

## Meeting Notes

Item	Description
Name/Title	General Education Review Committee
Date	January 13, 2014
Time	2:00-3:00
Location	200 McKenny
Members Attending	Daryl Barton, Chris Foreman (co-chair), Christopher Gardiner, John Koolage (co-chair), Peggy Liggitt, Gerald Newberry, Mary Rearick, Michael Tew
Also Attending	Tracey Sonntag
Absent	Zenia Bahorski, Ali Eydgahi

### Timeline

John Koolage spoke about the timeline for the committee in terms of two phases. The first phase is the fact finding phase, spanning from now to perhaps the end of winter semester. During the first month the committee would focus on structural matters, looking at what needs to be done to ascertain the facts and the rest of this phase would be the actual gathering of facts. The practicalities of the latter might involve focus groups, meeting with departments, etc.

The second phase, going through to the end of fall semester, would be the resolution phase, where the committee looks at what needs to be fixed and how this might be achieved. How should the program look? Where it is as we want it, how do we express that? At the end of this phase, the committee will put together a final written draft.

### Structural Matters and Data

The structural part breaks down into three domains.

- The historical component is essentially inherited from the initial program set up. A handout on the timeline, parties involved, and peer institutions studied with regard to the original Board approved proposal was provided.
- The quantitative component studies items such as how many General Education courses are offered, what departments offer them, how many students take them and how do these courses actually operate on campus. It also involves a contrastive analysis with regard to the study of peer institutions. Are the peer institution programs still running the way they were when originally researched? Are they offering anything new? Is our program still in line with the positive aspects of these programs?
- The qualitative component looks at the feelings of three specific groups with regard to the program's efficacy:
  - Providers (faculty and staff) who administer the program;
  - Students, both current and alumni;
  - End users, such as employers of our students.

In terms of the historical component, this committee could invite members of the General Education Reform Committee, which worked on the original General Education Program proposal, to come to one of our meetings to give their views about the initial goals, the

thinking behind them, and their understanding of them. This would aid in figuring out current goals, which goals we want to keep, and how to work towards them. Goals include items such as learning outcomes, original intent of program, ease of transfer, and reduced number of credit hours.

With regard to the quantitative component, Tracey Sonntag, GA for the General Education program, will work on the contrastive analysis of the peer institutions mentioned previously. This will include obtaining information on their general education programs, getting links to put on the committee website, and looking at the individual parts of their programs.

Daryl Barton emphasized that faculty need to be given the opportunity to be involved in the process up front. She suggested a faculty survey that would include background (e.g., how often do you teach General Education classes?) and specific questions on the program. She also suggested faculty input by college in terms of open sessions.

Peggy Liggitt emphasized that assessment needs to be valuable, with resources placed on what is critical. Not everything has equal value in terms of what the information tells us. All decisions should be made based on what we are fundamentally trying to accomplish with the program. Students learning outcomes are central to the program, and basic to many other decisions.

Michael Tew also emphasized that the committee should look at what is the fundamental rationale for decision making. While the contrastive information with peer institutions and the feelings of providers may be useful in making recommendations, it is learning outcomes that should inform the way we interpret all the other kinds of data. Constituents may not like the way the program works, but how relevant is this if we have evidence that learning outcomes are being met? While there are many goals for the program, learning outcomes is foundational. The question of how we assess learning outcomes most effectively is not necessarily the charge of this committee, but the question needs to be asked.

Peggy Liggitt asked if the large amount of time required for peer review as previously described might be better spent on looking at where we are with respect to assessment of student learning outcomes and then study how that information compares with other universities.

Christopher Gardiner stated that the committee's job is not to focus on learning outcomes, but on the overarching goals of the program. It is the job of the Assessment Committee to consider the learning outcomes for the social sciences, etc. While there is a link between the two, our focus should be at the higher level.

Daryl Barton emphasized the questions of audience for and implementation of the final report. The committee charge is to prepare a report for the university community, which would include the Assessment Committee. Michael Tew stated that the job of the committee is not to make recommendations for changing learning outcomes. Learning

outcomes are in place, his point is that we need to be mindful of how the information we gather relates to those learning outcomes and to consider this in the kind of information we obtain. He stated that data on whether students are meeting learning outcomes barely exists. He is not advocating assessment, but rather considering all of this in the decision making process.

Chris Foreman drew attention to the title of the original program proposal, "Education for Participation in the Global Community." She stated that this was the overarching goal of the reform committee. They had one simple goal: what should an EMU graduate know and be able to do. In response to the question of what will happen to the final report, she stated that the General Education Advisory Council (GEAC), made up of the chairs of the various subcommittees, entertains any suggested proposals. If the GEAC approves, she then submits the proposal to the Provost's Office which invites Faculty Senate input. While there is no guarantee that a recommendation will be approved, there is a process in place which has been used successfully in the past.

### **Action Items**

In the next meeting the committee will consider what it wants to ask of the Reform Committee and why it should focus on certain questions. With regard to the faculty survey, the committee also needs to consider what questions to ask. After this initial phase, where the committee considers the information it wants, it will start gathering it. The use of focus groups will also be considered. The Provost's Office has been asked for resources to have skilled facilitators for these groups. The committee should also review the General Education documents previously distributed electronically.

Daryl Barton asked that the current numbers for the General Education program be given to the committee.

After some discussion of the value of the contrastive analysis with peer institutions it was agreed that a sampling of these colleges and universities would be undertaken with an emphasis on schools in this area and institutions with similar characteristics. Chris Foreman will follow up on a list of similar institutions that Peggy Liggitt has ascertained for her research.

Attachment:

General Education Program *Education for Participation in the Global Community*: Timeline; General Education Reform Committee Roster; Colleges and Universities Studied