General Education Committee
December 13, 2012
10:00 – 11:30 a.m., Mason Hall, D5

Attending: Janette Muir (Chair), Dominique Banville, Rick Diecchio, Kelly Dunne, Kim Eby, Becky Ericson, Doug Eyman , Marcy Glover, Mack Holt, Frank Allen Philpot, Hugh Sockett, Cliff Sutton, Carol Urban

Out: Stephanie Hazel, Mark Uhen, Peter Winant

Overall Learning Outcomes for the University General Education Program

The learning outcomes are meant to demonstrate to students and faculty the overall purpose and intent of the general education program. We should also look at the categories against these outcomes to see if they reflect the overall program accurately.

Is gen ed the foundation for the major or does it compliment the major?

Below is the draft learning outcomes for the program. A few of the suggested edits from the meeting are included. Do we want to follow a different model (currently part of the vision discussion)? Should we identify 4-5 competency areas (such as sustainability) and help guide students through pathways that would lead to a credential (Princeton does this)? It was recommended that perhaps 3 & 4 should be replaced with a statement regarding building breadth across the student's educational experience. Should discovery and inquiry to be added to #1? A possible reorganization would center around: 1-critical thinking; 2-ethical; 3-discovery and inquiry, breadth; 4-self-understanding. Janette will revise the document and put in the org for further discussion. If you have additional comments or suggestions, please send to her directly.

General Education at Mason

General Education at George Mason University is designed to build student competency or capacity in several essential areas, with the following outcomes in mind:

1. Develop critical and creative thinking – student who are inquisitive, capable, informed, and able to integrate diverse bodies of knowledge and perspectives.
2. Foster citizen discovery and inquiry (and ethical thought and inquiry)– student who can conceptualize and communicate about problems of local, national and global significance, using research and evaluative perspectives to contribute to the common good.
3. Build capacity in STEM (or scientific and mathematical understanding) areas – students who are able to discover and describe natural, physical, and social phenomena, articulate hypotheses and evaluate hypotheses and their application.
4. How to solve problems; "engaging the methods" for the humanities – students who can demonstrate capability for inquiry, reason, and imagination in historical, literary and artistic fields.
5. Enable better understanding of self – students who can identify and articulate individual beliefs, strengths and weaknesses, critically reflect on these beliefs and develop the capacity to think well.

We will look at the sustainability pathway at the next meeting as an example of what we might be able to do in other areas (global, civic, etc.)

Follow up on Synthesis discussion from 11/29

Consensus among the members was that synthesis equals the capstone in their programs. Discussion of this issue led to a request to remove the Writing Intensive requirement from the general education web page. WI is not part of the gen ed curriculum and it causes confusion to be listed on our page. There was general discussion about frustration with the requirement and word counts.

Proposal for Review

ASTR 115 – NATURAL SCIENCE WITH LAB – APPROVED