University-level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum

200 Bricker Hall
September 15, 2009
8:00-10:00 a.m.

Summary Notes

ATTENDANCE

✓ Mr. Niraj J. Antani (USG, Philosophy, Political Science)
Dr. Wayne E. Carlson, (Dean, Undergraduate Education, Academic Affairs)
✓ Dr. Alexis C. Collier (Academic Affairs)
✓ Dr. Prabu David (Communication)
Dr. Esther E. Gottlieb (International Affairs)
Dr. Anna A. Grotans (Germanic Languages and Literatures)
✓ Dr. Christopher F. Highley (English)
✓ Dr. Mary Ellen Jenkins (Arts and Sciences)
Dr. Thomas R. Lemberger (Physics)
✓ Dr. Daniel A. Mendelsohn (Mechanical Engineering)
✓ Dr. Edna A. Menke (Nursing)
Dr. Myroslava M. Mudrak (History of Art)
Dr. Sally V. Rudmann (Allied Medicine)
✓ Dr. Mark W. Shanda (Theatre), Chair
Dr. Elliot E. Slotnick (Graduate School)
✓ Dr. W. Randy Smith (Academic Affairs)
✓ Mr. Zachary H. Usmani (USG, Sociology)
Dr. Harald E. F. Vaessin (Molecular Genetics)
✓ Dr. John D. Wanzer (Enrollment services and Undergraduate Education)
✓ Dr. Carl R. Zulauf (Agricultural, Environmental and Developmental Economics)

Guests:
Dr. Timothy A. Gerber (School of Music)
Dr. Terry L. Gustafson (Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences)
Dr. Kathleen M. Hallihan (Arts and Sciences)
Dr. Rebecca C. Harvey (Art)
Dr. Alan L. Kalish (Director, University Center for the Advancement of Teaching)

NOTES

The University-level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum (ULAC-GEC) convened its first meeting of the 2009-2010 academic year. New members were welcomed and introductions made. Professor Mark Shanda, Chair, along with Vice Provost Smith, provided an overview of the charge of the committee and the expanded role it will have in calendar conversion for the general education program (GEP).

As background, Vice-Provost Smith provided an overview of how the semester conversion process will be structured. An Implementation Coordinating Committee will be formed that will include faculty, students, staff, and campus partners, and will be co-chaired by Smith and a Provost Faculty Fellow. The committee will have sub-committees for Information Technology (IT), Advising, Space, Communications, Business Operations, and Curriculum. Each department will designate a point person. Another Provost Faculty Fellow will work closely with the Curriculum subcommittee.
and departmental contacts. A program manager will help coordinate conversion activities to ensure timely progress, and additional personnel in OAA will be available to provide support to the units. Overall, the conversion process provides an opportunity to rethink the curriculum and pedagogical practices, and to design the best educational programs possible. For undergraduates, this will include both majors and general education.

ULAC-GEC is a subcommittee of the Council on Academic Affairs (CAA) and charged with monitoring the status and efficacy of the GEC, and with making recommendations for improvements as warranted. Faculty representation is university-wide. The chair and faculty majority are from the Arts and Sciences Committee on Curriculum and Instruction (A&S CCI). Following consultation with both representatives from the A&S CCI and the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), University Senate faculty leadership recommended to CAA that ULAC-GEC make recommendations as to what the broad characteristics or ‘shell’ of the GEC will be in the semester calendar. Ideally recommendations for the shell will be completed by the end of autumn quarter, and additional details, including the conversion process for the GEC, will be forthcoming as soon as possible in the following quarter. The membership will also be expanded for the calendar conversion conversation.

Broad aspects the committee might consider in outlining a shell for the GEC are whether the following will be maintained:

- the current proportion of required hours in the GEC relative to the total minimum hours required to graduate,
- the current distribution model with nine distinct categories,
- sub-categories, and also
- whether categories will be added, removed, or revised.

Background materials were distributed to the committee to review, and ideas for additional membership representation were solicited. Suggestions included adding representation from professional/graduate programs and the international area. Input should also be solicited from the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Office of Student Life.

The Chair next led a discussion about principles that should guide the committee’s discussions as well as ideas for an improved program. Highlights of the discussion include the following:

- Members noted that students should have educational experiences that enhance their abilities as thinkers and problem solvers; they suggested curricular options for theme-based learning as well as finding ways to make what students are learning more relevant.
- It is essential to begin with learning goals for the GEP, and then determine how to structure a curriculum so those goals are achievable. Many institutions have a small set of 6-8 broad program-level learning goals. These should be articulated for Ohio State, and the value added to Ohio State’s version for achieving them made clearer.
- Having a range of experiences that enhance learning, such as undergraduate research, study abroad, capstone, internships, and service learning was desirable.
- The balance between additional breadth versus depth was considered.
- Other topics included the extent to which pre-requisites to the major and general education should overlap, how advanced placement might impact recommendations for the program, and the extent to which content versus delivery modes should be a focus of the deliberations.
Delivery aspects discussed included the need to improve communication about the value of general education.

- Ways to simplify the program should be looked for.
- Many professional programs have specialized accreditation with varied requirements. It would be beneficial to know at a minimum, the specific hours that will be required in the GEC.

The committee expressed that the 1988 Model Curriculum for an educated person remained a good document, and the idea of reinforcing general education goals throughout the curriculum should continue. Further, the task of the committee is not to perform extensive reviews as have been done in 2003 and 2005, but to use the findings from those reviews, along with the information found in the 2008 GEC Status Report, to inform its current work. The Chair then outlined some potential guiding principles the committee might consider in its task:

- Universal requirements
  - Determine what every student should know or be able to do as a result of their general education program; aim to have minimal requirements so it is deliverable.

- Alignment pre/post semesters
  - Plan relationship between quarter- and semester-hour curriculums.

- Redesign goals – e.g.,
  - Strive for flexibility, transparency, and simplicity
    - Clarify distinctions, if any, between BA and BS degrees
    - Clarify exceptions, as in Honors programs
    - Clarify mandated versus choice requirements, including minimum hours in GE and work completed at OSU

- GE Model
  - Verify distribution/category model and scope

The Committee concluded its discussion by considering additional information that would be helpful, such as a summary of the GEC course-level outcome reports gathered by the A&S CCI Assessment Initiatives subcommittee, and individuals they would like from. One request was, if possible, to hear from the Provost regarding budgetary implications if substantial revisions to the current GEC are recommended. The Committee also decided to meet weekly in order to meet its charge.