**General Education Policy Review Committee**

**Minutes of the November 16, 2010 Meeting**

Present: Gary Olsen, Michael Bixby, Nisha Fernando, John Houghton, Randy Olson, James Sage, Julie Schneider, Robert Sirabian, Greg Summers, Mary Holland.

Called to order at 3:03pm.

The minutes of November 2 were amended.

Announcements.

1. The Provost has provided copies of the “*Five High-Impact Practices*” booklet published by LEAP for each member of the GEPRC.
2. The minutes for today will be posted with the attachment, “*GEPRC Step 5: Notes and Updates November 8, 2010*.”
3. Julie Schneider updated that the Degree Type working group decided that Communication in the Major and Capstone Experience requirements should stay in the Gen Ed curriculum but not be listed in the catalog, because the Associates Degree will not require these. The subcommittee will share their recommendations with AAC next week, then e-mail to department chairs to collect feedback in a Sharepoint website open for broad-campus comment.
4. Review of L&S Chairs meeting on November 11 forum.

The committee discussed the questions raised why Oral Communication went from the current 2-3-credit to the approved 3-credit requirement. The concern is that if instructor qualifications for Communication are kept loose that might allow departments to teach these courses in-house.

The committee reviewed that given the precedent of Written Communication was a 6-credit requirement it was out of fairness and better to encourage Oral Communication to raise to 3-credits. The committee discussed if it might be a good idea to ask Dept Chair Jim Haney to the next meeting to provide assessment data and offer course structure and framework; for example if some Communication courses might be aimed at broad majors.

The committee discussed if any department across campus might be qualified to meet the Foundation level Communication learning outcomes. The committee discussed if assessment is done effectively then this question can be revisited to see if the learning outcomes are fair and sufficient for general education student courses as opposed to courses aimed at those in the major.

The committee discussed the concern of what might prompt the GEC when looking at a course proposal to consult with the disciplines concerned. The concern has been expressed that any individual committee member might not well represent their department.

The committee reviewed that there are 40-49 credits in the new GEP including silver bullet courses and double-dipping. It was agreed that triple-dipping could occur only with the 0-credit Experiential Learning requirement.

The committee reviewed the concern that Quantitative Literacy is not perceived to be a discipline that could participate in an Inter-disciplinary course. It is, but perhaps Quantitative Literacy needs to be listed with the distinct categories of disciplines listed in Step 5.

Old Business. Update Step 5 draft.

1. Integration level. Interdisciplinary Studies.

The committee discussed adding Communication and Mathematical Sciences to the list of distinct categories of disciplines, within the Explanation. It was agreed that Robert Sirabian would discuss this with Dale Rohm.

1. Communication in the Major.

The committee discussed that departments must be trusted to assess this at the department level; and to encourage departments to internally come up with a thoughtful plan to meet the learning outcomes creatively in a meaningful way with integrity.

The committee discussed there is still confusion over how the 6-credits can be spread out. A comment was added that departments may distribute this requirement over any number of courses.

The committee added the comment that writing and speaking instruction does not need to be an element of each individual course.

Homework: Review the Explanation so it can be edited in the next meeting.

Adjourned at 5:01pm.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Holland.

**GEPRC Step 5: Notes & Updates**

**October 28, 2010**

*These notes and updates below are provided by the GEPRC to give insight into how that committee is working toward a revision of Step 5b that was circulated to campus. What follows reflects the discussion that is proceeding. The comments do not necessarily reflect the opinion of each individual member of the GEPRC but rather how we are seeking to understand the comments of campus and appropriately address them in our next revision.*

**Overall:**

* Step 5b is being revised and will be re-released as Step 5c to campus for feedback. Most likely, this will require several more weeks of editing. When Step 5c is released to campus, several open-forums will be scheduled, including one for the College of Letters and Science (on a Thursday afternoon, to coincide with this meeting).
* Many of the questions/comments/worries that we received have been about resources and funding (which is not something the GEPRC is deciding). The GEPRC will be sure to share these questions/comments/worries with those who do control the allocation of resources. The GEPRC met with Mark Nook on November 2 to discuss how to best address the questions and concerns related to the allocation of resources. As a work in progress it is not yet possible to identify all of the details regarding the administration and implementation of the new GEP. Much of that detail will need to be worked out between departments and administration. Provost Nook did make it emphatically clear that no “person” will be non-retained due to the changing demands brought about by the new GEP. He did also state that through normal attrition “positions” will likely move around campus to meet these new demands. Those moves will be based on what departments identify as their needs to meet the new demands.
* Some questions and comments are based on misunderstandings and/or ambiguities, which we are attempting to correct in the next version.
* There have also been a number of worries expressed about the Center for Academic Excellence and Student Engagement (CAESE). We have tried to assure people that CAESE has been, and will continue to be, faculty-driven (meeting the needs of the faculty as determined by the faculty). Last year, a new mission for CAESE passed Faculty Senate, which included a revised focus on helping faculty adapt to the demands of the new GEP. However, CAESE will continue to be our campus teaching and learning center that supports interests in a broad variety of teaching-learning techniques. CAESE will be the conduit through which qualified instructors will provide professional development activities.
* There’s been some discussion of possibly “grandfathering in” many existing GDR classes into the new GEP, just to ease transition. The details of this will need to be developed, and nothing about this is definitive. Several people on GEPRC have remained in contact with Dan Kellogg in this respect.
* The GEPRC (in consultation with many other committees on campus) will also need to develop an assessment plan for the new GEP, a transition plan, a recommendation for transfer students and test-out options (which is the focus of Step 6: Implementation).

**General Criteria:**

* We’ve added the statement that all courses proposed must be submitted by an academic department or functional equivalent.
  + This includes all FYS courses.
* We’ve also addressed a worry about imposing too much uniformity on course syllabi (which was not the intention). So, now the course approval process will require a representative syllabus, which allows for flexibility when the same course is offered by multiple instructors. Only ONE representative syllabus is required when seeking GEP designation.
* We’ve also tried to make it clear that:
  + 1-credit requirements CAN be satisfied by a 2-credit or 3-credit course (i.e., Wellness); and
  + 3-credit requirements (say, in Natural Science or Quantitative Literacy) CAN be satisfied by a 4-credit or 5-credit course (science courses with labs, and/or Mathematics courses).

**The new General Education Committee (GEC):**

* The CHRS group (Constitution and Handbook Revision Subcommittee, reporting to the Academic Affairs Committee) is currently revising and editing the GEC proposal.
* The GEPRC provided an edited draft proposal and sent it to the CHRS group for their consideration. Subsequent changes were made to our revised proposal, and Provost Nook sent out another version on 10/12/10 on behalf of the CHRS. Campus is currently encouraged to send feedback to Rhonda Sprague, Chair of the CHRS group. As best as I know, the 10/12/10 draft from Nook is the latest version of the GEC proposal. The GEPRC is NOT responsible for this (we are simply giving input, just like other committees on campus). Please direct feedback to Rhonda Sprague and the CHRS group.

However, for whatever it’s worth, here are the revisions/changes/suggestions offered by the GEPRC:

* have each of the requirements (“boxes”) at the Foundation Level, Investigation Level, and the Cultural & Environmental Awareness have an ELECTED faculty representative (12 total).
  + We recommend that each is a tenured faculty member (to protect untenured faculty who might be involved with contentious decisions that might take place on the committee).
* If not represented in these 12 “boxes”, each College will appoint one person to the GEC (ensuring representation from each College).
* There will also be representatives from Student Affairs, the Student Government Association, as well as the Office of Academic Affairs (including representatives who can help with assessment issues, etc.).
* Like other standing committees, a faculty member will be elected to be the chair. However, we are recommending that the GEC have co-chairs:
  + One co-chair would be the elected faculty member who would be the representative on the Executive Committee (and in Faculty Senate).
  + The other co-chair would be the Director of General Education (or an appointee by the Office of Academic Affairs). This administrative position is really important in terms of logistics, room scheduling, continuity, and correspondence, and could also help to coordinate efforts with the Registrar, CAESE, Assessment Subcommittee, Curriculum Committee, etc. Expecting a faculty member to do all of this as the only chair of the committee is unreasonable.
* This is a large committee (about 17-19 members), with a minimum of 12 members being elected faculty members. However, we envision this committee to function in ways that are very much like an academic department that manages a shared curriculum. In a sense, this new GEC will be like “the department of general education” and will require considerable work to manage the general education curriculum. A larger committee can help to prevent that work from overwhelming individual committee members.
* Because 12 out of 17 members will be FACULTY, this is not an administratively top-heavy committee (at least, not compared to other existing committees). Yet, in order to prevent on-going worries about loss of faculty control of the GEP curriculum, both the GEPRC and the Assessment Subcommittee have even discussed (informally) the idea of making the Director of General Education (the co-chair) a NON-VOTING member of the committee, just to emphasize the consultation / coordination / collaboration role. In this way, the Director of General Education, as imagined, is not a step toward removing control of the curriculum from the faculty.
  + Note: including a Director of General Education is a response to feedback that campus has provided, which has been that faculty need support during these times of change. Faculty are already over-worked and busy, and if something like a Director of General Education can help to provide support, this will allow faculty to make decisions about the curriculum and teach classes (rather than scheduling meetings, doing paper work, and carrying out faculty-based decisions).

**Foundation Level:**

We attempted to account for worries about instructor criteria in the General Criteria (which applies to the entire proposal) by including the requirement that all GEP courses must be submitted by an academic department or functional equivalent.

* We used this wording because besides Departments (COLS), UWSP also has Schools (CPS), Divisions (COFAC), and Disciplines (CNR).
* This requirement eliminates the possibility of non-instructional staff offering FYS coursesWithout department “backing”, which will be required for all FYS courses, as well as every other GEP course.
* In other words, each instructor of the FYS will need to be housed in a department, either as a faculty member or as an instructional staff member (i.e., entering the Department’s adjunct pool, just as English 101 instructors or Anthropology adjuncts do).

There has been considerable discussion about enrollment caps, but this is a dicey issue.

* In our current GDR system, the ONLY enrollment cap that’s “legislated” is the Writing Emphasis enrollment cap of 21 (which requires Dean’s approval to exceed).
  + Even the English composition cap of 23 is something that Michael Williams must maintain through diligence and negotiation.
* Ideally, to ensure a quality GEP experience at the Foundation Level, we’d like to propose class size expectations on key requirements, such as FYS, Written Communication, and Oral Communication that are negotiated between departments and administration to insure that the learning outcomes can be met.
* It is important to note that there is a trade-off between:

(a) giving Departments the “backing” of keeping enrollments low (to resist the pressure to raise enrollments), and

(b) giving Departments the respect and flexibility to do what they see best in their courses in these GEP areas.

**Investigation Level:**

We are currently attempting to make room for 2 types of “audiences” for Investigation courses:

* One – Courses that are designed to serve a truly “general education” audience; these courses would be survey/service courses that are not intended as an introduction to the major (i.e., science courses for students who are in Fine Arts; Humanities courses for students in Natural Resources).
* Two – A more challenging course that presumes more preparation beyond what students might get at the Foundation Level; these courses might also be gateway courses into the major or a related major and could be required for the major (e.g., Biology 130 and Biology 160 are rigorous courses that could be part of the GEP and serve both Biology majors and Natural Resources majors).

This way of organizing the Investigation Level places the STUDENT at the center of our planning as a campus, by calling attention to what this or that course is intended to do. Approaching the new GEP in this intentional, student-focused way is important. We hope that something like this “dual audience” approach will meet student needs, but also work with Departments and current practice.

**Integration Level:**

We are still wading through the comments. So far, we’ve incorporated just one change:

* we removed the 300-level requirement for the Interdisciplinary Studies requirement; instead, we’re suggesting that students complete at least 24 credits before enrolling in interdisciplinary courses.
* This will encourage students to have some familiarity with one or more disciplines before asking them to think in interdisciplinary ways. This means that Interdisciplinary courses could be offered at any level, as long as students have completed 24 credits.
* Note: it is still the case that the Interdisciplinary Studies requirement can be satisfied by completing an interdisciplinary major, minor, or certificate.

**Cultural & Environmental Awareness:**

We received lots of feedback, but we’ve received lots of opposing ideas/suggestions:

1. Keep department affiliation OUT of consideration; focus on ability to deliver a quality course that meets the learning outcomes;
2. Define each category/requirement in terms of department affiliation.

This puts us in quite a pickle:

* If we go with (II) defining GEP requirements according to department affiliation, then this is becomes a thorny (political) issue: which departments/units get to offer Global Awareness courses? US Diversity courses? Environmental Responsibility courses? And how do we know that everyone in that department is really qualified to offer such courses?
* But, if we go with (I) focusing on instructor qualifications (not department membership), things aren’t much easier: we will need to figure out what qualifies an instructor to offer a course:
* Suppose we insist that instructor qualifications are determined by the field in which they earned their PhD or Masters degree.
  + If so, which fields count for each requirement? Does a Ph.D. in “Middle Eastern Studies” (say, from Univ. of Texas-Austin or Harvard) qualify a professor to teach a Global Awareness course? Probably. But what about the US Diversity course? Is she qualified to teach that? Maybe. I don’t know, really. It depends on her professional training (both within her Ph.D. program, and where her research and teaching experience has taken her since graduating). And what about a professor with a Ph.D. in Sociology? Is she qualified to teach a course to satisfy the Environmental Responsibility requirement? Maybe. If her area of study is environmental sociology, I would say definitely yes. But if her area of study is quantitative and/or ethnographic methods as applied to adolescent deviance, then maybe not. It would depend on her other professional experiences and training, and her teaching experience.
* So, because there’s so much variation among PhDs and Masters degree types, it might be impossible to simply list the specific Ph.D. areas.
* But, if it’s not based on degree achieved, then it will have to be based on their professional training and experience of some kind.
* It’s worth noting: Currently, courses offered as Minority Studies, Non-Western Cultures, and Environmental Literacy are open to anyone who submits a qualifying proposal to the GDR subcommittee (and doesn’t even require a department vote). So, with our new GEP, why not go with (roughly) what we have right now? For the “sidebar” (Cultural and Environmental Awareness) the GEPRC has decided to follow current practice, and specify neither department membership nor formal field of study (for the Ph.D. or the MA/MS). Instead, the GEPRC favors trusting the new GEC to make this determination about instructor qualifications (just as the GDR subcommittee does now), and if there are any questions, the GEC will gather additional information and seek advice from appropriate departments (i.e., those departments that might be able to provide additional insight into the area in question).

Finally, a few words about the **“In the Major” Requirements:**

We heard feedback about how this was not, properly speaking, part of Gen Ed (because it was “in the major”). Others objected as well, citing an intrusion into the majors. Let me make just two points:

* First, the “in the major” requirements were intended to serve as a continuation of the aims of the GEP throughout all 4 years of study at UWSP. This is an important aspect of any General Education Program, and our external accrediting agencies will be looking for a healthy inter-connection between our new GEP and our existing majors. So, the “in the major” requirements play this “dual role” by being common to all students (i.e., part of *general* education) and yet administered within academic programs/majors (i.e., carried out *in the major*).
* Second, these “in the major” requirements were actually passed by Faculty Senate last year, and so there’s at least some understanding by our campus that this would be a good thing. The details about how this will be “administered” are still to be determined. Perhaps these requirements are something that majors will figure out in consultation with the Curriculum Committee, rather than the new GEC. That is left to be discussed.

We tend to think that it’s probably more accurate to say that the “in the major” categories are university-wide requirements for students to earn a 4-year Baccalaureate degree at UWSP (as a component of the major). Just as each student MUST complete a major in order to graduate with a bachelor’s degree, these “in the major” categories are also requirements for graduation that are housed within each major. In this sense, they are “degree requirements” but they are also “general” in the sense that they apply to all students.

This leads naturally into the discussion of the “degree requirements” that is currently being addressed by the Academic Affairs Committee. A revised degree requirements document will be coming from Academic Affairs before Step 5c is released to the campus for comment. The GEPRC will consider the ramifications of those degree requirements as we finish our revisions. The GEPRC encourages UWSP faculty to fully engage in the degree requirements discussions and thoroughly understand the implications of those choices.