GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
234th Meeting
Thursday, January 19, 2017

MINUTES
Approved

Present: E. Klonoski (Ex-officio, Acting Associate Vice Provost), L. Matuszewich (LAS/PSYC), B. Montgomery (HHS/FCNS), A. Polansky (LAS/MATH), M. Quinlan (VPA/ART), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), M. Ray (for R. Subramony, Office of Assessment Services), A. Stich (EDU/LEPF), Z. Wang (EET/ISYE), L. Zhou (BUS/FINA)

Guests: S. Richter (Faculty Development)

The meeting was called to order by GEC Chair Zhou.

I. Adoption of Agenda. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA FOR THE JANUARY 19, 2017, GEC MEETING. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Announcements

A. Minutes from the November 17, 2016, were approved electronically.

B. HLC Interim Report—Vice Provost Anne Birberick. Birberick gave the GEC a report on what will be coming to them with regards to a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) interim assurance report. She explained that about four years ago, NIU went through the process of doing a self-study and following that was a site visit by the HLC. One of the groups the site visit team met with during the visit were members of the GEC at that time. Now that it’s midway through the accreditation process, in 2018 NIU needs to give the HLC a mid-cycle assurance report. The area that includes the general education program is Criterion #3, Teaching and Learning: Quality Resources and Support. Birberick gave the GEC a timeline of what will be happening with the interim report. Vice Provost for Academic Planning Carolinda Douglass, who oversees accreditation processes at NIU, will take the point on getting the overall report put together. Because the general education program falls under Birberick’s purview, she’ll be working with the GEC and with Klonoski to prepare the part of the report that addresses general education. This spring will be spent gathering data about the general education program and how it functions. The summer will be used to collect any last-minute data. During the fall, the report will be drafted and then during the spring 2018 semester, the overall assurance report will be revised. Birberick said that general education course instructors will be able to use the rubrics in Blackboard for collecting their own data, but there will also be alternative ways to collect data. She added that the university will have to address the hiatus from collecting data that happened during the transition from the old program to the new PLUS general education program. Zhou asked if the GEC could do a sampling of courses and Birberick replied that the GEC should collect data on all of the courses, but within courses, instructors can do a sampling, especially in the larger sections. It was clarified that instructors should be collecting assessment on both SLOs identified for each course. Klonoski added that there many reasons why assessment is done. It’s not just to provide data to the HLC but to give students feedback and to make sure progress is made
within the program. Feedback can also be given to departments and faculty/instructors.

III. Old Business

A. Assessment Plan.
1. Faculty Development. Klonoski reported that the office of Faculty Development and Instructional Design will be adding the appropriate general education rubrics in Blackboard to each general education course, based on the SLOs for those courses. Faculty Development will also be running two workshops on using rubrics. February 1 will be a workshop on rubrics in general and February 17 will be a workshop on how to use electronic rubrics in Blackboard.

2. Assessment Plan. Klonoski reported that the final assessment plan for general education needs to go to the University Assessment Panel (UAP) in February. He is asking the GEC to look at the assessment plan and let him know whether or not they have any changes. The file can be found in the GEC OneDrive/Sharepoint group in the assessment folder. Klonoski explained that he prepared the draft using the UAP template. There are two mechanisms for collecting data. The first is that instructors may use any tool they choose; however, the GEC will need to develop a way to calibrate those tools with the rubrics being provided. The second method is to use the rubrics provided in Blackboard. A discussion followed on the rubrics and levels of proficiency. Klonoski is working on a guide that will help instructors with accessing the rubrics in their Blackboard courses. Zhou asked about how data will be aggregated and Klonoski replied that one step will be working with Blackboard and how data are aggregated there. Discussion followed on possible ways of calibrating other assessment tools with the rubrics. Klonoski reported that he will be sending out a communication soon announcing all the pertinent information regarding data collection for general education, including the Blackboard rubrics and the HLC interim report. He will also be making presentations on the same information to further inform the university community on the rubrics and general education assessment and how the GEC will be using the data. A discussion followed regarding how many courses need to be in compliance and what can be done if a course does not provide assessment data. Klonoski said that the GEC does have the ability to remove a course from the general education program, but that should be done as a last resort, and that courses who are struggling with assessment should be given a chance to get a system in place. Polansky asked if there was a broader, university-wide assessment plan that the general education program is a part of. Ray replied that there is no such plan in place at this time. Polansky suggested that if the GEC wants to get buy-in from departments and instructors involved in the general education program, they should know how their data will be used.

B. Pathways Coordinators. Klonoski reported that he has met with most of the coordinators and the pathway are in various states of thriving. Four pathways are running at a good pace right now. He added that another university that is also doing pathways has reduced their program from 10 to 4 in order to maintain a more robust system. Zhou asked if we can invite the coordinators to a GEC meeting and Klonoski replied yes. They should come to a meeting since they report to the GEC. Klonoski said it would be helpful if the GEC could give them a list of what they would like to know from the coordinators.

C. Publicizing Pathways/Student Feedback. Klonoski reported that no progress has been made so far on getting student feedback. However, the pathways have been publicized in a variety of ways. There are brochures on PLUS, which includes the new general education program and the pathways. He has also been speaking with the colleges and departments to find out how they are informing students of the pathways. And he will continue to provide advisors
with information on which pathways courses are being offered in the various semesters.

IV. New Business

A. AHRS 300, application for new non-Pathway general education course. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Quinlan, TO APPROVE AHRS 300 FOR THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE SOCIETY AND CULTURE KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN. Matuszewich said the assignments are appropriate for the SLOs they’ve selected. There was a brief discussion on the numbers of general education courses (up to 208 from the 144 that were in place when the program was redesigned) and is there a concern if there are too many. Klonoski responded that the pathways are being marketed to bring more students to the general education program at NIU, so more courses are an advantage for that. He added that the best courses will survive. Montgomery asked if AHRS 300 has a prerequisite and Smith replied that AHRS 200 is a prerequisite and that it is a general education course in the Society and Culture knowledge domain. A discussion followed regarding whether or not a course should be approved for the general education program if it has a prerequisite. It was noted that this has been discussed in the past and it was determined that this should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Matuszewich observed two perspectives. The first is to allow only lower-level courses that have no prerequisites. But if higher level courses are allowed, are freshmen and sophomores put at a disadvantage if they take those higher level courses; do they have the proper preparation? Montgomery suggested this be tabled in order to get more information from the school and to get more information on prerequisites in general education courses. Zhou said that if the purpose of general education is to have a well-rounded student who gets exposure to a number of disciplines, then allowing AHRS 300 with a prerequisite of AHRS 200, which is already a general education course, does not provide for a variety in the Society and Culture knowledge domain. If students choose AHRS 300 as a general education course, it means they have already taken AHRS 200 and would then have two courses from the same department/school. It was also suggested that the school explain the rationale for having a prerequisite for AHRS 300, what is the difference between AHRS 200 and AHRS 300, and what is the proportion of majors and no-majors who take AHRS 200. The motion failed unanimously. Smith will communicate the GEC’s questions to the school.

B. Revisions to PSYC 102. The proposal was discussed and some clarification of language was made. Matuszewich will send an updated proposal to Smith for the record. She also noted that the new faculty coordinator for PSYC 102 determined it would be better if there were different SLOs for the course; they would be able to do more assessment on the course. Quinlan made a motion, seconded by Montgomery, TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS TO THE SLOS FOR PSYC 102, PENDING THE REVISION TO THE PROPOSAL. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Catalog change from the colleges. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Quinlan, TO APPROVE THE CHANGE FROM COLLEGE OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Adjournment

Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Quinlan, TO ADJOURN. The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 2:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 16, 2017.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator