

Minutes of the Task Force on General Education November 2, 2004

Members present: John Ambrose, Sarah Ash, Subhash Batra, Michael Carter, Allen Dupont, Ken Esbenschade, Chris Gould, Jacqui Hawkins-Morton, Karen Helm, Louis Hunt, March Krotee, Jose Picart, Laura Severin, Joni Spurlin, Kathy Wallace

Vice Provost John Ambrose welcomed and thanked all present for their participation in reviewing NC State's undergraduate general education requirements. A binder was distributed to all members, which contains a variety of documents relative to general education at NC State and also proposals for changes to the GER that have been forwarded to the task force.

Ambrose presented a power-point presentation outlining the charge of the task force, the current GER structure and requirements, the history of the GER at NC State, a comparison of our peer institutions and UNC sister institutions, notes on the Pope Study of general education requirements in the UNC system, examples of how GER objectives statements have been redrawn to allow course outcome alignment, the current GER assessment process, SACS requirements relative to general education, and a reminder that whatever form our GER takes, we must be able to adequately assess it.

Members were canvassed for any comments or concerns regarding the GER and the following comments were noted:

- Different college restrictions on eligible GER courses makes transfer between major difficult; it has been estimated that transferring majors adds a year to a students time to graduation.
- Restrictions on individual courses make it difficult for students to move through their GER requirements.
- Breadth of exposure to disciplines should be included to give students versatility of mind, to see how other disciplines are trained to think.
- Inquiry and discovery need to be emphasized.
- Current requirements are too logistically complex.
- The original composition of the GER may have been somewhat faulty (or at least the rationale for the inclusion of some of the courses) and we have since been layering practices on top of a flawed foundation.
- A narrower course list would allow us to focus resources on GER offerings.
- Students don't understand the GER as a program; they understand it more as a group of course to be disposed of.
- Faculty don't understand the GER and sometimes are not even aware they are teaching GER courses.
- Our total GER hours are higher than most, which encourages some disciplines to compress GER course-taking patterns rather than encouraging breadth in their students' GER selections.
- The basis of our GER should be student learning outcomes (what we want students to know and do) and the structure should be whatever best facilitates it; it does not necessarily need to be course based, but could be threads that run through courses.
- The turf mentality that existed at the time the GER was created has given way to a more cooperative atmosphere and the original compromises that may have eclipsed the functionality of the GER may not be a problem today.
- Students should have more free electives to nurture intellectual curiosity.
- The GER contains too many technical or skill courses rather than conceptual courses.
- Our course assessment process is not manageable and the assessment of a collection of courses does not inform us as to if students are achieving the desired outcomes.
- Our course assessment process has faculty more engaged in teaching GER concepts and also keep the faculty in control of delivery of the GER.

- The GER we have now is the result of a long process and a lot of thought about what works for our particular campus; it may be flawed but perhaps does not need to be abandoned.

Because of the late start date for the task force, the original report date of December 15 will likely need to be extended.

The recommendations of this task force will go to the Provost and if are seen as worthy, a wider evaluation of the recommendations will be necessary (by groups such as CUE, associate deans, student and faculty senate).

The assignment for the group for the next meeting will be to examine the four overarching GER objectives in relation to the associate deans' recommendation to go back to first principles and investigate other models that will potentially serve our purposes.

Next meetings were decided upon for Tuesday, November 9 from 8:00-9:30, Friday, November 12 from 8:00-9:00, Tuesday, November 16 from 8:00-9:30, Thursday, November 18 from 8:00-9:00 and Tuesday, November 23 from 8:00-9:30.

Submitted by Kathy Wallace