

General Education Committee

April 12, 2010 – HUB 123

MINUTES

Present: Lourdes Aviles, Samuel D. Brickley II (Chair), Mary E. Campbell (consultant, non-voting), Christopher C. Chabot, Wilson A. Garcia, Elliott G. Gruner, Jong Yoon Kim, Jillian Spring (student, voting), David Zehr [eight voting members]

Absent: Corey J. DeGroot (student, voting)

Vacant: Dean of the Academic Experience

Guests: Barbara Boschmans, Mathematics Department Chair; Wendy Palmquist, Coordinator of The First Year Seminar: Critical Thinking and the Nature of Inquiry (IS 1111)

Exhibits: First Year Seminar Course Evaluation Form; The First Year Seminar Critical Thinking and the Nature of Inquiry Core Content of Course (e-mailed following the meeting)

Recorded in the order in which the agenda item was discussed. Sam Brickley called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm.

1. **Approval of March 8th minutes.** *Approved by general consent.*

2. **Course Proposals**

a. Early Review (approved); no sunset date because it is an experimental course to be offered Fall 2010

- IS 3xxx Perspectives on India: Eco Spirituality and Sustainability

b. Standard Review

None

3. **Reports**

a. Foundation course coordinator discussion (Elliot).

Wendy explained that *IS 1111* is a critical thinking course, teaching those skills that college students should have for their college experience and for life. In the past there have been gaps with entering students; many were weak with broad skills. We spent a year designing the course. A lot of the exercises required design by the Philosophy Department. Each section has a critical question. Students use critical thinking skills to evaluate the question. We used the same text the first two years. Everyone agrees to teach the core content. We now have five to six approved texts for critical thinking. The course has a library component taught by the Library faculty, similar to what was done in IAC (IS 1010) and Composition (EN 1200). During the first year we offered the course (2004-05) we found out how much we needed the course. Faculty who were not teaching IS 1111 said student skills were improving. In Fall 2009 43 sections were offered; 39 sections did the evaluation; a vast majority of the students responded A (strongly agree) or B (generally agree) to the questions on page one of the instrument. Students also wrote about the particular skills they got from the course including the library. Nationally courses that previously taught study skills have evolved to be courses that teach critical thinking skills; we started before other institutions did.

What should we be doing? Overall assessment? Should the General Education Committee look at the First Year Experience portion of our program as a whole?

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Wendy said she has trouble getting people to teach it. The faculty is forgetting about the course. We still need more sections for next fall. The First Year Council does things that are broader. We have had a few linked courses, e.g., IS 1111 and EN 1200. Wendy is comfortable with the currently Catalog description of the First Year Experience (pages 65 and 69 of the current Catalog). It's what we are doing. Wendy is no longer part of new faculty orientation. She has offered workshops to faculty. We want faculty to know what students learn in IS 1111 so the skills do not get rusty, so the faculty expects the students to use them.

Wendy noted that one department went to a 3-3 load so no full-time faculty are teaching IS 1111 and no adjuncts in that department are teaching IS 1111. Barbara said her adjuncts can't teach IS 1111. IS 1111 is to be taken the first semester the student enters; EN 1200 and Mathematics Foundations are to be taken during the first year. IS 1111 teaches skills that the students need for their other courses. Has anyone studied the result of only being able to have 50% of an entering class take EN 1200 their first semester? This institution has not gone through true curriculum reform.

What are the numbers of full-time faculty versus part-time faculty who teach IS 1111? In the 43 sections offered Fall 2009, 11 were taught by full-time faculty, a quarter of the regular faculty. How do you get feedback from faculty? Many come to the workshops Wendy gives. She did a faculty survey during the first two years of the course. She may host a faculty brown bag.

Mathematics Foundations. The requirement changed Fall 1999 from Mathematics Proficiency to Mathematics Foundations (one three-credit mathematics course at the level of MA 1500 or higher); it did not change when the current General Education program began Fall 2005.

Barbara pointed out that there is not one single course that satisfies Mathematics Foundations; the Department offers many courses that meet this requirement. The Department is looking at what students are taking. For Fall 2010 they are offering an equal number of sections of MA 1500 Mathematics and the Humanities and MA 1900 Statistical Literacy in Today's Society. There may be too much variety in MA 1500. MA 1900 would give more life skills. The Department is also looking at MA 1800; it was really intended for those who have to take other math courses. The biggest challenge is having a student take a Math Foundations course and then declare a major that specifies Math Foundations.

Any feedback that you get? The existing description? It is suppose to be a foundation, be broad. Connection to other Gen Ed? Most have a paper or presentation or a project at the end which would bring in some of those skills. We want to see what happens with the equal number of sections of MA 1500 and MA 1900 this fall. MA 1500 connects to the arts; MA 1900 is statistical literacy. MA 1900 could be a foundation course but not for science majors. MA 2010 needs to go away; it will be offered for one more year.

How often would Wendy and Barbara like to talk with the Committee? We sunset courses on a four year cycle so we should talk with both of you on a similar schedule. Wendy and Barbara were thanked for attending the meeting and sharing their perspectives.

- b. PPDI faculty focus group—update (Sam). The meetings will be held in the Lamson Tower Room on Monday, **April 19th**, 2:30-3:45 pm and Tuesday, **April 20th**, 11-12:15. Lourdes will scribe. The same format will be followed. All are welcome to attend. Sam did a query of the PPDI sections offered Fall 2009, Spring 2010 and to be offered Fall 2010 and invited those instructors to attend either focus group session.

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- c. Procedure for electing chair—update on Steering Committee discussion (Sam). Sam took to the Steering Committee the motion the General Education Committee approved March 8th : That the Gen Ed Committee hold election for chair at the last meeting this spring and invite both current members (this year) and members-elect (any new members formally joining the Committee for next year) to participate in and vote in the chair election process. The Steering Committee will not bring it to the full faculty; an individual may bring it to the full faculty. Each committee can do it the way they want.
- d. myPlymouth v. Faculty Governance Blog—update (Sam). Scott Coykendall and Sam met with Casey Bisson, Zach Tirrell and two other ITS staff regarding the need for a more user friendly place to put documents, minutes, etc. They agreed that the Faculty Governance Blog is not user friendly. Scott wrote a draft proposal that includes having a dedicated space on myPlymouth; there would be a channel to the Faculty Governance Blog but with a different face. There would be a list of committees; one would click on the committee and get information on the committee by clicking on a document or minutes or reports, etc. Hopefully the work will begin this spring.
- e. Assessment/further review of Assessment Plan Guidelines (which Mary emailed to the Committee on March 23) (Elliott and Chris). The 2005 General Education Assessment Plan Guidelines is a good base document. Do we add to it and build for assessment? It is a credible approach to assessment. Please review the tables so we can show what we have done and what we would do.

4. **Announcements.** None.

The General Education Committee meets on the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 2:30 to 3:30 pm in HUB 123. The next meeting of the Committee will be **April 16th**. The Scribe will be on vacation that day.

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary E. Campbell, Scribe
Director of Curriculum Support

These minutes were approved April 26, 2010.