Step 4d Comments

Dear Committee:

I would appreciate the opportunity to quickly express my support for requiring 3 credits of a broadly defined “Wellness” requirement.  I currently teach Econ 272, Personal Finance, within the Division (School) of Business and Economics.   Requiring 3 “Wellness” credits, rather than 1, helps alleviate the logistical and scheduling problems associate with a 1 credit class.  By having a broadly defined “Wellness” requirement, it will help reduce any strain on resources.  In addition, this would allow students the opportunity to benefit in an area in which they have an interest, and provide for their future “Wellness” in some capacity.  “Wellness” could include a variety of courses, including Personal Finance, food and nutrition, communication, natural resources, psychology, etc.     By having a broad 3 credit requirement, I believe that we would minimize the strain on resources and serve the interests of students.

Thanks for your time.

Kevin Bahr

Associate Professor

School of Business and Economics

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Hi Don and committee,

 I am writing to address the concerns of the GEP committee regarding whether the campus currently has the resources to support an integrated 3-credit Wellness GEP requirement.  One of the arguments presented last week to support the notion that the campus can teach a 3-credit environmental literacy GEP requirement was that our campus currently fulfills the EL GDR requirement with faculty in multiple disciplines who have the expertise to do so. With that evidence in mind, I invite the committee to consider the following.

 Our campus currently commits the resources necessary for each student to complete 3 credits of Wellness GDR (1cr of activity and 2 credits of health enhancement) but these courses are primarily HESA’s activity courses and large format courses (100-300 students/section) in Health Promotion/Wellness (HPW) and Food & Nutrition (FN). This approach admittedly limits the quality of Wellness instruction.  An integrated 3-credit Wellness GEP requirement would allow students to assess their Wellness in smaller, upper level courses within their major or other content area of personal interest thereby improving students’ understanding and application of Wellness.

In addition, the 3-credit Wellness GEP model we have proposed would not burden the campus with any additional credits it does not already support.  This is because, although many Wellness-only courses could still be offered by HESA, HPW, and FN faculty/staff, I suspect that many departments would choose to capitalize on existing courses in their discipline that already focus on an area of Wellness (sociology, psychology, communication, natural resources, family studies, etc.).  These would become “silver bullet” courses that meet the GEP Wellness outcomes and discipline-specific curricular requirements.  For example, within our Family & Consumer Sciences major, we can easily adapt an existing, required course on family structure and interaction to frame some of the class discussions in the context of Wellness by asking students to consider how their personal choices impact their family functioning and interactions, and vice versa.

Thus, without necessitating additional resources, an integrated 3-credit Wellness GEP requirement would provide students with the enduring understanding that critical thinking is not merely an academic exercise but it is a skill essential to success in all areas of life.

 Thanks,

 Marty

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GEP Committee:

We appreciate the effort you have given to the large task of improving our general education program, and especially your willingness to consider our ideas on how to best place a Wellness requirement within the proposed GEP structure.

We believe that placing Wellness alongside Global Studies, Diversity Studies and Environmental Studies demonstrates the important historic value that UWSP has placed on Wellness, whereas a 1 credit requirement would only diminish the value of wellness in relation to all other GDR’s at UWSP.  Wellness has grown in importance over the past 20 years.  Its tenants currently underlie many national conversations as we grapple with the individual and societal impact of personal choice, locally as well as globally.

Although for many, Wellness is synonymous with diet and exercise, it is in fact a field without disciplinary boundaries because it is holistic and integrative.  Therefore, a 3 credit Wellness requirement would not demand faculty with special qualifications or expertise.  Rather, Wellness can be integrated into courses taught by almost any discipline, thereby expanding the number of “silver bullet” courses available to students.

Don mentioned to me that your committee may recommend to the faculty senate that a separate review of the Wellness requirement be conducted after the current GEP program has been instituted.  Although this may appear practical at the moment given the delayed timeline of the GEP process, in reality this inequitable approach would essentially hasten the end of our request as no one will be willing to consider a change to a GEP program that has taken several years to put into place.  The time is now.  We urge you to maintain the careful pace that the GEP process necessitates in order for “it to be done right.”  Given the rationale presented at last week’s discussion, additional data may need to be gathered so that the feasibility and merits of a 3-credit Wellness requirement be considered in an equitable fashion vis-à-vis the other 3-credit GEP requirements that have been identified as either essential to a liberal arts education or a hallmark of UWSP’s legacy.

As per your request, we have provided below a draft of a possible 3-credit Wellness requirement and measurable learning outcomes.

**UWSP Wellness Requirement**

Wellness courses provide students with the opportunity to explore the internal factors that drive personal responsibility and decision making and how any given choice impacts multiple aspects of our wellbeing (mind, body, spirit).  Wellness is holistic, encompassing physical, mental and spiritual well-being within the context of our life (natural environment, society, interpersonal relationships).  An understanding of wellness is the foundation for making conscious, self-directed decisions towards a well balanced life.

Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:

• Identify one’s personal values, goals, and beliefs, and articulate the connection between those and a lifestyle choice.

• Evaluate the current and future impact of lifestyle choice on multiple aspects of wellbeing, and describe how that choice impacts society.

Thank you, Marty

Good morning GEP committee.

I wish to comment specifically on the three credit Wellness option that HPHD has proposed.

As  I have previously stated, part of the liberal arts education ought to help address the largest challenges facing students today. In my mind, those would at least include personal and family finances, relationships, and physical health, given the breakup rates of families today, the current economy, and obesity trends across our nation. The THREE credit “wellness” (which is much broader than just diet and exercise) option provides a way for us to help meet those needs for ALL students coming to UWSP. While different courses may have different foci, such as a course on personal finances, or on family relations, across disciplines Wellness education instills a sense of mindful, purposeful, intentional living. This is the kind of awareness that is able to transfer across topics (though I do truly wish we could require NINE credits of wellness to address more completely each of the three issues I mentioned).

While I understand that nine credits is out of the question, I do wish to go on record as saying that three credits is barely enough to thoroughly treat any of these subjects. ONE credit is what I give students for a weekend retreat, or lunchtime book seminar, something that barely starts to pique their interest, but certainly not delving into the depths of a topic, or of one’s own life, in order to create higher thinking, deeper meaning, or lasting change. This is apart from the logistical mess it creates for faculty to now start piecing together teaching loads based on one credit, now to find two more to make three….

For the sakes of the students that we are here to serve, and for an education that can actually benefit them outside the walls of these buildings, where it matters most, please at least grant THREE credits to the wellness option that has been proposed by HPHD. I know there are courses in Psychology, Sociology, even Economics, that deal with these very real and pressing challenges facing students today. We do not need new ‘wellness’ experts hired, this is not something we are proposing to give HPHD a corner on the wellness market, rather, we ALL need to put our money where our mouth is as a university and demonstrate that the practical application to our students lives of material addressing today’s biggest challenges needs to be considered at least on the par of the other THREE CREDIT GE requirement areas.

Thank you for serving on this committee, taking the heat, and considering this request.

Sterling Wall

Family & Consumer Sciences