

TO: Senate Executive Committee

FROM: GE Council
J. Levitan and J. Peterman, Co-chairs

SUBJ: 2008-09 Year End Report

DATE: August 3, 2009

Because there were numerous documents posted via the Senate webpage during the year, and formal presentations made to the full Senate, this report is intentionally brief.

The Co-chairs frequently met with the Senate Chair and Vice-Chair during the academic year, and at least once with the Senate Executive Committee as well.

Members of the 2008-09 General Education Council:

Giuliana Andreopoulos, Economics
Sue Bedell, Adjunct
Laura Brown, Communication
Jonnine DeLoatch, Education Enrichment Center
Mark Ellis, Sociology
Evelyn Gonzalez, History
Peter Griswold, Special Education
Jean Levitan, Public Health, Co-Chair
Kathleen Malanga, Library
Robert McCallum, Chemistry
John Peterman, Philosophy, Co-Chair
Deborah Sheffield, Career Development and Advisement
Kathy Silgailis, Kinesiology
Aaron Tesfaye, Political Science
Ron Verdicchio, Elementary Education
Mahmoud Watad, Marketing and Management
Nancy Wiener, Library
Hillary Wilder, Educational Leadership

Kara Rabbitt, Administrative liaison
SteveHahn, Administrative liaison
Miryam Wahrman, Administrative liaison

Goals for the Year

Our primary goal was to develop a framework for a new general education program based upon the numerous campus, departmental and committee discussions of last year, to secure consensus from the WPU community to support these revisions and to present a finished model to the Senate for approval by mid March.

Activities of the Council

Summary: The Committee met about 18 times, held 5 all campus Forums, had two series of four-Friday working sessions on course topic areas, met with 12 departments, spoke with numerous Senators and faculty, worked closely with the Senate President and the Provost. The many documents needed to define a new program were created, presented, revised and publicized on the Senate website. The Committee saw its role as facilitators rather than independent creators of the new program, so each step of the process involved open and extensive discussion with the campus and compromise and revision of the framework.

The GE Council held a retreat in June 2008, summarizing the previous year's efforts to critique the current GE Program and using this analysis to develop principles to guide the revised effort, producing a document outlining the guiding principles upon which a new program would be built.

Each of the 5 campus Forums built upon the previous one to create a complete program

- in September to present guest speaker Terrell Rhodes from AACU and the Council's guiding principles,
- in October to process the input on the principles and how to create the curriculum
- in November to introduce the Grid framework,
- in December to discuss this framework which lead to the Narrative in January
- the last Forum in February presented the Implementation Plan

At the September Forum we brought Terrell Rhodes from the AACU to campus. He addressed the campus community on the national trends related to general education, worked with the GE Council, met with the Provost, and discussed the challenges and concerns facing the WPU Community with the co-chairs and a few Senate officers.

For the major portion of the academic year, the GE Council met as a working group in a “Committee of the Whole.” Our meetings were public and publicized. The two “Four Friday” series in October and February arranged extensive campus discussions of course topic areas and examined in depth each of the four curriculum areas in the proposed model: critical thinking, personal and social responsibilities, global perspectives and effective communication.

Throughout the year, the Council co-chairs made themselves available to meet with a variety of departments, individuals, administrators, and the Senate Executive Council. As the new proposal took form, there was a continual need to clarify intention and expectations. The feedback received throughout the year informed the many revisions made.

The key Elements of the Proposed University Studies Framework include:

- Intensive Focus on the First Year
- Critical Thinking Liberal Arts Core provides an explicit experience of the methods and expectations in college level work and also creates the foundation for higher level courses
- Developmental approach to knowledge and skills across all four years
- Explicit emphasis on skills and knowledge essential to lifelong learning
- Increased choice and flexibility within a structured program
- Reduction in the number of GE credits

List of draft documents

Throughout the year, the series of documents (and their ongoing revisions) necessary to define a complete program were posted on the GE webpage. In addition to the minutes from the GE meetings, these included:

- the initial presentation and later revisions of the USP Grid
- the narrative that explained the course topic areas of the USP Grid,
- the goals and student learning outcomes of the program,
- the Implementation Plan
- a list of Frequently Asked Questions, etc.

The WPU campus was also provided with numerous internet reference links to enhance their understanding of national trends, general education goals, and models implemented at institutions similar to WPU.

Suggested charge from the Senate to the GE Council for Fall 2009:

The GE Council presented the USP curriculum to the Senate in March as agreed upon. Numerous questions arose during the Senate discussions without enough time to adequately respond to them all. Clearly a broad consensus was still in the making and questions arose concerning whether the time was ready for a vote or not. In any case, a vote did not happen.

We suggest that the GE Council should follow through with the submitted Implementation Plan for Fall 2009 . Specifically that it should;

- continue with adjustments to the USP proposal to create greater consensus
- establish criteria for courses in each of the USP course topic areas - including SLO's and other requirements.
- determine procedures for the selection and scheduling of courses in each course topic area
- consider where to find and how to use resources: faculty development, outside grant support, etc.

A Plan describing the resolution of these issues will be submitted to the Senate no later than the end of the Fall 2009 term, so that course approval into the new GE program can begin in Spring 2010.