

GE Council Retreat Minutes, June 10, 2009

Present: (by order of signature) Alejandro Anreus, Giuliana Andreopoulos, Jean Levitan, Kathy Malanga, Lynne Orr, Kurt Wagner, Esther Martínez, Nancy Weiner, Kara Rabbitt, Sandra De Young, Tom Gundling, Christine Kelly, Viji Sargis, Mahmoud Watad, George Robb, Lorra Brown, Rob McCallum, Ron Verdicchio, Bob Rimmer, Peter Griswold, John Peterman, Mark Ellis, Miryam Warhman, Rey Martínez, Frank Pavese.

Meeting was called to order by Kathy Malanga at 1:00 pm.

. Meeting began with Kathy Malanga reading out loud a variety of responses from all of the retreat participants of “what I never had to take as a GE undergraduate class.”

. Jean Levitan established the ground rules for the retreat: meeting our charge of coming up with two GE models to present to the senate in Sept. and to be civil with each other and “issue” focused.

. John Peterman added the possibility of all of the faculty having to support the one model is accepted, therefore he suggested that the GE Council make both models strong so that ultimately either can be supported.

. Jen Levitan gave out a sheet of a data base of all our majors and the required number of credits of each of the majors. She suggested that ultimately individual departments will possibly revise their major requirements.

. Kathy Malanga gave out several sheets with the “recurring problems:” ranging from transfer agreement, foreign language and non-Western requirements, assessment, etc.

Alternative Model

. Christine Kelly, as chair of the Alternative model subcommittee, presented a rough draft of the Alternative GE model. Comments and questions followed:

. George Robb stressed that it was a work in progress.

. Lorra Brown praised the visual presentation for its clarity and bold colors. She requested clarification of the writing requirement; that a clear choice between writing in an English class and writing in a Communications class be present. She also brought up the issue of only 3 credits in the Arts and Comm. section. Giuliana Andreopoulos responded that every area had to give up something in order for the new model to work and that students would have a choice within one area; the more is offered in each department, the stronger the possibilities of students choosing that department over another.

. John Peterman brought up the irrational pairing of Arts and Comm. due to the three departments being in the same college, and hoped the council can at least divide them conceptually. He suggested moving up the Personal Well Being section to the first year due to pragmatics: the earlier students are exposed to issues of personal health (both physical and emotional) the better their college experience

will be. He also brought up similarity between areas 4, 5 and 6 and suggested dropping use of ‘Non-Western’ in favor of simply “global.”

. Christine Kelly responded by defining the clear differences between areas 4, 5 and 6 and emphasized that community engagement and civic knowledge are two separate areas, the first being experiential and the second academic. Eventually both would be synthesized in the life of the student.

. Mahmoud Watad requested that there be an additional course in scientific thinking – something around the basic sciences. Also encouraged the Language department to create a minor in foreign language with 12 instead of the current 18 credits. Commented that the Alternative model was still very grounded in the current model in use. Asked that the sub-committee be more RADICAL in what they are proposing.

. Giuliana Andreopoulos brought up the issue of Global studies and asked that there be a way of making Non-Western clear within it, as students tend to play it safe and do not take classes outside of the Europe/U.S. area.

. John Peterman requested that all of the interventions be brief, say 30 seconds.

. Ron Verdicchio praised the global focus of the Alternative model and its variety of choices. Together with Rob McCallum he asked that another quantitative course be required. Verdicchio also stressed not short changing the arts, that exposing our students to the arts is foundational during the four years of college. He also requested clarification of meaning of terms such as citizenship and diversity of educations.

. Kara Rabbitt requested that area 3, Ways of Knowing have writing removed from it and moved up to the first year area. Also that expression courses (art history and music) be broken off from communication courses.

. Peter Griswold asked why the division between computation and science?

. Christine Kelly responded that analytical philosophy can fit within the computation area while not in the science area and this gives more choice to the student.

. Jean Levitan asked why couldn't the area dealing with diversity/equity be available earlier in the sequence?

. Christine Kelly defended its placement in regards to diversity/equity having more substance after students have received the foundational knowledge needed for contextualizing diversity/equity.

. Eileen Gardner expressed liking the flexibility of the Alternative model, the fact that both history and literature are present which to her is key. She hoped that greater flexibility can be added.

. Sandra De Young agreed with C. Kelly, stressing that diversity/equity can be more significant and have greater impact after foundational knowledge has been received.

. M. Warhman asked which courses within the GE curriculum can be stratified and spread out to 2 and 3 year? Also that there be more opportunities for minors. Can we reduce further? Then promote minors or even double majors?

. Rob McCallum asked if there is an oral communication component in every capstone/major course?

. All present answered in the affirmative.

. C. Kelly repeated the philosophical framework of the Alternative model as having writing and oral skills, analytical and critical thinking skills present in all of the foundational areas of knowledge.

. John Peterman raised again the question of giving choice within the writing intensive component area between English and Communication approaches.

. The discussion of the Alternative model concluded and a brief snack break took place before moving on to the USP model.

USP Model

. John Peterman began by giving credit for the visual design to Lynne Orr. He then proceeds to explain the USP model, stressing the added historical foundation knowledge area and how it connects to concrete/practical applications. He mentioned the importance of a technology proficiency exam for our students.

. Nancy Weiner presented the narrative of the USP model, adding that they were all in agreement in their subcommittee for keeping Foreign Language as a graduation requirement.

. George Robb expressed some confusion about the number of credits. John Peterman responded that the blue area covers the major and GE is in the red circles. Foreign Language is added below the red circles.

. Rob Mc Callum asked for consensus on a required minimum of writing intensive courses, 6 credits perhaps?

. Giuliana Andreopoulos asked if there can be more than 3 credits in social science. She stressed her belief that business students in particular are illiterate when it comes to social sciences and they need it more than ever in our changing world. Peterman responded that there are possibilities for the student taking more courses in social science in the areas of Global Connections and Self and Society and Values. Andreopoulos responded; What about pursuing a strategy suggested by Warhman, where we have an inter-disciplinary approach where the social sciences are key?

. Ron Verdicchio asked that the USP model be spread out over the students four years. Then posed the following questions: What do we want all of our students to have as GE foundational knowledge? What are the differences between the two models?

- . Miryam Warhman stated that she added the credits in the red circles and it ends up at 52 credits in GE. It is still too much. She requests more flexibility and that we revisit the core area.
- . Rob McCallum asks that there be a general upgrade of GE classes, not just in science and math. Also perceives similarities between the two models.
- . Peterman states that major courses and GE courses were designed to be on the same page to help the student “picture” the information as they are going through their four years of study here at WP.
- . Lorra Brown says that it is impossible to have depth of knowledge within GE foundational courses. Asks that we discuss emerging areas of minors in Foreign Language, etc.
- . Eileen Gardner asks that we consider a pruned version of GE for students that choose to take a minor.
- . C. Kelly says that it will be good to encourage minors, but that usually students do not declare an interest in a minor until they are juniors, therefore the pruned GE version might not be practical in application.
- . Both MC Callum and Griswold agree with Kelly’s statement.
- . Sandra De Young reminds everyone that credit intensive programs like nursing, music and art will require the use of waivers and course substitutions.
- . Anreus states that there is unanimity within the Art department accepting the current GE requirements for BFA students.
- . Peterman says that the main difference between the USP model and the Alternative one is that USP focuses on the transitional quality of the first year as students have left High School and need to transition into college.
- . Tom Gundling also expressed concerns regarding minors, as these are generally 18 credits, not 12. If this means that a new GE curriculum will remove or take off 9 credits after completing a minor, it could become a logistical nightmare.
- . Lorra Brown agreed with Gundling and emphasized the importance of proper training of academic advisors and their ability to correctly advise students of the available choices.

Unresolved Issues

- . Ron Verdicchio reported on the principal areas the subcommittee on unresolved issues dealt with: Foreign Language Requirement, Technological Literacy and Transfer Credits.

Foreign Language

- . Rob Mc Callum asked about sign language as a Foreign Language requirement. After an explanation of the difference between sign language and American sign language by Sandra De Young, she

explained that in the future sign language could be offered by the department of Communication Disorders.

- . A lengthy discussion regarding issue of proficiency in a Foreign Language followed with the participation of Kara Rabbitt, Lorra Brown and Christine Kelly.
- . Kelly asked that it be required that a Foreign Language be taken in two consecutive semesters.
- . Both Mc Callum and De Young spoke of the fact that computer language due to its perpetual shifts and changes, cannot be applied as a Foreign Language requirement.
- . Peterman brought the discussion back to what to do with Foreign Language?
- . Robb made a motion that Foreign Language remain a graduation not a GE requirement.
- . Andreopoulos seconded the motion.
- . Motion was unanimously approved.

Technological Literacy

- . Ron Verdicchio asked the following questions regarding Technological literacy: What kind of Tech. literacy do our students have when they arrive? What kind and how much of Tech. literacy do our students need to succeed? He followed these by stating the need for students and faculty alike to be versed in Blackboard and Library Databases, also to encourage course appropriate technology in all the GE courses.
- . Lengthy discussion followed with many participants. Kathy Malanga brought up the tech literacy requirement in Middle States. Jean Levitan stated that the tech issue shifts according to the age/generation of the student, as older students have more of a difficulty adapting to technology.
- . Brown asked for clear definition of what is tech. literacy and how to both focus and define the areas. Malanga pointed to pages 1-2 of the Tech. document, specifically # 1-5.
- . Rabbitt stated that the intent of the subcommittee's recommendations was fairly simple: to allow each discipline to define/drive the technological needs of their respective areas.
- . Pavese spoke against Technological literacy requirements.
- . Mark Ellis brought up the importance of a technological skill being required within a course. The issue of need: integrating techno skill within the course, not as something separate and disconnected from the body of knowledge.
- . Peterman asked: test or no test for Techno. Literacy?
- . Mc Callum suggested teaching Techno. Literacy in the first year FYI course.
- . As no clear solution could be arrived at, the discussion was tabled.

Transfer Articulation Agreement

- . Malanga and Levitan both explained that the Articulation Agreement is a legally binding document that we have to live with when it comes to students transferring to WP with associate degrees.
- . Kelly suggested that regardless of which GE model the Senate goes with, there should be a series of recommendations regarding transfers without associate degrees that we can all agree on.

Student Learning Outcomes

- . Kelly expressed the difficulty of coming up with general slo's that can be applied to the entire GE program.
- . Council members agreed that each subcommittee would review, refine and agree on a basic set of slo's.
- . Levitan stressed the importance of first having a GE model, then coming up with credible slo's that fit within it. Have both general outcomes and sub-category outcomes too.
- . Malanga stressed the need for slo's to be both general and assessable.

As participants were fading in their participation, Levitan called for the adjournment of the meeting.

- . Subcommittees will meet next week. Final meeting of the full council will be on June 23, 1:30 to 3:30 and it will be an open meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35.

Respectfully submitted,

Alejandro Anreus

Department of Art