Minutes  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Faculty Senate Meeting  
March 29, 2017


Call to order/Welcome/Announcements
Chair Jim Sanders called the meeting to order at 3:35 pm. Jim noted that the administrators involved with the graduate housing project will try to attend the April 26 meeting. If they are not available on that date, they will come to a meeting in the fall. [Secretary’s note: the April 26 meeting was cancelled for lack of agenda items, including unavailability of the administrators mentioned here. These administrators will plan to attend a fall meeting.]

Approval of minutes
At the time the meeting started, it was not clear that there was a quorum. Therefore, the minutes for the February 22, 2017 meeting will be circulated electronically for approval.

Listening Session with the GE Review Coordinating Committee
The committee was introduced by co-chair Larry Krissek, who reiterated the questions the committee was hoping to have answered (included on the handout in the meeting materials; also available at http://oaa.osu.edu/general-education-review). The following is a compilation of the comments made by members of the Senate.

- OSU’s motto is a great way to frame the General Education (GE). However, students don’t seem to recognize the motto, so it will be important to ensure that everyone at the university—faculty, staff, and students—understands what the GE is supposed to do for students.

- Analysis, synthesis, and the ability to critique are critical components. It would be good if students could be involved in this work at a higher level – so the idea of a tiered GE (some lower level requirements and some higher level) is exciting. Also, we need to develop language for finding connections across the curriculum.

- GE courses should be transformative experiences rather than merely vehicles for providing information. We need to value the expertise of the faculty teaching the courses. If we want students to value the GE, we have to offer qualitative experiences greater than what they can get at Columbus State or some other community college near their homes.
There is ongoing public debate about the value of science, and it’s clear that many students outside of science fields don’t understand its significance. Perhaps we could develop more cross-disciplinary courses that will be more valuable to students than, say Biology 1101 or similar courses. [Committee members noted that the question of scientific literacy has come up in many of the listening sessions they’ve held. They also noted that the new GE must be able to be delivered at the regional campuses as well.]

Students ask “why do I have to take these courses?” They don’t understand why the GE is important, so we need to do a better job of explaining it. [Committee members noted that students (and parents) first hear about the GE at orientation, but clearly that doesn’t make the kind of impression it should.]

Perhaps we could establish a standard for the “first year experience” for every student at the university. [Committee members noted that this is indeed something they are discussing.]

It’s troubling that many of our students don’t know some important basic facts, so it would be good to still have some kind of “core” of course work to provide this basic knowledge.

Interdisciplinary course work would be an exciting addition. [Committee member response: Some of the other models being considered use “themes” to make such work possible for everyone.]

We need to come up with a “label” that does not include the term “general.” We should create something that can flex and shift with time but that is also unique to the experience at OSU. We need to show our students the “gems” that are available to them here. [Larry Krissek noted that the notion of a “unique OSU experience” has come up in many of the other listening sessions as well.]

We should use information from first-year seminars and STEP to help determine what the GE should look like. The framework should utilize all the unique possibilities at OSU.

Additionally, many questions were raised, including:

Why do we need to move so quickly on this? It would seem to make more sense to be more thoughtful about it.

What are some of the other models you’re studying? [See the attached document.]

How can we possibly do this without taking into consideration the budget model? [Randy Smith noted that the goal truly is to define what the GE should be, and then the administration will make the necessary adjustments to allow us to move forward.]

Why are we looking at places like Washington State and Portland State, who are nothing like us, and whose students are very different from ours? [Committee member response: They’ve done GE review recently and have models very different from our current distribution model.]
• What becomes of the faculty accountability upon implementation? [Larry Krisek noted that there will still need to be a standard curricular review process.]

• In the end, are we just going to reshuffle the current course requirements, or are we truly making changes? [Randy Smith: This is a real review. We need for you to share your ideas with us. We also want to keep everyone in the loop as the review progresses, so please share your thoughts on how the communication process should work.]

• Are there models that involve more student-generated ways to achieve the things our students should be doing? [Committee member response: The institutions that use a thematic approach do some of that. Some also require portfolios. These ideas are part of the discussion that is beginning now.]

• Any “core” model could be controversial, so are decisions left up to departments? If so, won’t that just take us back to something like our current model? [Committee member response: The goal is to implement a university-wide model that is different from the one we have.]

• How will some of the ideas being considered work for transfer students? Would a tiered model work better for them? [Larry Krisek noted that some institutions have a different model for their transfer students. Randy Smith indicated that while we need to pay attention to this issue, we can’t let the Ohio Transfer Module dictate what is best for our students. We also need to get a better handle on what our students are actually getting in Grade 12 before they come to us.]

• How do we get faculty buy-in, when so many GE courses are taught by lecturers and graduate students rather than faculty?

• What kind of challenges will a new model present for on-line courses? [Committee members noted that on-line courses still have the same learning outcomes as in-class courses. We need to help faculty make better use of instructional designers and on-line resources.]

Meeting adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ellen Jenkins
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College of Arts and Sciences