

Minutes

University Council on General Education

September 9, 2009 Meeting

In Attendance: Professors Ken Hamilton, Joe Kobyłka, Pamela Patton, Brad Thompson, Pia Vogel and Wayne Woodward; Assistant Dean and Director of University Honors Program David D. Doyle; Associate Dean Jennifer Haden; Associate Dean Gary Moskowitz; Associate Dean Robb Pocklington; Associate Dean Dennis D. Cordell; Student Representative Rachel Carey; and Assistant to the Associate Dean for General Education Julián Guevara.

Meeting of the University Council on General Education, chaired by Associate Dean Dennis Cordell

Review of Council Minutes

Dr. Cordell asked the Council to review the minutes for the meeting of April 22, 2009. The minutes were approved as written.

Announcements

Dr. Cordell welcomed all returning Council members and also introduced student representative Rachel Carey.

SACS Reaffirmation, the SACS report, the SACS GEC Subcommittee chaired by Associate Provost Tom Tunks, and our Council.

In deciding how to go about responding to SACS inquiries about General Education, initially, the Office of Institutional Research proposed a committee whose members had been part of the General Education Review Committee last year. After some reflection, however, the Provost came to two conclusions: 1) that the members of the review committee will be very occupied with developing the new curriculum should the faculty approve the proposal; 2) the review committee is not particularly familiar with the current curriculum. The people who know most about the current general education curriculum are the faculty who have served on this body either now or in the past. Hence the Provost has reconfigured the SACS Subcommittee on General Education to include most members of the current University Council on General Education, which is to say, us.

There are two general education issues that need to be addressed among the SACS principles for reaffirmation: 1) Does our curriculum comprise least 30.0 hours and cover courses in a select number of areas? 2) What are the learning outcomes of the general education curriculum, how are we assessing whether we are meeting them, and how are we using the results to improve student performance? We have the data collection procedures in place to respond to the second question, and we have collected substantial information over the last decade. Our task will be to discuss these questions, and draft responses to them over the course of the year. Associate Provost Tom Tunks will talk more about the SACS GEC Subcommittee once he arrives. Dr. Cordell will let members of our double "Council /Subcommittee" know what items of business will be addressed at each joint meeting. While the volume of on-going Council business has diminished with the shift of attention to the proposed new general education curriculum, there will be course proposals to consider from time to time.

University Curriculum

As you know, the General Education Review Committee was charged by the Provost to come up with a proposal for a new curriculum. The Committee sent a thirty-page report to the Provost in late April 2009. The Provost will make this report available to the faculty and send a letter to the entire faculty outlining the procedures to be followed in discussing the proposal, and providing for a faculty vote on whether or not to accept it. He is in discussions with Faculty Senate and faculty leaders to determine that process. The current GEC was approved in 1995-1996 in votes by the faculty of each school, and the faculty overall. Should the proposal be approved, committees will be put in place to fill out the details of the University Curriculum. The aim would be to launch the University Curriculum in either Fall 2011 or Fall 2012.

Perspectives/English: History of British Literature, (ENGL 1385), submitted by Timothy Rosendale on 04/27/09. Members agreed that this course would be an excellent addition to the roster of Perspectives-Literature offerings. However, Council members concluded that the proposal does not provide for sufficient writing: only one rewriteable essay, 3-5 pages long. Members asked to Dr. Cordell to explore changing the writing assignment with Professor Rosendale to include either one 8-10 page paper or two 3-5 page essays. A motion was made to approve ENGL 1385 with the proviso that the course include two 3-5 page term papers or an alternative. The motion was seconded and approved.

Wellness: (WELL 2191), submitted by Peter Gifford and Judith Banes

Wellness 2191-L02 is a section of Wellness in which we currently allow athletes to satisfy their WELL II requirement, an appropriate option given the many hours that athletes practice each week when their sports are in season. The Wellness Department asks that the same option be made available to the cheerleading and dance teams, which practice 3 to 6 times a week. A motion was made to allow cheerleaders and dance squads to use WELL 2191 in order to have their practice hours fulfill the Wellness II requirement. The motion was seconded and approved by all Council members with the exception of one, Professor Ken Hamilton, who asked that his name and dissent be recorded in these minutes.

Bill Beauchamp withdrew a proposal to use a CF "floating" number for a new offering in the spring. He will instead submit a course proposal

Meeting of the SACS Subcommittee on General Education, chaired by Associate Provost Tom Tunks

Associate Provost Tunks reviewed the history of how this SACS Subcommittee on General Education came into being (see above). The SACS review is a snapshot of what we have done in the area of general education over the last decade. The University Council on General Education is the group with the greatest knowledge and experience with the current general education curriculum--either by virtue of having served on this committee or, for those of you who are new to this group, simply by having taught under this curriculum. Associate Provost Tunks and Associate Dean Cordell determined it would be possible to pair meetings of the UCGE and the SACS subcommittee, and fulfill the duties of both goodies. This said, it may be necessary to add a few additional meetings over the course of the year.

Associate Provost Tunks reviewed the two SACS questions that we need to address

1) In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of the general education component at the collegiate level that a) comprises a substantial component of each undergraduate degree; b) ensures depth of knowledge; and 3) constitutes a coherent program. For Bachelors programs, SACS mandates a general education program of at least thirty semester hours or the equivalent. The curriculum should include at least one course from the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; natural science/mathematics. We can demonstrate this and provide documentation via existing GEC brochures and course descriptions. We can thus put together a response to this query by the end of the Fall semester. This documentation will be given to our central SACS committee, not handed directly to SACS.

The second question is much shorter, but more complex: 2) The institution identifies college level general education competencies and the extent to which graduates have obtained them. This sounds easy, but what does that entail? Dennis has been meeting with representatives from Meadows, Dedman College, Lyle, and Cox to formulate appropriate measures to allow us to determine if these outcomes are being met. SACS does not expect us to assess every single student, but we need to figure out a way to demonstrate the effectiveness of our program. Each department may have its own way of assessing students. Dr. Cordell offered a few examples of how History, Economics, Political Science, and Meadows-with its 7-8 divisions-are proceeding.

We have also launched a separate assessment exercise, administered by John Kalb, the Director of the office of Institutional Research. CAAP, or Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency, exams were administered during AARO sessions this summer to incoming students. This year and in future years, we intend to give that same test to a sample of seniors so that we can document their levels of proficiency. Not all seniors will be tested and we can select the students we want to test. If we are able to administer the CAAP to our seniors, we can to some degree document the effectiveness of our general education curriculum. SACS is concerned that we set goals, measure how well we are doing in achieving them, and then take measures to improve performance. They insist that we say what we are going to do, do it, determine how well we do it, and then use the results to revise our program for the future. Universities are allowed to determine themselves where they are weakest and strongest and then use that information to strengthen programs.

The second question we don't have to submit to the central committee until Spring semester. The first question should be pretty simple but the second question will involve more time. This is why it is important to have you a part of this subcommittee because you are the ones most familiar with this curriculum.

The Council adjourned at 4:33pm