

GE Committee Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2007

Present: Jean Levitan, John Peterman, Jerry Beal, Rob McCallum, Jack Feldman, Giuliana Andreopoulos, Peter Griswold, He Zhang, Kathy Silgailis, Kathy Malanga, Miryam Wahrman, Nancy Weiner, Deborah Sheffield, Mark Ellis, Aaron Tesfaye, Hilary Wilder.

Guests: Steve Hahn, Wartyna Davis, Gladys Scott, Maria Tajes, Octavio DelaSuaree, Molly O'Donnell

Meeting was convened at 12:45

- I. **Approval of Minutes:** minutes from October 16 meeting were approved with revisions to be made by J. Beal
- II. **Meeting structure- observers:** Meetings are open to all interested stakeholders. In order to encourage participation but at the same time ensure that committee business gets completed, there will be a time designated in each meeting to specifically solicit input from guests on topics not covered in the agenda, in addition to an open policy for guests to contribute to agenda items as they are covered during the meeting proper.
 - It was agreed that meetings would be announced campus-wide, making it clear that all were invited to attend. We will also be looking at how to make the agenda and prior meeting minutes available.
- III. **Subcommittee assignments:** *If you have not already done so, please send email to J. Levitan and J. Peterman regarding your 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices of subcommittees you would like to serve on.*
- IV. **Foreign Language Concerns – GE/ Graduation requirement:** It was pointed out that by making foreign language a graduation requirement then it is no longer under the purview of the GE Committee. However, this does not preclude the GE committee from considering a language as part of the GE curriculum. For now, the language requirement may have to be dealt with separately once the community college transfer agreement goes into effect.
- V. **Learning Literacies Strategies Team (LLST):** M. Wahrman explained the upcoming assessment survey which will be distributed by the LLST in order to measure students' basic information literacy skills in GE and capstone courses. She asked that the GE Committee endorse this assessment effort (and future planned assessment efforts of technological literacy skills, critical thinking skills, and quantitative literacy skills), as it will not only provide data that will be used in WPU's Middle States report, but can also help inform the GE committee as to what is/isn't currently working. The assessment is a direct assessment of student work samples, completed online by faculty members teaching GE and capstone courses. A motion was made by P. Griswold that the General Education Committee would support LLST efforts, and seconded by K. Silgailis. All were in favor.
 - M. Wahrman also asked that committee members encourage and persuade relevant colleagues to complete the survey when it gets mailed to them, in order to ensure full campus-wide participation.
- VI. **November 29th Forum:** Ballroom A has been reserved from 12:30-2:00 on Nov. 29 for the open forum to be held this semester. The Faculty Senate will provide lunch. It will now be up to the Forum Planning subcommittee to plan the structure of the meeting, advertise it to all stakeholders, order food, etc. (J. Levitan will distribute the names of the people on this group once everyone has submitted their choices for subcommittees (item III above)).

Since this will be the first opportunity by the committee to reach out to all stakeholders, a lengthy discussion followed. This included a discussion on what the objective of this forum should be, how it should be organized, and even what the title of the forum should be. Suggestions included:

- Using this fall forum as a way of focusing the campus and preparing them for the discussion that will happen in the spring, providing them with a preview of what the issues are, what needs to be done, etc.
- Having a panel with a member from each college
- Start off by explaining the Student Learning Outcomes and goal of the current GE curriculum
- Providing participants with concrete ideas that they can react to
- Breaking participants into small discussion groups
- Starting with one agenda item: "How do we make GE better", with three people giving an initial five-minute background of the current situation as well as the transfer student implications
- Making the forum very general and open-ended and including students to provide positive and negative reactions to the current curriculum
- Starting off with committee members giving a history, current situation, comparisons to other institutions (esp. in terms of number of credits required), goals, etc. and then breaking out into smaller discussion groups
- Stepping back and starting with the broader question of who we (WPU) are, who we are trying to serve, etc. before looking at what we currently do or how we compare with sister institutions.
- Making sure that we effectively collect input from participants and record what is said, perhaps with a survey with general questions (e.g. what works, what doesn't work) to be distributed to participants
- Just getting a general idea of what the different stakeholders around the campus think of GE, or narrow this down to just getting a general sense of the opinion of faculty members and direction they would like to see this taken in
- Getting participants to answer (in writing, for the purposes of collecting data) what should GE accomplish, are we doing it, what can we do better
- Starting with the question of who we are is related at some level to the current branding issue, but it was advised that faculty is responsible for curriculum.

Suggestions for titles included: "How can we fix GE?" and "GE – we bring good things to light at WPU". Given the short timeframe to organize this in, it was decided to continue the conversation by having committee members send their ideas for titles, agenda, etc. to J. Peterman and J. Levitan and be ready to continue the discussion at the next meeting.

- VII. **Review Draft Letter to WPU Community:** A revised version of the letter was distributed at the meeting. *Committee members are asked to send comments to J. Peterman so that the letter can be approved at the next meeting and sent out ASAP.*
- VIII. **Efforts for Community Buy-in to Discussion:** The importance of involving the WPU community as a whole and keeping them engaged and part of the process is very important.
- Spring 2008 Forum: the Forum subcommittee, once formed, should start making room reservations for forums in the spring, which might include a three hour 'retreat' for in-depth discussion
 - On-going discussion groups: the structure, logistics, etc. for the discussion groups also needs to be worked out as soon as possible.
 - Co-chair visits to academic departments: J. Levitan and J. Peterman will be contacting department chairs to set up visits to discuss the GE effort with academic departments.
- IX. **Future meeting agenda:** The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 30th from 12:30-2:00. The Nov. 29th forum will continue to be discussed at this meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Hilary Wilder