GE Board

Minutes of the September 16, 2015 meeting.

Present: Cesar Barros, Mary Beth Collier, Anne Deutsch, Sara Hsu, Rosemary Millham, Heather Morrison, Jared Nelson, Matt Newcomb, Patrick Saxe, Beth Thomas, Chih-Yang Tsai, Jennifer Waldo, Wendy Weiler, Jennifer Wawrzonek, Interim Provost Stella Deen attended as an invited guest.

1. The minutes of the September 17 meeting were approved as submitted.

2. Interim Provost Stella Deen came to share policy changes pertaining to SUNY-wide dictates, her hopes for the GE Board’s work to revise the College’s General Education and liberal education program, and to answer questions from GE Board members.

Information shared by the Provost included:

- Over the summer, the Cabinet determined that under SUNY’s Seamless Transfer policies, if a student is transferring in with an AA or an AS degree from a SUNY community college, we must recognize that student’s GE requirements as completed even if the student did not take courses in all ten GE categories. We do not have the technological system yet to apply the waivers in Degree Works and plans are underway to fully implement for next year. New transfer students who object at this point are within their rights; we need to determine the appeal and resolution route.

- For students who begin as freshmen or transfer without an applicable degree, she believes that SUNY limits now expects that we limit our GE requirements to nor more than 36 credits, although the source of that limit was not as clear. She will seek further information and get back to the Board. Under SUNY guidelines, all students must demonstrate competence in the mathematics and written communication/composition categories, and then have choices to complete at least five of the other eight categories for a minimum of 30 credits. Although not requiring it, SUNY is urging that campuses encourage all students to complete Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Humanities GE categories.
• SUNY is also requiring that each campus have an Applied Learning Committee. They would like to see an increase in experiences such as internships, civic engagement, service learning, study abroad, living and learning communities, etc. The New Paltz committee is in place and it is looking at parameters under which we can required applied learning. Stella encouraged the GE Board to incorporate this SUNY initiative, along with campus priorities for high impact learning experiences, the Strategic Plan and its measures, and the ideals expressed by the original Liberal Education Task Force’s tenets all as part of the bigger picture when making recommendations for a new GE/Liberal Education program.

• Chancellor Zimpher is advocating SUNY’s contribution to New York State’s economic health through demonstrating our curricular programs that: increase students’ cultural competence (multiculturalism with a global awareness), civic engagement, and applied learning experiences that are useful in creating good future employees and educated citizen ready to contribute in a global economy.

The Provost answered a number of questions from Board members. Highlights of the information or guidance from those questions included:

We may want to move some requirements out of GE and into general degree requirements as is true for the Writing Intensive requirement. Although it is not clear what the upper limit on how many of those could be created, if we believe that something is important and working well, we should look at ways of seeing that all students participate in it.

Team teaching initiatives are a positive step and would not be discouraged by the deans although some logistical issues need to be addressed.

The Teaching and Learning Center’s mission and leadership is in flux but the GE Board could make recommendations about the role it could play in professional development in support of those teaching GE courses.

A recurring review or oversight process could be helpful in keeping courses and categories at a high quality even years after being approved.

She felt it could be appropriate for individual schools and majors to require students meet particular GE categories rather than leaving them to choose which five of the eight categories must be met. There was a discussion of double-dipping for programs such as business and education, noting. However, program requirements should be identified as such rather than as GE requirements. This topic was left unresolved.
Stella would like to see parity between what AA/AS students must do - the new SUNY minimum of 30 credits that include composition, math, and five of the eight GE categories. This would leave us with more flexibility to put in campus-wide degree requirements and control the quality of what we do offer.

She reminded the group that Mid States is looking at assessment in terms of learning outcomes at the programmatic and institutional level, rather than the previous focus on assessing smaller, course specific learning objectives.

3. Jennifer Waldo discussed the timeline and agenda items for the upcoming meetings and committee work:

   The survey distributed to faculty regarding their feelings on GE revisions – Jen Waldo and Heather Morrison will review the qualitative responses to ensure there are no inappropriate comments and then will distribute the survey results to the GE Board for discussion.

   Individuals who are putting forward a proposal for a new GE construct are encouraged to get them out in the next few days so that board members may review them and be ready to discuss them at the September 23rd meeting.

   At the October 2nd meeting, the Board will look at the Spring 2015 assessment results and prepare to provide Laurel Garrick Duhaney with a response to those findings. Jen will draft a response and bring it to the group for review and revision.

   The co-chairs of the Curriculum Committee met with the co-chairs of the GE Board. The CC co-chairs agree that the GE Board should take the lead in developing a new GE proposal. They believe the best way to get buy in from the faculty as a whole is to informally circulate a couple of plans and get feedback.

   The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Beth Collier.