

Minutes of GE Committee Meeting December 13, 2007

GE Committee approved Nov 15, 2007 minutes.

Present: Beal, Ellis, Levitan, Weiner, Malanga, Sheffield, Peterman, McCallum, Griswold, Tesfaye, Wahrman, Rabbitt, Hahn.

Guest: Esther Martinez.

J. Levitan: reported that she and Peterman had met with the Provost re: comprehensive state-wide transfer agreement (NJPC) and how this will affect GE as well as graduation requirements. After passing to committee members Final NJPC Draft -12/3/07, she cautioned members not to dwell into graduation requirements for now, particularly foreign language, but move quietly as it might generate territorial claims and counterclaims. That the committees focus on envisioning GE requirements rather than face controversial topics, the exceptions being as far as GE is concerned the non-western and first year requirements.

J. Peterman: urged the committee that in this interim space the effect of the changes due to NJPC Agreement on graduation requirements (about 10% will graduate) will only affect a few students and that we need to limit the number of changes in graduation requirements.

R. McCallum: raised the important issue of transfer students and NJPC Agreement and how this would affect graduating requirements of students..

J. Peterman: noted that the GE committee was working in a time of lots of curriculum changes and that up to 50% of incoming students could be transfer while some 20% will be entering for a normal four years degree. He added that overall during the interim period the fewer changes in terms of graduating requirements the better. He underlined that graduation requirement, by and the large, should be left to the Undergraduate Council and that the role of the GE Committee should be limited to one of advisory. However, if the matter is pressing then in the spring semester the committee can revise it.

K. Rabbitt: reminded the committee to focus on the larger and broader objectives of the university and that the foreign language requirement was somewhat a proficiency requirement, unlike other courses, and thus can mores easily pulled and set aside. K. Rabbitt urged that the committee refer the matter to the Undergraduate Council and that the question needs to be looked at the university level.

S. Hahn: Urged the GE committee to be aware of the issues involved in the NJPC Agreement and to leave the foreign language requirements issue to the Undergraduate Council. He concurred with K. Rabbitt that initially the foreign language requirement was language proficiency requirement. But he also added that in the future the issue could be revisited if the President of the university initiates a university wide debate.

M. Wahrman: raised the issue of handling two population groups at the university; those required to take foreign language and those that are not. **J. Levitan** and **J. Peterman** informed the committee that the best that one could do is ease the transition for them and that since the rules change the university must also change

K. Malanga: Reported on the accomplishments of the GE Sub-Committee on Conference, particularly on the results of the *Zoomrang* electronic survey and *Blue Sheet* feed back of the Nov 28, 2007 GE Forum. She handed out to the committee highlights of the most important points to come out of the survey. She indicated availability of additional raw data of *Blue Sheet Survey* for future use and that overall the information might inform and be useful to the GE Research Committee.

-she further informed the committee she was working on shaping the format of the retreat scheduled for Feb 8, 2007. She urged committee members to give/send her suggestions on how to structure the retreat, particularly on topics of defining who our students are and ways to restructure GE. She urged all to focus on how outcomes are to be incorporated instead of just presenting a model of GE. Finally, she suggested that the committee look at other institutions with interesting ideas which allows for thinking outside the box.

J. Levitan: noted there might be some funds for travel so that appropriate members of the GE committee can go to other institutions (e.g. In North Carolina) and speak to people who have restructured GE.

J. Peterman: raised the issue of efficiency and suggested that, while individual participation in a conference is fine, bringing some one with expert knowledge in the field might even be better as more people at WPU can participate. He added that local programs in NJ might also be good resource, as well as AACU conferences such as the one to be held in Boston on Feb. 21, 2008.

K. Rabbitt: brought up important issue of establishing an information bank. She suggested that all ideas of GE Envisioning, from local, out of state, speakers, conferences etc. should have a central repository. She further noted that it should be written up and be available in a resource bank to the campus community for discussion and input on Blackboard.

J. Peterman: suggested three ideas on how to plug on GE possibilities into this resource bank (a) focus on elements of programs of others and what is different from our program (2) focus on future forums on undergraduate education in the 21st century. What is coming up in the next 20 years? He noted the committee should invite provocative speakers, (3) focus in forums that have a very strong student component and should address issues such as (i) how much do we want to change GE? (ii)How do we want our student profiles to change it.? (III) what makes our student engage in GE and stay focused?

D. Sheffield: presented the work of the GE Sub-committee Discussion Group. She reported on (a) the Welcome Message of the GE Discussion group (b) Discussion Group Moderator Guide (draft) (c) GE Discussion Group Managing the GE Listserv. A discussion then ensued on the best day and time for the list serve moderator to hold such discussions: Wednesday common hours? Once a month during forum meetings? **J. Peterman** brought up Mahmud Watad's idea of communicating every week with an interim question.

M. Ellis: handed out the draft *Online and In-person Campus Discussion Group Questions* informing the committee that it was divided into three sections (a) questions involving broad Ideas of on GE, (b) Other GE models and (c) WPU's current GE. He urged committee that thinking broadly, what works and what doesn't work was important.

J. Peterman: raised the issue of having Blackboard function as repository of information documentation which raised a number of discussions by many regarding access to such information by committee and campus community and whether it can be on a shared drive where everyone can go. He noted that we need to work on such capacity. **S. Hahn** cautioned committee to think carefully on the matter of shared drives and issues of privacy in this era of internet proficiency.

P. Griswold: brought up the point that not everyone on the campus community may be proficient in Blackboard. He further suggested the GE committee decide whether the Discussion Group conducts an experimental list serve as a pilot to work out problems. **S.Hahn** suggested the Discussion Group sub Committee appoint 1 or 2 people as moderators. **J. Peterman** suggested moderators approach different persons for note taking from the group.

P. Griswold; reminded the committee that the document Discussion Group Moderator guide has proposed there meeting dates: Jan 31, 2008 (12:30-1:45); Feb 28, 2008 (12:30-1:45); March 27, 2008 (12:30-1:45) as well as weekly topics. He informed committee that *Netiquette Guidelines* will be sent to Committee soon. He further suggested that moderator be neutral (see sample on second page) but also raised the issue of what to do with the information generated.

R. McCallum: suggested the possibility of having a note-taker in the Discussion Groups but also raised challenges associated with compiling data and documentation.

J. Peterman: suggested there may be two solutions (a) Discussion Group moderators should focused on what's happening in "the room" at the moment and (b) that at the end of the meeting moderators should sum up the discussion which should provide enough holistic moments. **P. Griswold:** noted that opposing opinions should also be reflected in the final summary. He underlined the committee should always reinforce the notion that envisioning GE is not for our benefit. It is for the University and that campus wide input is essential. The more campus involvement the better. And in that in the final analysis while GE committee can vote, such vote is part of a large pool of the campus wide community.

J. Levitan: raised the issue of standard college meeting days, when scheduling GE meetings in the spring 08 and suggested all in the committee send her some thoughts on the matter. **J. Levitan** reminded the committee to please answer emails over the holidays and that plans were under way to set up Blackboard.

Meeting adjourned at 2pm.

Respectfully submitted

Aaron Tesfaye. *Happy Holidays!*