

General Education Council

Minutes

October 13, 2009

ATTENDING: Jim Deitrick, Kim Eskola, Stephen Feldman, Kathy French, Lori Isom, Roger Pauly, Ed Powers, Conrad Shumaker, Ellen Stengel, Stephanie Vanderslice, and Charles Watson. EX OFFICIO: Sally Roden.

Director Shumaker called the meeting to order at 1:45. Motions to approve the May 5, 2009, and the September 1, 2009, minutes, submitted respectively by Ellen Stengel and Bill Friedman, were made, seconded, and approved.

The subject of renewed and lengthy discussion was the Spring 2007 proposal of the Writing Department to move Writing 1320 to the sophomore year. The proposal had been seconded and approved as a motion, discussed, and then tabled. Director Shumaker explained that the proposal had been tabled while the General Education program as a whole was under review and while administrative commitment to a Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) Program was being sought. He narrated some recent events in the pursuit of these goals: his meeting in Spring 2009 with the Writing Department General Education Committee; and the recent gathering of 12 faculty members from 6 different departments to explore potential components of a WAC Program, including General Education Writing Intensive (WI) courses and major-level WI courses in addition to the relocation of the second-semester General Education Writing course (currently Writing 1320, Academic Writing and Research). The WAC exploratory group will continue to meet in person and via URSA group.

Members' concerns about the Writing 1320 proposal were addressed by the two Council members from the Writing Department, Stephanie Vanderslice and Ellen Stengel. Additionally, Director Shumaker and others underlined the necessity that the WAC program and the possible WI guidelines and courses be perceived by the faculty as faculty-generated "grounds up" efforts.

The action item on the agenda was a draft of the 2009 General Education Assessment Plan. The Council's Assessment Subcommittee is working on the Plan. The MAPP (Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress) exam component of the Plan then sparked extensive discussion. Director Shumaker reviewed the history of the MAPP exam's status, including administrative recommendations at the level of the Provost's and President's Offices and the General Education Council's divided vote to include the exam in the draft Plan (see May 5, 2009, minutes). A motion to approve the draft Assessment Plan was then seconded.

The discussion that followed indicated the Council members' ongoing concerns in particular about the MAPP exam component of the Assessment Plan. Kim Eskola summarized those concerns: there may be too much assessment emphasis placed on a standardized test; the test may not represent our institution publically in an ideal light; and there remains no student incentive for taking, and excelling at, the test. A motion to table approval of the draft plan was seconded and approved.

Director Shumaker requested that Ed Powers of the Assessment Subcommittee draft language in the Plan which will de-emphasize the weighting of the MAPP and mandate an essay component while emphasizing the importance of department-level assessment.

At 2:43, a motion to adjourn the Council meeting carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Powers Stengel (Writing Area Representative)