

UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

October 11, 2011

10:00 – 12:30 p.m., Mason Hall, D1

Attending: Rick Davis (chair), Rick Diecchio, Kelly Dunne, Kim Eby, Doug Eyman, Marcy Glover (recording secretary), Mack Holt, Frank Allen Philpot, Kammy Sanghera, Hugh Sockett, Mark Uhen, Carol Urban, Peter Winant

Absent: Cliff Sutton

Call to Order

The meeting started at 10:16 a.m.

New Business

Welcome New and Returning Committee Members

Rick opened the meeting by welcoming/introducing our three new committee members: Kelly Dunne – New Century College, Mark Uhen – Atmospheric, Earth, and Oceanic Sciences, and Mack Holt - History. Don Boileau, Karen Studd and Claire Snyder-Hall have rotated off the committee. After the new members introduced themselves, we continued around the table with introductions by the returning committee members.

Report on AGLS Award Ceremony and Presentation in Miami

Rick Davis, Karen Gentemann and Ying Zhou traveled to Miami to attend the AGLS (Association of General and Liberal Studies) annual conference. They were there to accept the Improvement of General Education: Exemplary Program Award in recognition of the portfolio assessment process conducted by the general education committee and Mason faculty. Rick and Ying also presented a session on the learning outcome creation process and how we reframed/reshaped our general education program. Rick will share the comments from the judges with the committee in the future. As part of the recognition we are allowed to include on our web page the AGLS gold medallion of achievement.

Semester Agenda Overview

We have scheduled multiple meetings, but anticipate canceling at least two of them. It is easier to hold too many dates than to try and schedule additional meetings throughout the semester due to everyone's busy schedules.

Learning Outcomes for Oral Communication, Written Communication and Quantitative Reasoning

The SACS review is over, however we did promise to continue the assessment process for the categories that had not been completed at the time of the accreditation visit. We need to create learning outcomes for the natural science category, as well as for written and oral communication and quantitative reasoning. These four categories have been assessed in the past for SCHEV however; we need to create learning outcomes for these categories. It is anticipated that we will use the outcomes already in place, but modify them to be consistent with the other categories. The Quantitative Reasoning category will be difficult as Math and Statistics have different goals for their courses.

Natural Science Learning Outcomes

There was discussion about the title of the natural science category. SCHEV refers to it as scientific reasoning, why don't we? Natural science is left over language from the previous general education program. The committee was inclined to change to the SCHEV language. According to Rick Diecchio, the College of Science faculty who are working on the learning outcomes considered changing the name, but decided to leave it as is. There is overlap between natural science and scientific reasoning and they are two different things. This is similar to how we use the synthesis category to assess critical thinking.

The College of Science faculty are working on redesigning the introductory level science courses. As part of that process, they are revising the learning outcomes for the natural science category (the general education committee will review and finalize these outcomes at a future meeting). They will then revise their courses to meet the new learning outcomes. Once the learning outcomes are in place, the category will be assessed. There was general discussion about whether the assessment should occur before or after the courses are revised. Rick advised before because it may take some time to revise the courses.

The committee then reviewed a draft of the learning outcomes to date. The following recommendations were made: condense the list to 5 outcomes; re-write several of the outcomes so that they are "assessable;" #2 and #3 are the most important and they can be assessed all disciplines; create an overall paragraph to describe purpose of category. Rick Diecchio will share with his faculty and hopes to have final outcomes by our October 24 meeting.

Announcements

Trends in Higher Education - Smarter Thinking

On demand tutorial provider – academic call center. Straighterline – packages content from text books and organizes it into courses and offers them online for \$99. No entry requirements; self-paced instruction. The courses are not accredited; however, many colleges will allow these courses to count. The challenge is that they may be offering courses similar to ours at a greatly discounted rate, especially courses that are less hands on. This could be a challenge to our financial and pedagogical models. This will challenge us to think about what do we contribute to our students; critical thinking, nuances, interaction.

Assessing learning outcomes and multiple choice exams in large classes

The portfolio process revealed that it is often difficult to assess whether a course has met the learning outcomes, if the only evidence provided is multiple choice exams. Multiple choice works if the questions are written carefully; you can do assessment this way. You can ask thought provoking questions that require critical thinking in order to select the correct answer. It was recommended that examples be shared to assist faculty in learning how to do this. The nursing licensure exam is multiple choice and that is a good example of how to write a well written multiple choice question.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:29 a.m.