. The layout is cleaner, and the faculty resources page now contains additional materials, including exemplary proposals.

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

We have started discussion of this item.

4. Work with FSBC on exploring the feasibility of limiting enrollments for General Education courses, especially the Foundations courses, for pedagogical reasons.

We plan to ask FSBC to determine budget implications of limiting enrollment of Gen Ed courses early next semester. The Gen Ed office has created a report showing the number of courses with large enrollments, highlighting those teaching skills which might be an extra challenge with large class sizes, such as oral communication and written communication. Since we anticipate resistance from administration to this increased staffing cost, we have begun efforts to solve the problem in other ways:

- In the workshops described above, Christine Renner of Pew FTLC covers effective approaches to teaching and assessing Gen Ed skills in large sections.
- We now give units more flexibility in choice of skills to associate with any particular Gen Ed course – three of the foundations categories now have a third choice for one or both of the goals.

5. 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.

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.

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