

General Education Steering Committee
 September 21, 2012
 Valencia College
 Meeting Notes

Participants

General Education Steering Committee

Florida College System		State University System	
Judy Bilsky*	Florida State College at Jacksonville	Diane Chase*	University of Central Florida
Karen Borglum	Valencia College	Karen Laughlin	Florida State University
Sharon Erle	North Florida Community College	Bernard Mair	University of Florida
Pamela Menke	Miami Dade College	Douglas Robertson	Florida International University
Leana Revell	South Florida State College	Mark Workman	University of North Florida

*Co-Chairs

Other Participants

Julie Alexander	DOE-Florida College System	Mary Locke	Indian River State College
Shanna Autry	DOE-Florida College System	Susan Ledlow	Valencia College
George Bishop*	Gulf Coast State College	Lynda Page	Board of Governors office
Amy Bosley	Valencia College	Melissa Pedone	Valencia College
Matthew Bouck	DOE	Cheryl Robinson	Valencia College
Jenni Campbell	Valencia College	Ken Ross*	Polk State College
Diana Ciesko	Valencia College	Jon Rogers	Board of Governors office
Tace Crouse	University of Central Florida	Barbara Sloan*	Tallahassee Community College
Pat Frohe	DOE-Florida College System	Irina Strugamore	Valencia College
Tom Furlong	Florida College System	Bob Sullins*	University of South Florida
Barbara Howard*	Lake Sumter Community College	Lee Thomas	Valencia College
Jan Ignash	Board of Governors office	Joan Tiller	Valencia College
Craig Johnson*	Hillsborough Community College	Falecia Williams	Valencia College
Stacy Johnson	Valencia College	Michael Vitale*	Daytona State College
John Niss	Valencia College		

*General Education Steering Committee Alternate

Welcome and Introductions

Committee co-chairs Dr. Judy Bilsky and Dr. Diane Chase opened the General Education Steering Committee meeting by expressing appreciation for Valencia College's hospitality and willingness to host the meeting. The co-chairs thanked the Department of Education and Board of Governors staff for their work in preparing for the meeting. The Committee members and audience then introduced themselves. There were a number of Committee alternates in the audience or listening in on the conference call.

Meeting Charge and Goals

Mr. Matthew Bouck provided an overview of past activities and the purpose of this meeting, which was to determine the composition, activities, deliverables, and timeline of the faculty committees.

Mr. Bouck noted that the law specifies that a maximum of five courses per discipline area are required to be determined. It does not address competencies of the discipline, although there will be further discussion during the meeting. He indicated that following lunch, the two sectors will individually meet to finalize faculty appointments. The Committee members will then reconvene to finalize appointments and review the timelines

Discipline Designations in the General Education Areas

Dr. Chase began the discussion to determine where individual disciplines were placed within the five major areas prior to appointing individual discipline committee membership. The Steering Committee's discussion on this topic included recognizing that there are overlaps and intersections. Possible review of a spreadsheet of current general education courses was discussed; however, some felt that perhaps reverting to the course information might be going a bit too fast. Dr. Laughlin recommended that the process should begin with the identification of discipline competencies. To focus on the outcomes for each of these areas is a more challenging conversation, but is a better conversation.

Recognizing that institutions are already including courses from the same prefix area in more than one general education discipline area (i.e., Communications, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Natural Sciences), the consensus of the Committee was to not provide the specificity to the faculty committees at this time.

It was recognized that faculty that have been nominated will have a breadth of experience and understanding with the general education curriculum at a conceptual level, and not tied to one discipline.

Instead of the Steering Committee determining these student learning outcomes, it should set faculty criteria to determine who should be a part of the committees to review these issues. Then let the faculty committees determine the overall outcomes.

In previous sector conversations, the desired faculty representatives were those who were involved with general education broad experience or experience in other statewide issues. They were looking for members who could represent not only their individual academic discipline but the general education discipline area as a whole. The group was reminded that the discipline committee as a whole should be representative of the state and the

sector. In addition, other guiding principles for faculty committee composition was that the institution represented by a Steering Committee member would not also have a faculty representative, and that all institutions that submitted nominations would be represented on at least one committee.

Competencies and Courses

In Committee discussion of the charge for the discipline committees, the development of an overarching rubric for general education was considered that could be applied to all discipline committees. The Steering Committee must give the faculty committees some guidance in the task—to frame the problem, determine tasks and deliverables, and set timelines. The consensus of the Committee was that the discipline committees should begin their work with an identification of area competencies.

It was suggested that the Legislature is going to want to know if students are achieving these expectations. It was recognized that general education competencies are higher level skills and not specific.

Dr. Chase indicated that the legislature is interested in the Steering Committee's progress and will be following its work. We need to show the Legislature that we are making progress, and to keep them informed at each step.

The Committee discussed the purpose of the general education program. It is ultimately to prepare individuals who can perform satisfactorily in the workplace. Our result should be mindful of this focus in essential things graduates need when they enter the workforce. Typically, what employers want is aligned to general education outcomes.

General education competencies also introduce students to different ways of knowing. It prepares students not just for the workforce, but also for further education. The Legislature acknowledges a "knowledge-based economy," which raises the conversation to a higher plane. We want our graduates to not just perform, but to create.

In discussing the initial meeting of the faculty committee it was suggested that we may have this first meeting with all faculty members present where the task is introduced, and then allow break-out sessions for faculty work.

Project Timeline

Members were presented with a tentative timeline for completion of the Steering Committee's responsibilities for core general education revisions. The co-chairs acknowledged that the faculty committees will need to have a fairly quick timeline in order to move forward to campus review and implementation processes. The current timeline is focused on the activities of the Steering Committee and faculty committees.

Dr. Robertson pointed out that about half a year is needed to go through the local faculty governance process for approval. It was noted that if the recommendations aren't brought back to the institutions for approval, some institutions may be in accreditation peril. Communication to and from faculty is important, as it is clear that the faculty "own" the curriculum.

It was noted that there will always be conflicts and that the Committee won't have an answer for everything. It is believed that the faculty as a whole will probably not put students in jeopardy and that most of the issues can be worked out. There will need to be clear ways for faculty to express concern and for voices to be heard. It was recommended that institutions have an appointed contact person and that communication should occur prior to the public notice period in order to allow for the initial vetting of issues on campuses.

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Regarding the Faculty Senate review, a question was posed regarding the ability of any institution entity to refuse these general education core decisions? If the process has integrity we can work out disagreements. The perception of integrity will involve a reasonable amount of time for review.

It was suggested that faculty committee recommendations should go out to the institutions in January, with a 60-day window for faculty review built in to the timeline.

Ms. Julie Alexander asked the members if the Legislature does not make any changes to the 2014 implementation date, how much time do the institutions need to implement these provisions? Most agreed that it would take about a year; she made the point that that is why the timeline is aggressive.

The Committee discussed specific changes to the timeline, but stressed that efforts must be made to meet the timeline. The Committee can't begin the process by first stating that it can't be done. In addition, faculty committees must work on the principle that we must implement in 2014.

Perhaps some of the state-level tasks can be pushed from March/April to July/August. This helps to give the faculty a bit more time in the spring for review. By November of 2012 there needs to be some communication with the Legislature to show our progress and to have these conversations about the timeline.

An audience member pointed out that institutions needed enough time on their own campuses to determine how to handle the decrease of six general education credit hours, to determine the other 15 hours of general education, how to fit institution general education courses into the five areas, and staffing concerns. Each institution will need to work out these issues.

An audience member suggested that there might need to be a separate group appointed to work on a glitch bill in case those involved in this project want to develop a legislative request for a revised timeline.

Another question addressed the need to determine a process for changing the selected core coursework. These courses can't be expected to live in perpetuity. Perhaps these changes may be processed through the Articulation Coordinating Committee.

An audience member suggested that the group move forward with selecting the faculty committees to let them start the work. If the faculty committees have broad representation and a clear charge they can discuss these issues.

Dr. Jan Ignash stressed that for the faculty committees, it is important to note that we have a guiding principle that colleges and universities are equal partners in the provision of the first two years of postsecondary education.

Faculty Committees

The Steering Committee then broke out by sectors to review and confirm faculty committee memberships. The decision was to have six faculty representatives and one alternate member from each sector. The Steering Committee members are to be nonvoting members.

The faculty committees should attempt to reach consensus, even if it is not a unanimous decision. The role of the Steering Committee members will be to guide the efforts of the faculty committee to reach consensus. Any issue for which there is no agreement will be brought back to the Steering Committee for discussion. It is important to note that ultimately, the faculty committees make recommendations, not decisions.

The Committee discussed and agreed upon the process whereby the five faculty committees will make recommendations to the Chancellors on general education courses in each of the five disciplines. Operational guidelines for the committees will be developed by staff.

Next Steps

Mr. Bouck and Ms. Alexander provided an overhead slide projection of the combined faculty representative committees. They indicated that they would finalize the approved lists and share it as appropriate. The list will be provided to the Chancellors who will send a notice to the presidents.

The Committee decided that there needed to be a committee meeting as a whole, plus each discipline committee in mid-October, most likely in the Central Florida region. Dr. Chase will do some initial polling to assist with the dates.

The co-chairs thanked everyone's participation in the productive meeting.