University-level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum

October 23, 2009
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
200 Bricker Hall

Summary Notes

ATTENDANCE

✓ Mr. Niraj J. Antani (USG, Philosophy, Political Science)

✓ Dr. Annette L. Beatty, (Fisher College of Business)

✓ Dr. Wayne E. Carlson, (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. Mari Noda, (East Asian Languages and Literature)

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. Wranzer (Enrollment services and Undergraduate Education)

✓ Dr. Carl R. Zulauf (Agricultural, Environmental and Developmental Economics)

Guests:

Dr. Steven S. Fink (Provost Faculty Fellow)

Dr. Terry L. Gustafson (Executive Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences)

Dr. Kathleen M. Hallihan (Arts and Sciences)

Mr. Jay V. Johnson (Academic Affairs)

NOTES

Following the introduction of a new member, the Chair provided updates to the committee. He had sent an e-mail to the Provost requesting an extension to a two-year budget buffer to units if the general education curriculum (GEC) is substantially revised. The Provost’s response was that he is open to working with colleges to ensure enrollment shifts resulting from the semester conversion will be buffered as needed, but such buffers will be considered in the context of the fiscal well-being of each college and the academic plan (see response at: http://oaa.osu.edu/caa/documents/FinancialImplicationsofChangesinGEC_000.pdf).

Professor Carl Zulauf, chair of the task force charged to articulate a set of institution-wide expected learning outcomes for the general education program (GEP), presented the full committee with a draft of the group’s work. A set of eight potential outcomes was accompanied by statements on the distinctions and complementary aspects between students’ general education and concentrated curricular work. The task force suggested that ‘General Education Program’ be
used as a descriptor for general education, and ‘Specialized Study Program’ be used as a
description of concentrated work that might include multiple majors and minors. The Committee
was supportive of the distinct program descriptors, but discussed components of the eight outcome
statements in more depth. In addition to suggesting alternative ways of expressing the outcomes,
the committee recommended further delineation that highlighted various components. For
example, the committee saw value in separating international issues and social diversity outcomes.
The Committee concurred that the set of outcomes that would ultimately be endorsed should be
concise, written at an overarching level, and not wedded to specific disciplines. Departments
could self-identify which outcomes they could best help students achieve. Further, the initial set
appeared to capture the essential outcomes graduates should have. Because of the substantial
feedback, the Chair asked the taskforce to incorporate the suggestions in a revised draft for the
full committee to review.

The Chair next led a discussion on what the ‘roadblocks’ to GEC revision might be. Issues centered
on overall resistance to change, the magnitude and feasibility of any large scale change,
implementation and budget matters, and issues about competing philosophies. The following
provides some examples of the discussion.

- There exists a quarter course mentality for the GEC; shifting to semester thinking with respect
to a new general education curriculum is difficult.
- Many large-enrollment courses in the GEC are introductory courses for a discipline. It would
be challenging to develop and implement different kinds of courses on any scale.
- Considering if and how to require sequences, ensure knowledge building, and take into
account various perquisites to majors is hard to achieve with the array of majors and
requirements across the university.
- The sheer number of courses at the institution, and how courses can be part of the curriculum, is
daunting. If departments were to self-identify courses for the curriculum, for example, how
can the institution ensure standards and somewhat comparable student experiences across the
curriculum, and what would make the GEC a distinctive program? Re-certification of new
courses is either time consuming or will likely result in only minimal changes.
- Finding ways to make general education more transparent and cohesive, as with theme based
courses, can be at odds with desires for a distribution model that includes faculties’ own
disciplines.
- External constraints, such as the Ohio Board of Regents transfer and articulation guidelines,
the requirement to accept advanced placement (AP) credit at a predetermined level within
the University System of Ohio, and Regents guidelines for general education can potentially
limit innovation.
- The recent ‘supermarket’ mentality to ‘marketing’ courses for enrollments is increasingly
pervasive.
- Concerns about enrollment changes and the budget remain.

Following the discussion, the Chair provided members with a simplified version of the current GEC
requirements for B.A. students in Arts and Sciences. The next meeting will be devoted to thinking
about an architecture for ensuring students achieve the expected learning outcomes using the
current structure as a baseline for the conversation.