

GENERAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting

9 March 2006

Council Members Present: Bryon Clark (Chair), Betty Clay, Jim Cunningham, Jane Elder, Steven Emge, Dick Hackett, Brad Ludrick, Linda Kallam, Shannon McCraw, Steve McKim, John Mischo, Cherry Wilmoth

Council Members Absent: Gleny Beach, Debra Haley, Gene Hetzel, Nancy Hill, Sharon Morrison, John Topuz, Chip Weiner (*ex officio*)

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 2:00 p.m. The minutes of the previous meeting were considered. An inaccurate date in paragraph 4 of the previous minutes was noted and corrected. The second Friday in September is the 8th rather than the 15th. The Council unanimously agreed that the minutes should stand as amended.

The Chair passed out the summary of the Conference Committee meeting of 3-7-06 as well as notes from the 3-3-06 meeting. Linda Kallam and Dick Hackett, both General Education Council representatives to the Conference Committee, were asked to elaborate. Linda Kallam reported that the focus is currently on English reading and writing. The Math, Speech, and Computer Science requirements are on hold for the moment.

Included in the notes was a report of testing done in Feb. 2006 by Teacher Education Services. This test required a constructed response. The Chair felt that, since a constructed response test is at least 50% about the subject area, this is an inappropriate set of data for us to use for comparison purposes on reading and writing skills.

The Conference Committee did not wish to agree to a mandate of requiring that all students make a C or better in Gen Ed English classes. Instead, they proposed a pilot program for Eng 1113 that involved tracking for early intervention of students who are failing, as well as a requirement that students who do poorly go to the Learning Center for assistance. Failure to go to the Learning Center will result in an automatic zero grade on that assignment for that student. The Gen Ed Council members felt that that was perhaps more punitive than the student making a D in the class. There was also a question as to whether the students in the pilot program will be willing to go to the learning center, since those in classes not in the pilot program will not be so required. It was the opinion of John Mischo from the English Dept. that based on past experience probably many will not go and simply drop the class.

The issue of assessment measures of reading and writing proficiency were also taken under consideration. The Gen Ed Council members felt that several assessment techniques would be appropriate. In addition to class grades, we might want to mandate some sort of written paper. The Chair also offered to fund the ACT-CAAP writing essay at the end of the semester and see if those scores correlate with visits to the learning center, etc.

Concern was expressed regarding whether the university has the resources to ensure that every student make a C in (eventually) every class. There was also consideration of the broader implications of what this process would mean in relation to the generally accepted standards currently used in the classroom of the assignation of various grades. Some speculated that if we implement a pilot program, students may be inclined to take the English class at some other institution and transfer the credit in rather than taking part in our requirements.

Dick Hackett emphasized the overall importance of writing (or communicating) across the curriculum. Brad Ludrick wondered if it would be possible for the Councils to agree on an instrument to measure achievement such as the Junior Level essay used in Texas. It is administered when the student has completed between 45 and 80 hours. If the student does not pass, he/she must go back and re-take the class, even if he/she passed the class prior.

While it is imperative that a decision on the pilot program be made as soon as possible so that if accepted it can be put in place before enrollment for the summer and fall semesters commence, it was the general feeling of the Council that they needed time to consider all of the issues raised, even if that meant any changes might not be in place until a later semester. Steve McKim moved to table the issue until after spring break to give Council members time to consider the options. Brad Ludrick seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting will be held April 6, 2006, in M205 at 2:00. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.