DRAFT Minutes of the General Education Subcommittee  
April 27, 2015  
LI 2250  
2:00 pm – 3:50 pm


Absent: none.

Guests: Eileen Barrett, Katherine Bell, Tom Bickley, Mike Hedrick, Gr Keer, Lindsay McCrae, Sarah Nielsen, Andrew Pasquinelli, Glen Perry, Margaret Rustick, Jason Singley, Diana Wakimoto.

The Chair (Eagan) called the meeting to order at 2:06.

1. Approval of the agenda. (M Murphy/S Bliss/P). The Chair noted that the sustainability and cultural groups discussions will be moved to May 11 (and were struck (5a/b) from today’s agenda). The Ethics ILO discussion was also struck (5c) from the agenda.

2. Approval of minutes.
   a. April 13 (M Murphy/S Satin/P).
   b. April 21 The wrong minutes were distributed and this was postponed to the next meeting.

3. Proposed GE Model. There was discussion about the phrasing for the double-counting of “Writing within the Discipline” (WID) for courses offered within the discipline. The parenthetical word “prefix” was replaced by “with the major prefix”. Regarding overlays under “features not covered”, “Potential overlay requirements (see, for example, CIC 24) are under discussion. Cultural Groups and Women are the only current overlay requirement. There was applause to acknowledge Glass’ work on the document.

   a. COMM 2XXX Queer Cultures for lower division area D. (M Murphy/S Soules/P) There was a question about whether this would be offered as cross-listed with a library prefix. It was noted that Library does not currently get FTES and the Library would not benefit from such a listing. Numerous comments were made to the effect that, if the course was team-taught by a Library faculty member, the Library faculty member would get instructional credit for the contribution. Keer and Bell outlined the meaning of the course. Bell noted that the proposed course cap would be 35 per section and that there might be collaborative meetings between the sections.
   b. Discussion of Information Literacy. Soules presented a Powerpoint presentation regarding the current information literacy requirement. It was noted in the presentation that Information Literacy is a WASC “Core Competency” (CFR 2.2a). In the presentation, Soules also noted that AAC&U uses information literacy standards. The information
literacy course has been offered since 1998 at CSUEB and, for the past few years, has been a 2-unit course. Library proposes that information literacy be part of the Area E requirements and that librarians be considered the instructors of record for these courses. The Library Faculty have been discussing between 1 and 3 units, but the current preference is for a 3-unit course, but, in any event, a graduation requirement specifying information literacy is needed (according to the proposal) so that students could not evade the information literacy topic. The Librarians propose the information literacy course be a sophomore course so that it can correspond better to writing and research courses. There was a question as to how moving this course to sophomore level might hurt cluster courses and/or GS (were those to go forward). Murphy noted that, since many students are in remediation in their first year, there might be added value at that level. However, Murphy argued that the course should be paired with other courses (perhaps part of a sophomore year learning experience) or discipline courses. She also felt that GS should persist and, so, argued against the course being 3 units. Nielsen spoke in favor of linking information literacy to second-year courses (either in clusters or the “writing in the discipline” course). Keer said that she likes the linkage viewpoint, but is not necessary. Her version of information literacy is centered around writing advocacy letters. Barrett echoed Nielsen’s sentiments. Murphy argued for cluster structures for first- and second-year students, particularly for retention purposes. She reminded the subcommittee that the University previously tried area E and found that the current “Area G” model worked better. Eagan supported the second-year approach and noted that critical thinking would likely be a better fit for second-year students. Eagan noted that it was the faculty that didn’t like second-year clusters, but that may have been due to a lack of support. There might be a social benefit to second-year clusters. Bickley reiterated the WASC value of information literacy. Ivey and Liberti asked whether, if information literacy took 3 units, students would get all they need from area E. Murphy suggested 2 units of GS in the freshman year and 1 unit of information literacy in the sophomore year. Wakimoto asked for a timeline as to when the area E requirements will be specified to facilitate Library’s planning. Karnes supported the notion of linking information literacy to a writing course. Karnes asked about funding for data from sources currently not available in the Library. Liberti asked about the reason for GS being 2 units. Murphy noted that this allows GS to be offered throughout the year, which allows needed support of students. Murphy noted, in a response to Watnik’s point about clusters becoming increasing major-oriented, that this is largely in the Science College and is because of the sequential nature in those majors. It increases the students’ abilities to graduate in 4 years. She cited the
Biology cluster starting with 120 students and ends with enrollments of about 58 in the Spring.

c. Discussion of the University Writing Skills Requirement (Writing Skills Subcommittee). Rustick cited a paper “The Call of Research: A Longitudinal View of Writing Development” by Nancy Sommers. Rustick differentiated between GWAR, UWSR, and WST. Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement is a mandate that there has to be some method of assessing writing and this method must be reported to the CO. The University Writing Skills Requirement is the graduation requirement. The Writing Skills test is one method (an on-demand writing assignment) by which students can satisfy the UWSR. There are three scores on the WST (clear competence- pass, developing competence- need second-tier course, and limited competence- need first-tier course). Rustick noted that the cliché that “The WST is a barrier to graduation” is false, with it being the writing skills of students that is the issue. 70% of the students taking the WST for the first time were seniors in 2012-4. Though the percentage of students who take the WST as seniors has increased, it is not that the percentage of transfer students and/or non-native speakers has had some concomitant change. The pass rate is also flat. Rustick noted that there is the feeling that the WST is not “real” writing in that the topic is unfamiliar and the scenario is on-demand. There is analogous feeling that the students should be more disciplinary based. The Writing Skills Subcommittee wants to reduce reliance on the WST. The WSS wants to increase the disciplinary variety and number of second-tier courses (for those who have “developing competency”). These should be junior-level courses to give students an opportunity to satisfy the UWSR, if the students fail the writing skills portion to do so before graduation. That is, the second-tier courses in the major should not be capstone courses. Singley noted that putting such a course in the discipline could be beneficial to the programs. Eagan noted that many students do not come in the Fall and that the courses cannot be implemented uniformly with the expectation that, in the students’ timeline, the ability for this to be at the beginning of the junior year is not entirely practical. Rustick pointed out that writing assessment and teaching are different tasks. She noted that graduate writing assistants can help with the teaching issue. Regarding the problem that writing in one discipline might not mean that a person could write in any setting, Rustick noted that writing is context-dependent and that the ability to write in one context is useful. The Writing Center in the SCAA can help with tutors. Rustick argued that, without faculty support in the Faculty Development Office with a full-time person, the notion of campus-wide writing in the discipline would probably fail. In response to a question about workload for faculty teaching the course, Rustick noted that initial (early) assessment for students is necessary. A one-unit tutorial, particularly
for students receiving limited competence in the early assessment, would be practical. The tutorial would be held by graduate writing assistants. Rustick also noted that appropriate online tools might be useful (but not a substitute for faculty intervention). These require University resources (money). There should be incentives and allowances in departmental budgets for courses that require substantial writing. There should be reporting tools to advise students of their progress on the UWSR. Writing cannot be mastered in a single course. Writing Across the Curriculum is not a quick fix and requires commitment. “First year writing alone is inadequate. Practice, repetition, and instruction make the difference.” (Sommers, pp. 155-7) WSS will propose upper division assessment and departmental second-year courses. The course cap proposed will be 30. Currently, the lower division writing course is capped at 25. There is the possibility of subdividing the course into discussion sections. Rustick noted that writing intensive courses are probably “twice the work” of most other courses. There is likely a proposal to add units to the writing-intensive courses for the instructors. Nielsen reminded the subcommittee that the existing courses in English will likely persist as a backup to department’s courses. Glass asked whether writing in the discipline courses would be assessed outside the course vis-à-vis the UWSR and Rustick suggested that instructors would be trained in such a way that outside assessment would not be necessary. However, the Subcommittee would look at the courses regularly (and in the first year of the program) to ensure uniform mechanisms. Eagan noted that Senate-mandated course caps for these courses would be needed.

5. Adjournment. The chair declared the meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM due to time.

Respectfully submitted,
Mitchell Watnik, subcommittee secretary