GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
236th Meeting
Thursday, March 23, 2017

MINUTES
Approved

Present: D. Gorman (LAS/ENGL/BC), B. Hunt (EDU/ETRA/BC), E. Klonoski (Ex-officio, Acting Associate Vice Provost), J. Kot (LAS/FL&L/BC), L. Matuszewich (LAS/PSYC), B. Montgomery (HHS/FCNS), M. Pickett (Advisors), A. Polansky (LAS/MATH/STAT), Quinlan (VPA/ART), D. Smith (Catalog Editor), P. Roberts (for A. Stich, EDU/LEPF), R. Subramony (Office of Assessment Services), L. Zhou (BUS/FINA)

Guests: Pathways Coordinators: A. Bah (LAS/SOCI), S. Marsh (BUS/MGMT), L. Vasquez (LAS/COMS), Y. Xie (EDU/ETRA)

The meeting was called to order by GEC Chair Zhou.

I. Adoption of Agenda. Matuszewich made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA FOR THE MARCH 23, 2017, GEC MEETING. Klonoski asked that the Pathways Minor discussion be moved up so the pathways coordinators in attendance may participate in the discussion. Motion passed unanimously as amended.

II. Approval of Minutes. Hunt made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 16, 2017, GEC MEETING. Motion passed with one abstention.

III. Introductions. Due to the presence of guests, introductions were made.

IV. Old Business

A. Assessment Plan. Klonoski reported that he and Zhou met with the chair of the Department of Geography regarding the rubrics. The main item of discussion was one that has been heard from other departments as well. Graduate assistants are teaching a lot of general education courses and they are unaware of what SLOs are and how to collect assessment data. More education is needed on SLOs and signature assignments. The GEC also needs to make a decision regarding sample size. They also talked about how can instructors be encouraged to participate in the assessment process. There’s a feeling across campus that many faculty and instructors already have too much they are required to do and doing assessment is not feasible. Klonoski said the GEC will have to work with those who are willing to participate and let that be the start and to try to develop momentum for a larger change on campus. Klonoski talked briefly about past data collection, which was minimal, and that anything collected going forward should be more robust. It is the hope that there will be enough data collected to show the HLC that NIU is making progress on assessing its general education program. Zhou said he agrees that it’s about quality versus quantity. Zhou reported that he also heard from the chair of the Department of Physics, who suggested...
modifications to the rubrics, and a brief discussion followed on that topic. Klonoski said that the rubrics can be customized as long certain elements remained fixed. Montgomery suggested that the GEC wait to see what we kinds of data is received before putting out a broader message that the rubrics can be modified.

Regarding the overall general education assessment plan, Subramony said that this could go to the University Assessment Panel (UAP) at their April 21 meeting. Klonoski said that more work needs to be done on the plan before it goes before the UAP. It was noted that presenting the plan to the UAP is an advisory process to help programs consider everything possible. Klonoski said one of the suggestions from the Office of Assessment Services was to set targets. However, when he consulted with a number of his colleagues at other universities, he found that none of their general education programs had set targets in assessment plans. Discussion followed regarding what, if any, suggestions from the Office of Assessment Services needed to be followed. It was decided that the GEC could incorporate any of those suggestions they felt were constructive, including adding targets that made sense, such as increasing participation in the pathways. Klonoski asked GEC members to respond to the list of suggestions from the Office of Assessment Services for the general education assessment plan. It was discussed that this will probably not be completed in time for the April 21 UAP meeting. Zhou will communicate this to the UAP and ask if they would like to see the general education assessment plan regardless.

Committee members discussed sample size. Polansky said that sample size depends on what the GEC wants to be able to do with the data. Montgomery said that the sample size needs to be minimal if the intent is to get buy-in and to get results. A sample size of 10 was decided on and this would be for all sections of all general education courses being taught. Zhou will communicate this with the chairs and ask them to relate it to the faculty responsible for data collection. It was also decided that the GEC needs to facilitate the assessment process over the summer with chairs and help them discuss the process with the graduate assistants who are teaching courses.

B. Pathways Coordinators. The pathways coordinators who were present gave reports on their activities so far. Marsh reported that her team met earlier this year to talk about how they were going do better integration across courses. She has made sure students know they are taking courses in her pathway; the information is included in all the syllabi. She plans to meet at the end of the year. Matuszewich asked about the time commitment. Marsh responded that in the beginning it took some time to get things organized, but now the hardest part is finding time for everyone to meet and to help them through the assessment process. She says her faculty meetings are organized based on the questions her pathway is addressing, but it’s too early to tell whether or not that is working. Bah said his group needs to meet, but the faculty are engaged in discussion. They are mostly sharing visions of how they see the pathway going forward. Bah was asked what percentage of the faculty teaching pathway courses are engaged and he replied that about half are wholly engaged. Marsh said that one of the challenges is working with instructors who are unfamiliar with the pathways. Vasquez added that she has similar problems, especially when working with graduate teaching assistants who aren’t familiar with the pathways. She is also organizing her pathways courses around the questions. Xie said it has been more difficult to organize by question, since only two courses in her pathway address one of the questions. For her, the instructors were concerned about what they needed to know and what kind of artifacts they needed to provide. They seemed to be open to using the rubric that has been provided to them. Discussion followed regarding what kind of assessment should be done this semester. It was clarified that the pathways instructors should try to participate in the current assessment process. It was also discussed that better education on how to do assessment for general education courses is needed. Roberts asked to what degree faculty have the ability to
alter the rubric. Klonoski replied that the rubrics can be modified, but there has to be common elements including four levels of proficiency and the third level needs to equate to what an NIU graduate is expected to achieve. Categories would stay the same but the language to describe the levels of proficiencies are adaptable. Bah suggested that to keep instructors motivated maybe a larger event could be planned and maybe there could be incentives for instructors teaching courses in the pathways. Kot asked if there has there been advertising done to students. Klonoski said the pathways are being communicated to students through advising and information sheets on each pathway will be provided to all the advisors on an annual basis. Marsh said that she cannot tell if students are taking the courses in her pathway to work on the pathway or just as a regular general education requirement and it would be helpful if the coordinators could get this information. Pickett gave the advisors’ perspective and that students enroll in general education courses based on their interests. But for some majors there is little flexibility to explore other areas of interest. It was clarified that the pathways are just a focus with a notation in the transcript. There is a draft of the proposal for a pathways minor (see discussion below). And if the minor gets approved, advisors would be able to see that with the degree progress reports. Pickett noted that not all students are required to see their advisors, so they won’t be getting information on the pathways that way. Klonoski said that there will be advertising done during orientation. Pathways coordinators were asked what the GEC can do to help them. Bah suggested getting chairs and advisors involved. Marsh would like a list of the pathways courses being taught each semester with the respective instructors. Klonoski said he can provide that information. Marsh would also like to know if a course isn’t being offered a lot so she can reach out to the chair. Xie asked if the GEC could contact instructors before the semester to alert them to their participation in pathways and their assessment obligations. Bah said that faculty are being asked to do more than ever without recognition, so he suggested that faculty be recognized somehow for teaching a pathways course. Matuszewich asked the coordinators if they would do it again. Bah said yes; he enjoys the principle behind it. The problem is coordinating instructors. Klonoski observed that since the pathways have just gotten started, that it will be better organized going forward.

C. AHRS 300. Smith reported that she heard back from the School of Allied Health and Professional Studies and AHRS 300 will not be a requirement in the program and the school is willing to drop the prerequisite of AHRS 200 if need be. Montgomery said that she noticed that other general education courses have prerequisites, so that should not be the issue for AHRS 300. Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Gorman, TO APPROVE AHRS 300 FOR GENERAL EDUCATION CREDIT IN THE SOCIETY AND CULTURE KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN. Motion passed unanimously.

V. New Business.
A. Pathways Minor. Klonoski gave an overview. In essence it’s 18 semester hours, which is consistent with many minors across the university. Students need to take at least three upper-division courses and six credits can count towards another minor or major. Marsh asked if every pathway would automatically be a minor and Klonoski said yes. Also required of the pathways minor is that students have to take at least one course from each knowledge domain, then three upper division course from at least two knowledge domains. Zhou asked what the motivation for the minor is and Klonoski replied that students said this was one of the most attractive features of the revised general education program as proposed by that task force. Students reacted favorably to the concept of their general education courses being more meaningful and being able to earn a minor while fulfilling their general education requirements was very appealing. Bah said this is a good thing and it would not involve additional resources. It was also noted that to make the minor possible, the pathway courses must be offered minimally every four semesters or they risk being removed from the pathway. Matuszewich said she has been told that all minors need to be housed in a
department and asked where would this new minor be housed. There is a concern there is no
advising with these interdisciplinary minors. What happens if a substitution is needed? She
added that most faculty agree to this conceptually, but there are concerns about the
implementation and administration of the minor. Klonoski responded that there are models at
other universities that can be looked to where a similar minor has been successful.
Montgomery provided some revisions to the proposal.

VI. Adjournment
Montgomery made a motion, seconded by Polansky, TO ADJOURN. The meeting adjourned by
acclamation at 2:25 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2017.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator