University-level Advisory Committee for the General Education Curriculum

February 23, 2010
8:30 a.m. – 10:30 p.m.
385 Bricker

Summary 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. Steven S. Fink (English and Academic Affairs)
Dr. Terry L. Gustafson (Executive Associate Dean, 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) reported on the feedback he had received about ULAC’s recommendations for a semester-based General Education Program (GEP) following wide circulation to the university community. Among others, the GEP template had been shared with the Arts and Sciences Committee on Curriculum and Instruction (A&S CCI), the Arts and Sciences Senate, and the Council on Academic Affairs (CAA) groups. The Chair reported the feedback to be relatively benign except for concerns in select areas that he wanted the committee to consider during the meeting. The committee went through the concerns and following additional discussion, made revised recommendations described below.
First, ways in which Foreign Language courses might be used in the open options were shared as an informational item with the committee. Next, what happens to foundational courses which are no longer part of the GEP template was raised as a concern. Programs can have additional requirements which neither count toward the major nor as part of the proposed GEP template. The Chair then sought clarification as to whether the data analysis requirement could be completed in the major for the B.A. as well as the B.S. The committee affirmed this is the case, although most B.A. programs do not have a data analysis requirement in the major so students typically take those courses in other departments (e.g., statistics).

The committee turned to the substantive concerns that the recommended template had reduced the quantity of history and science. The committee discussed whether the current ‘Course 12’ requirement for a course in either ‘cultures and ideas,’ historical study,’ or social science’ should be modified to include only ‘cultures and ideas’ and ‘historical study’ to privilege these two areas. Students will already be required to take two social science courses and also have the potential to take two more in the open course options. Professor Highley therefore recommended a revision of the proposed template to remove ‘social science’ from the ‘Course 12’ requirement; Professor Vaessin seconded the motion. The motion carried by majority vote (12 for, one against).

The committee then discussed at length the science recommendation. Since 2007, this component of GE has been reduced considerably, which seems inconsistent within the mission of a comprehensive research institution that has several programs aimed at increasing participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM disciplines). Also, while it is recommended that students will be required to take two semester courses in science, there is no requirement as to the specific credit-hour length of those courses (e.g., 3- vs. 5-credits). The committee raised the question as to whether the science requirement should be revised to one of a minimum of 10-credit hours which would mandate one biological and one physical science course, one of which must include a laboratory for the B.A. Two laboratories would still be required for the B.S. The above change would accommodate a variety of credit-hour combinations in which the courses and labs could be offered, and may increase the likelihood that students would take courses that are now second courses of a sequence. The revision would also help with variable hours of transfer credit in the sciences. Professor Beatty moved for the recommended revisions; Professor Vaessin seconded the motion. The motion carried by majority vote (12 for, one against).

A committee member raised whether the recommended mathematics requirement was rigorous enough. Following an engaged discussion, members thought additional data were needed before recommending that the minimum mathematics requirements be raised.

The Chair returned to the committee’s recommendation that faculty in the social sciences consider whether two rather than three subcategories in the social sciences categories was sensible and/or feasible in order to help simplify GE requirements. He pointed out, however, that he had confused the distinctiveness of the subcategories with double counts (i.e., whether a single social science course could count in more than one subcategory). Because social science GEC courses can presently be in only one subcategory, and the general feedback from social science faculty was to maintain three subcategories, the committee concurred with the continuation of three subcategories. The requirement will thus be for students to take two social science courses in two of the three social science subcategories.
Two additional matters were brought to the committee. The first was a recommendation that the label for the new GE program be distinct from the previous General Education Curriculum (GEC) label that has been in place for many years. The Chair pointed out that the committee had been attempting to refer to the revised program as the 'General Education Program' (GEP) rather than the GEC. One person suggested the General Education Model (GEM) as a potential name. The Chair will use the GEP default until there is more time to consider a possible label change in the future.

The second matter that was brought to the committee was one raised at the Arts and Sciences Senate. The issue was a concern about the absence of ‘science and technology’ as well as ‘scientific thinking’ in the Curricular Experience Statement. This was viewed as troublesome given the place of science and technology in the world. While ULAC had purposefully avoided singling out specific disciplines in the Curricular Experience Statement, the use of the words ‘science and technology’ would not change that operating principle. By unanimous voice vote, the committee recommended that to think ‘scientifically’ be added in the opening sentence of the Curricular Experience Statement, and that words which conveyed understanding about the role of science and technology in the contemporary world be added as an expected outcome under perspectives.

The Chair will revise the Curricular Experience Statement and GE Template documents as discussed, and will again distribute them for further deliberation by the university community, including the ASC CCI, the Arts and Sciences Senate, and the CAA. He is hopeful that the Arts and Sciences Senate will be able to vote on a semester-based GEP for Arts and Sciences students soon.