

GE Committee Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2008

Present: Mark Ellis , Jack Feldman, Peter Griswold, Jean Levitan, Rob McCallum, John Peterman, Kara Rabbitt, Deborah Sheffield, Aaron Tesfaye, Miryam Wahrman, Nancy Weiner , Hilary Wilder, He Zhang
Guests: Steve Hahn

Meeting was convened at 12:40

I. February 8th Forum/Retreat:

Ideas for the forum were discussed:

- The draft powerpoint from the Research sub-committee was distributed and the theme of 'deconstruction' was explained. N. Weiner reported that the sub-committee first looked at "models" and reviewed the GE programs from a lot of other schools, then came up with some of the characteristics ("pieces") that went into these programs (e.g. cross-curricular courses, service learning component, etc.).
- Logistics: An email invitation asking people to indicate possible attendance will be sent out so we can get an idea of number of people who might show up, both for food purposes and planning purposes (e.g. number of tables to set up for small breakout sessions, etc.). A "save the date" email will also be sent out shortly.
- The relationship of the forum to the discussion groups was discussed. It was decided to postpone the face-to-face discussion group sessions to be held on Jan. 31 until after the forum.
- A concern was raised that if we used the Research powerpoint with the different models that this would raise 'territorial' concerns if people see specific courses, etc. that other schools require.
- Participants will come with various levels of expertise, understanding, etc. of GE, so we need to give some introduction and background to what general parts might go into a GE program – get people to open up to new possibilities.
- Suggestion to focus on our specific situation – our students (who they are, what do we want them to be), our strengths (location, faculty), etc. – need to present in context of WPU, but this might be too contentious and not lead to any resolution.
- Suggestion to use mannequins (to follow up from J. Peterman's description of early Greek philosopher's concept of evolution) or something like this to get participants to think about what should the 'hearts & minds' of our students be when they graduate?
- Does the Faculty Senate expect that we will have a set of student learning outcomes from this forum?
- Should there be a 'differentiated' GE – recognizing that we have a diverse student body (in terms of interest, academic achievement, etc.)? But with the same general goals for all students at the end (just a different way (tailored) of getting there for different students). Currently we just use proficiency model to give extra instruction for students who need it.
- Program could be structured:
 1. Beginning – general – what's GE in the US?
 2. Presentation by Jane Zeff on WPU students, what is WPU?
 3. Look at models, ideas, characteristics from other colleges
- Forum needs a title – something like "what do we want GE to do for students?". Models are premature and will get peoples' backs up
- Have Jane Zeff present re. who our students are – or this might be one of the breakout groups
- Need a 'hook' – maybe 3 short (10 minute) presentations on visions of GE which show diverse views. Starting with an idea of what GE should be then looking at how each component contributes to goals.

- Need to share feedback, results, opinions from first forum, zoomerang and blue sheet, but some of the things people wrote were not positive. If something isn't done with these opinions/feedback then people might think we are just blowing them off.
- Program could be structured:
 1. bridge to last event – ½ hour to present data
 2. what our students strengths are, (Zeff presentation?), what they should be
 3. how do we get them to what they should be
- Program could be structured to address two sides:
 - Students: what do our students look like/what do we want them to look like/what are our strengths & weaknesses;
 - Program: what are general, current issues, trends, etc. out there in GE
- Use Research powerpoint, but only the slides that show general, not specific models. Assign specific models to participants for homework for next meeting
- Avoid models – discuss options in terms of how needs, goals are met, not models
- Give participants something active to accomplish – through breakout groups, etc.
- Bring in groups of alumni as a way of understanding our students and what kind of education they need for 21st century. But Zeff has data on this and can give a short presentation on it.
- J. Levitan and J. Peterman will work with the Forum committee ASAP to come up with a proposed agenda which they will send out via discussion board (or email?). It may include:
 - Breakfast from 9-9:30
 - Info from last meeting
 - Who WPU students are (Zeff)
 - General 'pieces' (from Research powerpoint)
 - Small group breakout discussions

Please send input/ideas to them as soon as possible. Finalized agenda will hopefully come out of Jan. 31 whole-committee meeting.

II. Discussion Groups

P. Griswold reported that the Discussion sub-committee had sent out a 'test' discussion thread but no one responded. It was agreed to postpone the first face-to-face (F2F) discussion group (scheduled for Jan. 31) till after Feb. 8. Discussion sub-committee will be meeting on 1/24. There may be an online discussion that get started before the forum to set up questions, etc. for the 8th. Or use forum to tell people about the discussion groups (online and F2F) and get the familiar with the logistics of how it will work.

III. Other Business:

A. Two General Education meetings coming up.

- Boston, MA, Feb. 21-24. Integrative Designs for General Education and Assessment – M. Wahrman will be attending
- Minneapolis, MN, May 30-Jun. 4. AAC&U Institute on General Education – attend as a team

B. Next meeting: January 31st, common hour. Room TBA

Meeting was adjourned at 1:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Hilary Wilder