

GER Task Force
Minutes of August 5, 2005

Members present: J. Ambrose, S. Ash, M. Carter, A. Dupont, K. Esbenshade, C. Gould, J. Hawkins-Morton, L. Hunt, J. Lavelle, J. Picart, L. Severin, J. Spurlin, K. Wallace, C. Zelna. Tom Evans and Rex Smith attended for March Krotee.

The purpose of today's meeting is to review the responses to the draft that have been received to date. John Ambrose asked those present that represented groups that responded to give a verbal summary of their group's reaction to the draft.

Laura Severin reported for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences that the CHASS members who reviewed the draft were generally favorable and had no major objections. The main point of debate and conversation was around the "integrative" question; most felt it was meant to indicate interdisciplinary perspectives and if so, the CHASS group was split on the necessity of this.

Ken Esbenshade reported for the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences that the groups that had reviewed the draft were the department heads and the courses and curriculum committee. Department heads were generally in favor but more interested in commenting on potential implementation strategies. The prevailing sentiment from the courses and curriculum committee was that many CALS faculty were invested in course development for the current system, considered their instructional responsibilities to be an important contribution to the identity of NC State as a land grant institution, and were therefore cautious about the implications of changes to the current GER model.

Jerome Lavelle reported for the College of Engineering that while an extensive attempt at canvassing the college was made, few comments were forthcoming for this round of feedback; most are interested in seeing the potential implementation strategies. With the accreditation restrictions placed on their curricula, the COE faculty were concerned about the impact of any changes to the current model.

Jacqui Hawkins Morton reported for three units in Undergraduate Academic Programs (Academic Support for Student Athletes, First Year College, and the Transition Program) submitted a joint response that primarily indicated the spirit of the draft is commendable if it can be implemented to actually achieve the goals stated; they also felt the problem with the current model is in its delivery; students just take whatever courses they can to complete the GER and there is a lack of synthesis. Some here also advocated a common core of courses that all students would take.

Jacqui Hawkins Morton also reported for the Council on Undergraduate Education whose recommendations was to combine the Mission for Undergraduate Education and the Mission for General Education as they did not feel there should be a separation of the two. CUE also drafted a combined mission statement that included a list of learning experiences that should be encompassed. CUE's approach was to challenge the campus to really think outside of the box in terms of GER and major requirements being blended; they also tried to avoid any language that would indicate disciplinary foci.

Carrie Zelna reported for Student Affairs that they were generally in favor of the draft but anxious to see what implementation strategies would emerge.

Chris Gould reported that the College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences did not submit a formal report as they felt the draft at this time was not specific enough to generate comment. Gould stated that the discussion in the college curriculum committee consisted of questions as to why there was any need to change the current system and concern about implementation strategies.

Laura Severin reported for the Academic Affairs Assessment Planning Team that they purposefully did not address GER as part of their recommendations as they knew the results of the GER Task Force could alter the current structure and it would be unproductive to talk about assessment at this time. They

did discuss the meaningfulness of a course-based system: does a collection of courses actually combine to create a knowledge base? In that it may not, and in that assessment of GER per course has been difficult to implement, the Academic Affairs Assessment Planning Team felt that a course based system may not only be impractical but also not pedagogically sound.

Allen Dupont submitted two reports for the group's consideration. The first was a comparison of NC State's GER against that of 101 public doctoral/research-extensive universities that showed our current GER is more similar than dissimilar to the other institutions; the vast majority use a course-based disciplinary menu approach. The second report was a list of implementation issues that needed to be considered: current articulation agreements, transfer issues, accreditation issues (both SACS and disciplinary), assessment issues, and resource considerations.

The group chose to spend the remainder of the day discussing CUE recommendation and tackling the issue of an integrative component to the GER.

Most thought the CUE mission statement was elegantly crafted but had concerns about combining the Undergraduate Education Mission Statement with GER Mission Statement; if we eliminate the difference between the two, then by default GER may end up being defined at the program level. If that were to be true then we would no longer have a GER model that is common to all graduates of NC State, one that attempts to espouse certain outcomes regardless of major. Some felt that CUE draft would be a fitting replacement for the Undergraduate Education Mission Statement while still retaining the GER Mission Statement. Ambrose asked the group to consider this as a possible motion for the next meeting.

The group then tuned its attention to the matter of the integrative component. Many campus responders felt unable to answer the question 3 (is an integrative component appropriate, how would it be defined, how would it be implemented?) as they were unclear about what "integrative disciplinary perspectives" meant. Few suggestions for a definition actually came forward from the campus community. The GER Task Force members offered definitions such as "learning from multiple perspectives" and "experiences that come together in a holistic way." The group revisited the CHASS draft where several implementation ideas were suggested based on a interdisciplinary definition. Also mentioned was a model where each college would be given a rubric of integrative outcomes and design their own implementation strategy to achieve the outcomes and their own method of assessment.

Ambrose also mentioned that an international focus is something that is getting a lot discussion around campus and may become one of the university's thrust areas. It also came out strongly in the responses so we may want to keep that in mind.

Next meeting we will begin to examine implementation scenarios.

Submitted by Kathy Wallace