

Minutes

General Education Council
Friday, September 21, 2007

Attendance:

Maurianne Adams, Mokhtar Atallah, Gail Cruise, Alexandrina Deschamps, John Cunningham, Isabel Espinal, Ginger Etinde, David Fleming, Judy Goodenough, Kevin Klement, Randall Knoper, Mark Leckie, Pamela Marsh-Williams, Ernest May, Dori McCracken

Minutes:

The minutes of May 18, 2007 were passed by the Council.

Davis Foundation: Ernie May presented a synopsis of the Davis Foundation Grant proposal which the president's office has been drafting. He stated that some aspects of the proposal, such as assessing every course and every student's transcript against the proposed, centralized standards, would be unmanageable, but a key objection to it is the way it contributes to a radical centralization of the UMASS campuses by the central administration. Also, at bottom, this is an attempt to alter the curriculum without faculty input, which violates the principle that faculty have primary responsibility for the curriculum. Ernie said that although the Amherst administration ultimately has to consent to initiatives from higher up, the faculty do not have to, and in this case cannot. There will be a motion to withdraw the present Davis Foundation proposal at the next Faculty Senate meeting, with the intention of drafting a second proposal, which includes the necessary contributions from faculty. Relatedly, John Cunningham reported that the Provost's office has begun formation of a Gen Ed Task Force, which he will lead, and it will aim to work in coordination with the Davis grant, if it goes forward, and in coordination with the efforts of the Gen Ed Council.

Annual Report: Randall Knoper summarized his trip with Andy Effrat and Martha Stassen to the AACU institute on General Education in May. The meeting's theme was rethinking General Education goals and outcomes. In subsequent discussion, Mark Leckie asked if the Council could find the 12 most highly ranked GenEd courses and then have a subcommittee evaluate the factors that make the course interesting. After this, criteria for successful Gened courses could be developed. Maurianne Adams reminded the Council to keep in mind that the Gened courses selected must agree with the present Gened goals and objectives. The Council approved the annual report, as well as the appended General Education Action Plan and the report on the AACU institute. They will all be sent to the Faculty Senate.

Website: Randall announced that the revised Gen Ed course approval forms are now posted on the Faculty Senate website. He is still working on getting a separate Gen Ed website underway.

GenEd Faculty: The Council agreed to support Judy Goodenough's recommendation to send a letter of thanks to all faculty teaching GenEd courses. Randall will obtain the list from either Bryan Harvey or John Cunningham.

Quinquennial Reviews: Randall will review the latest list of received and outstanding Q-Reviews, as well as a previous list provided by Kyle Hoffman.

Subcommittees: There are two new subcommittees that have been formed within the Council;

Assessment: Mark Leckie (coordinator), Maurianne Adams, Isabel Espinal, Randall Knoper, Kevin

Klement

Workshops/Taskforce: Randall Knoper (coordinator), Gail Cruise, Alex Deschamps, David Fleming, Judy Goodenough, Pamela Marsh-Williams

The Council's newest member, David Fleming, has agreed to serve on both the AL/AT and HS subcommittees.

The Variance Committee, a branch-subcommittee of the GenEd Council, has been lead by Mokhtar Atallah and Brian O'Connor (Biology). Mokhtar has asked that a member of the GenEd Council volunteer to sit in as a mentee on this committee for the academic year, in preparation for Fall '08, when Mokhtar will not be on the committee. Kevin Klement volunteered to do this.

Next Meeting: Friday October 19, 2007 at 2:30 PM, in the Chancellor's Board Room, 370 Whitmore.