

Gen Ed Committee Meeting Minutes:
Feb 10, 2014

Date and Time of Meeting: 2/10/14, 2:30pm – 4:00pm

Meeting called to order by Chair, Pat Cantor at 2:30pm

Members Present: Pat Cantor (chair), Ryanne Carmichael, Jeremiah Duncan, Heather Hanssen (student member, voting), Kristine Levan, Jim Stiles, Jason Swift, David Zehr, Mary Campbell (non-voting), Jason Cordeira (faculty, non-voting)

Members Absent: Jirasak Theplama

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes for the Dec 9, 2013 meeting were submitted for approval. Several edits were suggested, particularly with regard to the vote counts for course approvals from the minutes. The scribe was asked to retract the minutes, edit them, and re-submit at the next meeting.

Preapprovals (Sunset Renewals and Initial Proposals):

none

Review of Curriculum Committee Actions of December 20 :

The following Curriculum Committee actions from their Dec 20 meeting were reviewed:

- BU 2290 Organizational Communications (WRCO), change course description
- BU 3420 Organizational Behavior (DICO), change course description
- BU 4220 Administrative Policy (INCO), change course description, change title to Strategic Management; change prerequisites from BU 2262, BU 3210, BU 3300 and Junior status to BU 2450, BU 3210, BU 3300 and Junior status
- EC 2550 Macroeconomics (GACO), change course description
- MA 3010 Mathematics in Our World II (QRCO), change course number to MA 2120
- MA 3110 Logic, Proofs, and Axiomatic Systems (WRCO), change course number to MA 2700; change prerequisites from MA 2490 or MA 2550 to MA 2000 and (MA 2490 or MA 2550)
- MA 3230 Geometries (TECO, WRCO), change prerequisites from MA 2000 and (MA 2490 or MA 2550) to MA 2700 (formerly MA 3110)

The Gen Ed Committee had no questions or objections to any of these changes/actions.

New Business (Sunset Renewals and Initial Proposals):

[Results of vote (# in favor, # opposed, # abstaining, # absent/not voting)]

- MUDI 1XXX: Creating Sound Effects and Music for Video Games. Initial Course Proposal for New CTDI Course
 - Vote: 7 – 0 – 1 – 1
- BUDI 2650 Career Exploration. Resubmission for SSDI Designation
 - Vote: 6 – 0 – 2 – 1

Key points from Discussion about proposals reviewed at the meeting:

- MUDI 1XXX: Creating Sound Effects and Music for Video Games.
 - Rik Pfenninger visited the Committee to discuss this new course he is proposing. Course will use 3 free programs to build “rooms” for video games and create music/sound effects for them. This will be a technology-heavy course taught online. It will include some history on the use of sound effects in movies and video games. In lieu of a specific text, students will view online tutorials to learn the software and read HTML-based, instructor created content. Writing skills will be met using online journals, reports on historical usage of sounds in movies. Collaboration skills will be covered using online forums and final projects that may be done as a group.
 - The Gen Ed Committee expressed excitement and support for the creation of the course
- BUDI 2650 Career Exploration.
 - Trent Boggess visited the Committee to present new materials in support of the re-submission of BUDI 2650 as an SSDI course. (scribes note: The sunset renewal for this course was rejected by the Committee in the Fall semester, citing a lack of a “society” element in the course). The course is typically taught by Debbie Burnell, who could not attend the meeting. A variety of materials, including specific assignment descriptions, were provided to the Committee as part of the re-application. Trent provided the Committee with a graphic depicting employment records tracking historically with educational levels of workers, arguing that this course is particularly important to offer, as education leads to lower unemployment levels.

Discussion Items:

- Course Evaluation Group Report: Pat Cantor is the Gen Ed representative to the Group, and reported important notes from the latest meeting
 - There was a fix to some of the language in the “Gen Ed” portion of the online surveys. Previous paper-based evals had descriptions of Gen Ed components, which were left off in initial versions of the online evals and will now be included.
 - All questions, including the overall, department-specific, instructor-specific, and Gen Ed, are now being included in one survey (previously, the Gen Ed

- component was given as a separate survey). Notably in some cases this has meant rather long evals, up to as many as 37 questions
- Several efforts made last semester to increase student participation rates in the evals appear to have been successful. These included “Feedback Frenzy” days and email reminders to students. The Course Eval Group is looking at results to determine what the most successful efforts were.
 - First Year Seminar Council Report: Pat Cantor is the Gen Ed representative to the Council, and reported important notes from the latest meeting
 - The Council met recently for this Spring semester, but it did not meet in Fall
 - The Board of Trustees is now requiring all USNH campuses to administer the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), which tests critical thinking, problem solving, etc. skills among students. (scribes note: the CLA is largely taken by students who volunteer to do so, and is administered to Freshman and graduating Seniors; this test was administered previously at Plymouth State prior to the Board's requirement)
 - Student participants are solicited and encouraged with a raffle. In the past, prizes included i-Pads, priority registration, and home-cooked meals.
 - It can be difficult to get enough graduating seniors to participate, and other means of enticement are being considered, as, for example, they are not interested in priority registration.
 - The CLA in theory tests the skills that employers say they want in college graduates: critical thinking, problem solving
 - We are not sure how the other USNH campuses are doing with the implementation of the Board's requirement, or what their results have been. **David Zehr is interested in knowing and will attempt to look into this.**
 - General Education Website
 - Sharon Zec in the Undergraduate Studies office has been assigned the task of updating the faculty governance websites. Pat Cantor met with her recently to look at the Gen Ed site and noted numerous areas where updating is needed. These include:
 - The application forms for course applications / sunset renewals
 - Committee meeting minutes
 - Course evaluation questions
 - The Committee discussed other items that might be updated / added to the site:
 - Guidelines for completing course applications / sunset renewals, including:
 - A document outlining the proposal process. **Jason Swift previously worked on a draft for this and will share it with Pat Cantor.**
 - a list of items to include on the application and in syllabi (this was a suggestion brought from a meeting of the Department

Chairs). David Zehr and Jim Stiles agreed to work on this and present a draft for the next Gen Ed Committee meeting.

- Samples of assessments done in Gen Ed courses
- The Chair requested that the Committee look at the website and bring suggestions for other changes to the next Committee meeting.
- Discussion with Music Department Representatives re: 1-credit courses for Gen Ed credit
 - Pat Cantor met with Dan Perkins and another representative of the Music Department. The Department has a request that the Gen Ed Committee consider a change in the rules and development of a process by which students could take three 1-credit courses to satisfy 3 credits of Gen Ed requirements, such as CTDI or GACO. Under the previous system, students could take 1-credit courses in Music, such as Chorus, to meet this requirements, but a rule was put into place in the current system that a Gen Ed course must be at least 3 credits. The music department has noted a substantial drop in enrollment of non-majors in their 1-credit courses as a result.
 - The Committee discussed why the change was made in the current system, and whether the Music Department's request had merit. The change was made in an effort to ensure that students had “sustained engagement” with the specific skills covered in a given type of course (e.g., CTDI).
 - As a whole, the Committee seemed to be receptive to the idea of a change that would allow students to take several 1-credit courses to satisfy some Gen Ed requirements. There would need to be some oversight to ensure that students received a “coherent” experience that added up to a total 3-credit course. One idea was to allow students to propose packaging three courses together into a “module.”
 - It was mentioned that the Provost intends to request the Faculty to consider moving to a “4-credit” system, wherein the “normal” class on campus would change from 3 to 4 credits. This would represent a substantial change to the overall curriculum for the University, which in turn would require a revision to the current Gen Ed program.
- Assessment of the Gen Ed program
 - A discussion of moving forward with assessment of the Gen Ed program was begun by posing a series of questions:
 - What are we trying to assess? Is it 1) Are students achieving certain learning goals / outcomes? or 2) Does the Gen Ed program add “value” to a degree from Plymouth State University? The former is likely easier than the later
 - What does NEASC want us to assess? (scribes note: The University went through a re-approval process by NEASC in the Fall semester, which included a visit to the campus by the reviewing team, during which time, the Gen Ed Committee met with reviewers. In initial feedback, NEASC referred to the assessment plan for Gen Ed as

“embryonic.”). NEASC guidelines are rather vague and flexible on this point. It appears they just want some kind of an implemented assessment plan that shows students are making some kind of progress toward stated learning goals.

- Newer members of the Committee were informed about the document “General Education Assessment Plan Guidelines,” a report published by a sub-committee of the Gen Ed Committee along with the Provost in April 2005.
- There was a long discussion about creating learning goals for students. Should learning goals be specific to the types of Gen Ed courses (e.g., CTDI, WRCO), or should they be very general for a student who has completed all the Gen Ed requirements? It was largely agreed that goals should be created for each type of course, and that the number of goals should be limited to 2-4. These goals may be related to skills already in place, and/or they may include content. Currently, there are no stated learning goals, only a list of 8 skills.
- The ideal assessment plan would be one in which instructors are given fairly specific learning goals and asked to develop a specific assessment for them in their course. This is very similar to the motion passed two years ago by the Committee, requiring instructors to outline an assessment of one of the skills relevant to the type of Gen Ed course, then report the findings of the assessment at Sunset Renewal. The difference and missing piece of that proposal is that specific learning goals have not been developed.
- It was asked whether NEASC may have guidelines for learning goals of Gen Ed. The answer is “no, probably not, but AAC&U might”
- It was noted that the Deans had a discussion of implementing assessment of Gen Ed at their last meeting, largely in response to the NEASC's initial response to their Fall visit. The Committee noted that the Deans need to be in communication with the Committee in regards to this topic, and that assessment should be the purview of the Faculty.
- It was noted that we need a way to collect and organize data received from these intended assessments. An online, electronic database would be ideal. The University has already met with representatives of one software company about purchasing such a data collection and management system.
- **The Chair asked the Committee to look at the descriptions of the SIDI courses and develop 2 learning outcomes for the next meeting.**

Next meeting:

- Feb 24, 2014; 2:30-4:00pm
- To discuss / do for the semester:
 - Create an appeals process for courses that are rejected in sunset renewal
 - Review and possibly revise the process for renewing Waivers (likely to be pushed to March meetings)

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00PM.

Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Jeremiah Duncan