University-level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum

October 13, 2009
8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
200 Bricker Hall

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. 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)
✓ Dr. 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. Ann Christy (Provost Faculty Fellow)
Dr. Terry L. Gustafson (Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences)
Dr. Kathleen M. Hallihan (Arts and Sciences)
Dr. Rebecca C. Harvey (Art)
Dr. Jay V. Johnson (Academic Affairs)
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) continued its deliberation of guiding principles for the general education program (GEP). The Chair framed the discussion around the following parallel yet intertwined topics:

- Content – What is the General Education Program intended to achieve?
- Structure (Architecture) – What is the manner in which students and faculty engage in this program?
- Interpretation (Marketing) – How do we effectively describe the General Education Program?

Committee members offered varied views and philosophical approaches for a potentially revised program related to the three intertwining topics. While not exhaustive, the following highlights the kinds of issues that were raised:
• Content and Marketing: For communication as well as philosophical reasons, outcome statements in the 1988 Model Curriculum could be improved by: (1) centering the discussion on an educated citizen vs. person; (2) removing references to particular disciplines; and (3) making the language more consistent with marketing format vs. lengthy academic language. Others agreed that the purpose of general education could be stated more succinctly but suggested a rationale statement was necessary and phrasing should be done in what is now standard expected learning outcome language. Others pointed out that it is important to recognize that the skills acquired through general education are timeless – it is the problems to which those skills will be applied that will change vary. Nonetheless, the committee might consider the practical skills students of today need that may have not been as critical in the past.

• Architecture: Distinctions between how a general education program is delivered, and how students should achieve expected outcomes were raised. To what extent should the whole educational experience, including co-curricular activities and the major program, be considered as part of general education? Skills and knowledge can be introduced, reinforced, and developed to an advanced level through a progression of experiences that are not necessarily limited to a specified curriculum, e.g., the GEC. A general education program of study, though, is expected for institutional accreditation, and it may be helpful to articulate what is distinctive about such a program of study. Ohio State has a distribution model for delivering general education that permits great flexibility in how an individual can fulfill GEC requirements. However, courses approved for the GEC may serve multiple functions and can include courses that are parts of a sequence or pre-requisites to a major. Given this, some argued for a much smaller integrated core curriculum that is not an entrée into specific major programs. Others advocated for even greater flexibility as to how students achieve expected outcomes, as currently occurs in Honors programs. Yet others suggested multiple programs be developed to accommodate distinctions for the professional vs. liberal arts programs.

• Parameters for the general education ‘shell’ were discussed, particularly the size of the program, and the breadth of requirements that would be expected. Members will need to address these questions soon.

• The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) essential outcomes were brought up. Ohio State’s goals for general education will probably not differ greatly form those of other institutions. What would make Ohio State distinctive are the kinds and qualities of experiences students would have to achieve those outcomes, and the standards that could be set.

The Chair brought the discussion to an end by asking for a volunteer subcommittee to craft a small set of program-level expected outcomes to frame subsequent conversations. The subcommittee should try to meet and draft some preliminary statements before the next meeting if possible. In the meantime, invitations will be extended to Javaune Adams-Gaston, Vice President of Student Life, and Joseph Steinmetz, Arts and Sciences Executive Dean, to attend a meeting and share their views on general education and essential outcomes for student success.