Minutes
General Education Requirements Committee
Tuesday, 27 October 2020

Zoom - https://isu.zoom.us/j/99532797942?pwd=eFhjRlV3YTIwcVlNd3I0NjQ0czdlUT09
2:30-4:30 p.m.

GERC’s website: www.isu.edu/gerc/

Nawotniak, DeWayne Derryberry, Matt Wilson, Tayo Omotowa, Paul Cady, Taylor Neibaur
Ex-officio: Cindy Hill, Ann Hackert, Sarah Mead, Lisa Kidder, Abbey Hadlich, Carmen Febles (UCC)
Admin. Asst. Catherine Read
Guest: Jim Skidmore

1. Announcements –
   - Ann Hackert reported that Daniel McInerney, the NIOLA coach from Utah State University, plans to return to ISU virtually this spring to host another assessment workshop.
   - Welcome to GERC’s new ASISU rep, Taylor Neibaur, who is majoring in business management and outdoor education. Spencer Jardine explained a little of what the committee does and encouraged Neibaur to speak up during meetings and give his student perspective.
   - Carmen Febles mentioned UCC, Graduate Council and Academic Standards Council are working on a draft policy to create a framework for accelerated bachelor's/master's pathways that will allow up to 12 graduate credits to count toward both an undergraduate degree and toward a master’s degree to help them obtain the graduate degree a year earlier than usual. She encouraged members to inform their constituents of this framework and provide their input.

2. Council approved the Minutes for September 22, 2020

3. Program Review & Assessment updates – Ann Hackert: nothing further to report


5. Academic Affairs update – Cindy Hill

6. Gen Ed Summit debrief
   Hill reported Justin Stover in ISU’s History Department received the Objective 6 Gen Ed Instructor of the Year award. Format of the Gen Ed Summit was different this year than previously. Discipline Groups met several times before the Summit to discuss the learning outcomes for each Objective and think through potential changes. This approach worked quite well, resulting in well-thought-out changes to learning competencies.

   Summit participants discussed dual credit enrollment; concerns about such programs are widespread across the institutions and nationally. The Discipline Groups made several recommendations about how to address some of the concerns. One suggestion would be for the State Board Office (OSBE) to require high schools work with the college or university in their particular geographical region rather than statewide. Another idea was to create a Dual Credit Enrollment Summit similar to the Gen Ed Summit, and invite high school dual enrollment instructors across the state to get together with university and OSBE staff to work together to resolve some of the issues.

   Hill is working with Jonathan Lashley, OSBE’s Associate Chief Academic Officer, to obtain SBOE approval to implement some or all of the recommended changes to the Objective learning outcomes. Jardine concurred this year’s Summit format was more effective than in previous years. The Gen Ed Discipline Groups will continue to meet throughout the year instead of only once a year at the annual Summit. Online programs were not discussed as being specific to regions.
7. Unfinished Business:
      The ORC committee recommended all five learning outcomes be required for this Objective. The GEM discipline group made the same recommendation to SBOE at the last Gen Ed Summit. Unclear where the policy currently stands at the state level; it still appears to require only 4 of the 5 outcomes. Fulton, who is on the discipline group, mentioned there was some resistance against requiring all five outcomes for the Economics courses, but she didn’t remember the details of the difficulties. Most of the group felt strongly that all five outcomes should meet. Lin recalled a couple of years ago there was some question whether College of Education should be teaching Objective 6 courses, but she was unsure of the details of the concern. Skidmore reported the Objective Review Committee did not see any obstacles to implementing all five outcomes. Their overall impression they got from the Five-Year Reports they reviewed is that departments are indeed adjusting their assessment methods and processes as they review their assessment findings.

Continued debriefing discussion of Gen Ed Summit and discipline groups’ proposed revisions to the GEM Objective learning outcomes:

Jardine displayed the Objective 4 Humanistic and Artistic Ways of Knowing discipline group’s Executive Summary and their recommended changes to competencies for Objective 4. The proposed changes are more easily measured, and would help incorporate language courses more directly into the Objective. GERC members suggested additional changes to clean up ambiguities. The outcomes should fit the discipline, not the courses that have been slotted into the Objective.

Jardine pointed out how the Objective 5 Scientific Ways of Knowing discipline group streamlined the use and number of verbs in each competency to make it easier to measure students’ mastery of the activity.

Derryberry said his Objective 3 Mathematical Ways of Knowing discipline group met and revised details of the competencies. They reduced the number of verbs in the competencies and improved the language to make them easier to measure and assess. They also changed the rubric to eliminate ‘exceeds expectations’ and left it with ‘meets’, ‘partially meets’, and ‘fails to meet’ expectations. He commended his group’s chair for her ability to keep them organized and focused on accomplishing the task.

Fulton worked in the Objective 6 Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing discipline group. They wordsmithed some of the competencies. Then they discussed the rubric, which was the subject of some disagreement. The rubric’s headings are problematic, and the rubric’s purpose and use were unclear. None of the institutions are using it. A basic unanswered question is should the rubric be used to determine whether a course belongs in the Objective, or should it define the Objective based on a preordained list of courses? Does History belong in Social Sciences, or should it be in Humanities? Should there be a cap on how many courses be allowed in the Objective?

How to determine where courses belong: does the discipline belong in the Objective? Can the course be adequately assessed by the competencies? Cady reminded the purpose of general education is to give students some exposure to liberal arts so they end up with a well-rounded community member with a broader foundational perspective. But academics are driven more by the financial impetus behind decisions that are made than by what is best for students. Foreign languages have been sidelined because it benefits other departments, not because languages are not in demand or have lost value in society.

Jardine said Jonathan Lashley has been involved with the Open Educational Resources project. That has been equated to low-cost resources. Policy was to offer one section of each gen ed course with low-cost or free textbooks or class materials. There has been some push-back against this by the
institutions. OSBE is taking this issue up again; the policy will likely be revisited in the near future. The new Academic Officers at OSBE have a different philosophy than the previous leadership. Several other SBOE policies are under revision, too.

Jardine asked members whether they want to invite the GEM discipline group reps to GERC’s next meeting. Wilson suggested reaching out to the specific reps and offer them the choice of submitting a written summary or attending GERC’s meeting.

b. NWCCU Accreditation Report – Ann Hackert
ISU wants an analysis of what the numbers mean for the accreditation report and this might be something that comes out of the discussion
a. GERC and Core Themes Matrix
b. GERC Assessment Stats spreadsheet

Jardine displayed the assessment stats spreadsheet, and Read briefly explained how she compiled the data and from what sources.

c. GERC Subcommittee: Faculty Survey re: gen ed program and assessment – update
Members: Tayo Omotowa, Spencer Jardine, Abbey Hadlich, Jim Stoutenborough (Political Science)
Subcommittee has been working on a broad-based faculty survey regarding the Gen Ed program and Objectives, with an emphasis on obtaining feedback for Objectives 7, 8 and 9.

Jardine reported he emailed Jim Stoutenborough asking where he is with the survey and is awaiting his reply. The subcommittee will bring the survey to GERC once they finish their work on it.

8. New Business:
a. Process for Selecting ISU’s State Gen Ed Discipline Group Reps
Many of the current discipline group members have been serving since SBOE first formed the working groups. There is no established protocol for selecting replacements, ensuring smooth transfer of documents and knowledge from outgoing to incoming reps, parameters and time limit of terms, etc. Things to consider: staggered terms and longer term limits will help with continuity because of the time it takes for new reps to get up to speed and acquire the historical knowledge necessary for making informed decisions. This will be addressed more fully in a subsequent meeting.

9. Adjournment: 4:23 p.m.

Approved by GERC: February 1, 2021 via email vote
Accepted by UCC: February 4, 2021
Accepted by Faculty Senate: February 8, 2021
Accepted by Academic Affairs: February 16, 2021