

GER Task Force Meeting

May 26, 2006

Present: John Ambrose, Sarah Ash, Mike Carter, Jo-Ann Cohen, Allen Dupont, Ken Esbenshade, Catherine Freeman, Louis Hunt, Chris Kessler, March Krotee, Marian McCord, Jacqui Hawkins-Morton, Jose Picart, Dan Robison, Joni Spurlin, Carrie Zelna.

Meeting began at 8:08 a.m.

The Task Force reviewed the minutes of May 12, 2006. Dr. John Ambrose moved to approve the minutes. Minutes were approved.

The meeting opened with a discussion of possible meeting dates for the summer from the list of dates and times previously sent via email. Initially, July 18th and August 1st seemed to be the best choices. After further consideration, the Task Force decided to forego the previous proposed meeting dates at this time and instead look at having a couple of days with half-day sessions to continue their work on the GER.

An email will be sent out to discuss possible meeting dates. The meeting began with members looking over two delivery method options for an introductory GER course (first-year experience). The two delivery methods examined were (from the 5-12-06 GERTF minutes):

3. a common university-wide course (most likely a new course)
4. a course or set of courses determined by each college (these may be existing courses, modification of existing courses, or new courses)

Laura Severin sent notice of her preference for the University-wide course option. The members agreed to discuss which method they would most like to take and also came to the conclusion that maybe they should be looking at 3 options: 1) University-wide course with multiple sections; 2) set of objectives that the colleges could use to develop a course meeting those objectives; or 3) use an existing course to meet defined objectives.

- Would this introductory course, where it to be defined by colleges, share a syllabus, text, and readings?
- Would it be 1 course with different sections and a team of teachers from across colleges to teach it?
- What are the pros/cons of making the course cross-college (interdisciplinary)?
- If they went the route of colleges designing their own intro GER course, what happens when a new dean/administrator comes into a college and decides the structure is not appropriate and wants to eliminate it?
- However, it would be a nice way to give colleges the chance to build in flexibility and meet the objectives the task force sets up.
- One possibility for an introductory GER course as far as scheduling it would be to create say 1-4 lecture series (based on a theme, perhaps tied to a summer reading) paired with multiple problem sessions where students from different colleges could interact. You could restrict some sections to certain groups if needed and provide for a course/problem session that is easily transferred between colleges.
- Would colleges be responsible for themes?

Task Force members emphasized that their desire for this introductory GER course, with its four objectives, is to help students understand the purpose of general education, that they need more than the courses in their major, and to excite them about learning. There was some discussion as to how this is similar to courses designed as introductions to a college and the university, such as ALS 103.

- Also, summer readings and lecture/course could be tied together with outside experiences like lectures and forums.

Members also discussed “what is a theme,” and how do they approach and determine its intention. The group agreed any plan they come up with would be a pilot program/course, perhaps with the different themes that could be covered in a university wide course. The group also wants to create something that fosters engaged learning and helps students form groups that can share experience as they enter their college career.

At first summer session, the group agreed to discuss in more detail the topic of the freshman experience.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Melissa McConnell.