Minutes of the Meeting of the General Education Committee

Friday, 2/24/12, Fenton 2157, 12:05-12:52 PM

Present: Laura Koepke, Carl Lam, Sam Mason, Dawn Eckenrode, Andrea Zevenbergen

Excused: Steve Fabian, Tai Yi, Todd Proffitt, Guangyu Tan

The meeting began at 12:05 PM. The agenda was approved as presented. The minutes from the meeting on 2/10/12 were approved as presented.

Laura provided information about the conference she attended in Austin in January 2012. The name of the conference was “Infusing New Energy into a Familiar Course: Strategies, Activities, and Assignments.” She attended with Juan DeUrda of Modern Languages, a member of the Baccalaureate Goals Task Force. Laura reported that the information at the conference was quite informative, including constructing better syllabi (e.g., inviting students to learn rather than indicating all that students must do in the course; considering carefully the tone of syllabi; considering currently used syllabi vs. one’s ideal syllabus). The conference also talked about ways to engage students using a three-pronged model (content, instructor, peers). Attendees were encouraged to look for ways that students can learn from peers in particular. Attendees were also encouraged to get to know students better (e.g., names, plans, interesting things about students). One specific strategy discussed is to have an index card designated for each student, and after each class, the individual students will write out a question related to that day’s material. They also discussed instructors’ purposely and strategically sharing information about themselves to help connect with students. Hybrid models of teaching were also discussed (e.g., 1/3 in class lecture, 1/3 small group discussion, 1/3 on line information). Controversial strategies of teaching were also discussed such as having students do all the reading for the course at the beginning, and starting to attend classes after the third week. The committee discussed strategies for Laura disseminating what she has learned to the campus. Dawn suggested that Laura and Juan present at the Teaching and Learning Conference on campus in late August. The group consensus was that this would be a good forum.

Course Proposals:

1. SPMG 330 - Revised. Sam made a motion to approve this revised proposal for the Oral Communication category. Laura seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (5-0).

2. CSIT 455 – Revised. Dawn made a motion to approve this revised proposal for the Oral Communication category. Carl seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (5-0).

3. COMM 105 – Revised. Laura made a motion to approve this revised proposal for the Oral Communication category. Dawn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (5-0). The approval letter to the instructor and department Chair will include the request that all sections of this course meet the General Education requirements.

4. PHIL 477 (for Oral Communication category): The group discussed this proposal, with earlier information having been obtained from Andrea, Guangyu, Laura, Sam, and Steve through electronic voting. The group decided that there are two weaknesses in the proposal currently: 1) the extended course policy information, which is now just connected to the syllabus through an electronic link, needs to be attached to the course syllabus in the revised proposal; 2) the second oral communication requirement, that students evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria, is not evidenced in the syllabus. The group consensus was to send this proposal back for revision.

5. PHIL 460-469 (for Oral Communication category): This proposal was not reviewed formally by the group today since the electronic voting revealed that no one was comfortable with the proposal as initially submitted. Because we had just discussed PHIL 477, this proposal came up for brief discussion. Andrea reviewed the main concern: the length of presentations is not clear. It was also determined in this meeting that the syllabus is not currently noting that students must evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria. This proposal will be sent back for revision.

6. EDU 430 – This course largely meets the requirement for the Oral Communication category. One concern was advanced by one group member. It is not clear that students are assessed in the domains of “understand and use basic research techniques” and “locate, evaluate, and synthesize information from a variety of sources.” It was proposed that the School of Education could put on the student evaluation documents an additional criteria reading something like, “Effectively researches and applies new and prior knowledge into the development and planning of lessons.” Andrea will talk with the coordinator of student teaching to see if this can be added. She will also ask if student teaching in math comes from the MAT department instead of EDU. EDU 430 was not approved at this meeting, given this reservation about the course proposal.

The last point of discussion was that Andrea reported that all the student teaching proposals submitted by the coordinator of student teaching (within School of Education) are essentially identical and asked permission to approve them as a group, once they are approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Zevenbergen, Chair, General Education Committee