

Minutes for Educational Policies Committee Meeting

Held 2-08-07

Members present: Mary Halavais (MH)-Chair, Steve Bittner (SB)-History, Rick Robison (RR)-Library, Elaine Sundberg (ES)-Academic Affairs, Sharon Cabaniss (SB)-Math, Lynne Morrow (LM)-Music, Kirsten Ely (KE)-SBE, Zach Maruda (ZM)-AS, Carmen Works-(CW)-Chemistry

Guests: Sasha von Meier (SVM) and Tom Shaw (TSh) representing FYE, Nathan Rank (NR) representing GE, Art Warmoth (AW) representing APC (AW arrived for the EMT presentation but EMT did not show).

Meeting called to order at 11:05am

Agenda approved

Minutes approved

Agenda Item 1. Report on FYE—SVM and TSh

SVM: Fall 2006:

Faculty felt that it would be really difficult. The question was “can we do it.” It is a tough teaching assignment; faculty worried about their qualifications to teach outside their area.

Students tended to love it.

Spring 2007:

Faculty felt the logistics meshed better and that it was definitely doable. Reasons include the practice and experience from Fall, aggressively scheduled faculty development where they taught each other. The feeling among them is that FYE might be worth it financially just for the professional development and increased appreciation across areas. Faculty development is answering the challenge of interdisciplinary teaching. And, the experience and faculty development is helping overall teaching.

Syllabus—We shifted the syllabus for the Spring because we felt it would work better. In the Fall, the sessions were based on assignments needed and it took a lot of work to match the readings to the assignments. This Spring we chose rich readings and then matched the assignments & lectures to the readings. This seems to be working well.

Another exciting aspect of FYE is that we have been able to bring in non-FYE faculty to do lectures and this introduces students to faculty and areas across the university that they might like as their majors.

The faculty all now agree that FYE is doable

New Faculty for next year: We have a pool but we will be choosing only 2. All but 1 of the current FYE faculty wish to continue.

One problem to consider as FYE moves forward and potentially scales up is that the sections faculty teach in their departments are not currently very flexible. This is a structural, resource issue that makes rotating in and out of FYE difficult.

The current FYE faculty are enthusiastic and committed. We feel that the appropriate question isn't whether FYE should continue but rather what we need to do and what we need to ask of the Provost and President in order to make it work.

SC: What is the timeline for the FYE budget consideration?

SB: The Budget Committee is in the dark.

MH: Since we currently don't have a budget from the Governor, we don't have a CSU budget, so we don't have a SSU budget, making this issue difficult to address.

ES: I believe Katie Pierce has some preliminary FYE budget figures to present to AABAC for a discussion at their next meeting.

LM: I'm thrilled that the faculty are enjoying the interdisciplinary teaching aspect. The freshman music students are all enjoying it.

CW: How many faculty are involved?

SVM: There are 10 faculty sections, Tom Shaw (assessment) and me (coordinator) who both receive a release, Karen and Erin from the library who have been able to get some grant money for this, and student service professionals.

Can it be scaled up?

TSh: There are a lot of models—St Mary's, Duke.

KE: But the scale up is not just more of the above. A scale up would change the way we approached these GE objectives and, therefore, the other areas that currently teach these objectives. That would need to be taken into consideration.

SC: How does FYE reflect diversity and EOP?

SVM: Per Tom, there is no statistically significant difference between the FYE sections and the rest of the university. The key issue will be retention. Therefore, the fact of no significant difference between the populations helps with this comparison.

One of the FYE sections is an EOP section: The SSP for that section thinks that maybe EOP students are not ready for it (also, unlike the others, they didn't self-select into FYE).

No students (EOP or other) are allowed to take FYE if they aren't ready to take Eng 101.

RR: One important question is how FYE affects their future at SSU and career expectations.

TSh: We are looking at essays to assess improved writing and critical thinking. We are using focus groups to assess life skills. And we have an ethnographer infiltrating the student ranks to see how it's affecting students.

MH: What is the grade distribution like?

TSh: It is not currently compiled.

SVM: Three students failed. It is a distribution just like any other class. We need to look at it statistically to see the degree of discrepancy across sections, again like any course with multiple sections.

MH: How many students dropped going into the Spring?

SVM: 5 students dropped. Therefore, 8 are not returning (the 5 that dropped plus the 3 that failed).

Agenda Item 2. GE Subcommittee activity-NR, ES, and KE

NR reported on what GE has done and is doing this year.

1. Questionnaires to the Departments

The questionnaires ask Chairs to indicate the learning outcomes and assessment that they are already performing for their GE courses. We are also working on getting hard data of enrollments.

2. GE petition form

The Subcommittee altered the petition form to provide a place for the Chair of the School of the course that is being substituted for to provide a recommendation and reasoning (as input). This has been very helpful.

3. AAC&U meeting in New Orleans

Elaine, Kirsten, and I attended. One of the booklets available there provides a process for engaging the whole faculty that I have shared with the Senate and APC Chairs. They are supportive.

Several of the workshops made it clear that it is important to get Faculty input into the core Learning Outcomes for the University—General Learning Outcomes.

I would like to see us have a Retreat or something (similar to what happened at convocation) either this year or early in the Fall to engage the faculty in such a discussion.

4. AAC&U workshop in May

The Provost asked the GE subcommittee to decide if it was worthwhile to send a team to the AAC&U workshop this May. The workshop is a focused workshop that provides expertise to teams to allow them to really get some work done on an area they consider important with respect to GE.

There is a budget component to this, so the first step is to assess whether it is worthwhile thinking about going. The GE Subcommittee thinks it is.

It is a 5-person team and we want to include one or two members from EPC, APC, or other faculty governance committees as well as GE Subcommittee members. An administrator is required and Elaine has volunteered to go.

KE: I want to note four things from the AAC&U conference: 1. Everyone was emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary courses (this supports FYE). 2. It was also emphasized that the learning outcomes have to be supported and emphasized throughout a student's education—GE and major alike. 3. It was interesting to see that other universities are essentially in the same position as we are. 4. Many people felt that, if we don't come up with a clear set of supportable learning outcomes and assessment to show that we are achieving them, it will be mandated at the governmental level.

SB: Even if we do, this doesn't guarantee it won't be mandated.

SC: We received copies of the GE packet in APC. It would be helpful to make them available to EPC members.

Also, I want to remind you of the Access to Excellence campus discussion 2/22.

The Access to Excellence discussion should include CSU plans, SSU and CSU, and SSU, CSU, and the Academic Senate

ES: Every campus has been asked by the Chancellor to have this discussion concerning the CSU plan—it is a new version of Cornerstones with 6 domains identified by the Chancellor. The Provost is hoping it will provide an opportunity for us to reflect on our plan in the context of what the system is doing or even whether it is necessary for our plan to “match up” with CSU's plan.

MH interjected a question on GE before resuming the Access to Excellence discussion: Has GE scheduled a GE review of FYE?

Continuing with the Access to Excellence discussion...

AW: It would be a good move to raise questions about how our role as a liberal arts institution fits into the six domains.

MH: On “Senate Talk” faculty are saying that it is ridiculous to think about Access to Excellence given the resource issue.

SC: There is some discussion of whether to boycott or to go and speak your mind.

AW: A protest might not hurt, but you should also come in and speak your mind. Also, I want to note that campus-wide buy-in is a very useful aspect of the GE Process Plan NR is suggesting.

KE: I see no point in just protesting or going in and yelling. We can always reach for excellence, even with no resources. The question is what all we can accomplish and how. Therefore, I think it would be more effective to cost out what we need to “reach” for excellence at different levels. If we yell and shout, they just say we’re being unreasonable. If we lay out what we can and cannot do with various levels of resources and why, it’s much harder to ignore.

SB: Last year there was a suggestion that all faculty should stop at 45 hours per week since that is what we’re paid for.

ES: Don’t forget to include the staff. The faculty are upset because they feel that the administration isn’t including them in discussions and decisions. But the same is true for the staff. They are extremely hardworking and also underpaid. Just as the faculty haven’t grown to meet the increased demand, neither have the staff. Pass on to the faculty leadership that it would be advantageous to include the staff so that we are speaking as a community of workers.

Agenda Item 3. EMT (did not show)

Several members had to leave so we adjourned at 12:15 due to the lack of a quorum.