UNIVERSITY-LEVEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

JANUARY 12, 2010
8:30 A.M. – 10:30 P.M.
385 Bricker

S Ummary Notes

ATTENDANCE

✓ Mr. Niraj J. Antani (USG, Philosophy, Political Science)
✓ Dr. Annette L. Beatty, (Fisher College of Business)
✓ 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. Peter L. Hahn (History)
✓ Dr. Christopher F. Highley (English)
✓ Dr. Mary Ellen Jenkins (Arts and Sciences)
✓ Dr. Thomas R. Lemberger (Physics)
✓ 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. Wanzer (Enrollment services and Undergraduate Education)
✓ Dr. Carl R. Zulauf (Agricultural, Environmental and Developmental Economics)

Guests:

Dr. Terry L. Gustafson (Executive Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences)
Dr. Kathleen M. Hallihan (Arts and Sciences)
Dr. Alan L. Kalish (University Center for the Advancement of Teaching)

NOTES

The Chair of the University-level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum (ULAC-GEC) provided members with a revised curricular statement and General Education (GE) template which incorporated input from the previous meeting. He indicated both documents seemed to capture the discussion and will of the committee that had emerged over the last several months as to what the shell and expected outcomes for a semester based GE should be. Following any additional revisions from the day’s discussion, the Chair indicated he would like the committee to vote as to whether to recommend the revised documents to the Council on Academic Affairs (CAA) and the Arts and Sciences Committee on Curriculum and Instruction (A&S CCI).

The Chair next pointed out several items from previous GE reviews and reports that were not explicitly addressed in the current template and statement. The first was the idea from the 1988 Babcock report to include advanced study in the GE at the 300-level or above. The Chair
suggested that the spirit of this idea is advanced through the second-level writing course and open options, and through the added recommendation that upper division courses from an equivalent area could be substituted by an advisor. Requiring upper division coursework might prove challenging, particularly in the sciences. One potential solution could be for each college to identify which courses constituted upper-level course work. The consensus of the committee was to support the spirit of advanced study in GE without explicitly requiring it.

Another current requirement that had not been explicitly addressed by the committee was the third-level writing requirement. Concerns were raised about the perceived need to improve students' writing. A course of action might be for each department/major to demonstrate how it would meet upper-level writing requirements as is currently done. Information from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has revealed Ohio State students write shorter papers than those at peer institutions. The semester calendar may help address that particular concern. The committee agreed that additional writing at the junior and senior level should continue and be encouraged, but did not recommend a third-level GE writing requirement.

It was pointed out that currently oral communication is required as part of the second-level writing requirements. A&S assessment work has revealed this form of communication has not been emphasized. An oral communication requirement will therefore likely be continued in the expected outcomes for second-level writing requirements.

In addition, the current template places ‘Issues of the Contemporary World’ 597 courses as an option rather than a requirement. Members ideally would like to require a GE capstone/integrated seminar experience, and in principle believed the interdisciplinary aspect of the current requirement could be expanded in colleges outside A&S. The institution to date has not had the capacity to require 597 courses for all students as originally intended. Therefore while valued and encouraged, the members did not see how to require a capstone experience universally without substantial additional resources.

To determine how the proposed GE template aligned with expected outcomes articulated in the curricular statement, the Director for the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching drafted a curricular map between outcomes and course categories. Some outcomes were aspirational and not intended to be explicitly assessed, e.g., creative thinking. Nonetheless, aspirational goals appeared to map across most of the categories. Other specific skills appeared to be embedded in the current GE categories with the possible exception of ethical judgments. Members believed a treatment of ethics is likely incorporated across multiple course work and would therefore not need to be ensured by a specific course requirement. Whether the assumption is correct will need to be addressed in subsequent assessment work.

Finally, the committee again considered several other skills that had been suggested for inclusion in a revised GE curriculum, but had not as yet been endorsed as explicit requirements. These included technology literacy, visual literacy, moral reasoning or ethics, sustainability, and health/wellness. The committee proposed that definitions/learning goals for these areas be identified and baseline assessments conducted before determining whether additional GE course requirements should be implemented for them.

Following additional discussion and minor revisions to the template, Professor Lemberger moved to recommend the template and curricular statement; Professor Vaessin seconded. The motion was carried unanimously by voice vote. The Chair will now make the recommended editorial
changes to the templates, draft a cover letter in which the specifics and rationale for the course recommendations are described, and distribute the documents to CAA and A&S CCI for additional discussion. The recommended GE template, the curricular statement, and the cover commentary will be posted on the ULAC section of the CAA web site.