New members of the University-level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum (ULAC-GEC) were welcomed and introductions made. Three guests were invited to help inform the committee’s work: (1) Provost Joseph Alutto, to discuss budget implications of potential changes in the general education program (GEP) when converting to the semester calendar; (2) Vice Provost Martha Garland, to offer her perspectives about general education (GE) at The Ohio State University (OSU); and (3) Associate Dean of the Graduate School, Elliot Slotnick, to present ideas about GE from the viewpoint of aligning undergraduate and post-baccalaureate education.

Vice Provost Garland began by discussing the opportunity the institution had with the calendar conversion to rethink the curriculum and to center it around needs of students in the 21st century. She encouraged the committee to consider the ideal as well as the possible, and re-title any
revised GEP to reflect the new thinking. Some of the key points she offered for consideration include the following:

- **Consider what introductory courses to disciplines actually do, and whether this is what is needed in GE.** In addition to providing students with foundational material for the major, perhaps introductory courses should help students learn ways of thinking and problem solving in a field, and help them address big issue questions through the lenses of that field. Many times courses are not structured in this way even though they are part of the GEC. Also, less experienced instructors frequently teach the introductory courses and may not be as prepared to challenge students with big issue questions.

- **Consider the institution’s motto:** “Education for Citizenship,” and to what extent the GEP should help develop values of an educated citizen. It would be good to be able to say to parents that we educate citizens, and then have examples of what an educated citizen might look following different educational paths at Ohio State. An educated citizen might, for example, be globally aware (through course work or study abroad); have leadership abilities (through co-curricular experiences); appreciate diversity (through curricular and co-curricular activities); and/or engage in discovery (through research, studio, laboratory, and library experiences). Doing so focuses GE on a range of experiences in- and out- of the classroom.

- **Consider the practical skills students need in our global world, and what will help them adapt to the complexities of a rapidly changing world.** Examples might include knowledge about and skills to address financial, health, environmental, and technical matters from a variety of perspectives.

- **Consider varied and theme-based delivery approaches.** For example, provide students big issue challenge problems that can be approached from various perspectives and theme based multidisciplinary curriculums; increase flexibility and student choice in their own GE curriculum similar to what currently occurs with Honors contracts; clarify learning goals so courses and experiences can dictate what outcomes a course or experience helps an individual student achieve; and invite faculty to create such courses.

Next Provost Alutto met with the committee. The Chair provided the context for budgetary concerns. In a responsibility based budget environment, maintaining enrollments through current GEC requirements appears necessary to protect departments’ budgets. The budget, then, limits willingness to consider curricular changes. The Provost indicated that the institution has a history of providing buffers during such transitions, and further indicated a two-year buffer would be in place if needed, as has been done in the past. He also pointed out that the budget should be managed at the college level, thus providing another buffer for individual departments.

Associate Dean Slotnick then shared ideas about general education from the perspective of the Graduate School. While graduate education is more specialized, students are nonetheless expected to be contributing members of society who have skills consistent with those developed in general education programs of study. These include strong communication skills, analytical reasoning abilities, historical and contextual knowledge, basic understanding of art, humanities, and the sciences, and a global perspective. In the future it is expected that increasing numbers of students will be seeking advanced and interdisciplinary degrees, such as specialized masters. It is important that they are well prepared and have highly developed skills emphasized in general education. Areas in which additional experience would be encouraged are in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines where domestic students are not as well prepared as international applicants. Also, given the focus of graduate education, general education requirements in research methods, philosophy of science, and research ethics would be
desirable. Admissions to graduate programs are local so other specific pre-requisites are more variable.

Following the presentations, the committee continued their discussion on guiding principles. Three inter-related categories emerged: (1) content – what are the types of skills, knowledge, and attitudes OSU graduates should achieve; (2) architecture of the GEP – how should the educational experience be structured to ensure students achieve what is intended; and (3) interpretation of the program – how should GE be framed so all constituents understand and can communicate its value.

At the close of the meeting, the Chair pointed out that the weekly meetings are set up so there is only one business day between the Friday – Tuesday meetings. For meetings that are scheduled in this way, the Tuesday agendas will be continued discussions of the previous Friday agenda and summary notes may be combined. For the next meeting, members should plan to continue discussion of guiding GE principles around the three categories described above.