

Minutes - GE Path – June 7, 2004
10:00AM –12:00 PM Schulz 1121

Attendance

Paul Draper (PD),
Scott Miller (SM)
Colette Brutocao (CB)
Kristin Daley (KD)
Elaine Sundberg (ES)
Tim Wandling (TW)
Suzanne Toczyski (ST)
Karen Brodsky (KB)
Sascha Von Meier (SVM)
Anne Greenblatt (AG)
Mary Ann Nickel (MAN)

PD began the meeting with welcomes and word that some support from the Provost for faculty participation this summer will probably be forthcoming. He articulated these goals for the summer's work:

- Write a philosophical overview of a future GE at SSU
- Develop a detailed proposal for the freshman-year experience (FYE) portion of the "PATH"
- Prepare an October GE Faire, which would showcase to faculty, staff and students the efforts of other institutions to develop rich GE programs
- Begin discussions on areas needed for faculty development to address the future GE program
- Develop teams of faculty, administrators, and staff to begin further design and articulation of the separate strands of the GE PATH (Point 2: expanded choices in 200-400-level classes; Point 3: a capstone course; Point 4: a writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) component, Point 5: faculty development component; Point 6: GE assessment mechanisms; Resources and SFR)

PD argued that the development of the "PATH" depends on the construction of a strong FYE program, so that's where he'd like to devote energy this summer.

PD articulated these larger questions for FYE:

1. What can we put in place in the FYE that will INSPIRE each of our entering freshmen to grow intellectually, academically, creatively, socially and emotionally?
2. What components of FYE are essential to launch students into a quality education, to find a calling within a major, and be prepared to meet the challenges that the major program requires?
3. We need to look at strong existing FYE programs, SSU's values, aligning with GE MGOs; we must assume the culture of GE will change but know that change causes fear and be prepared to surmount that. We should be as creative as we can be.
4. What would GE and EMT look like under one umbrella?

5. And what components of a first year curriculum do we need to include? E.G., remediation, Freshman O, advising, WAC, Title 5 & Exec Order 595 requirements.

The floor was opened for discussion.

TW raised the question of timeline. It was generally agreed that fall '06 was workable, although some thought was given to piloting only. ES suggested that by fall '06 we should have FYE, some sense of a capstone course, and a process in place for identifying courses for expanded 200-400 GE offerings and WAC courses.

SVM raised the problem of faculty intransigence (“there’s nothing wrong with GE”). PD acknowledged the challenge but cautioned about getting too caught up in this question—there’s a great deal of impetus, from our faculty retreat discussions, work through faculty governance bodies (EPC, GE, APC, Senate) internal data, from WASC, etc. ES argued for a strong philosophical overview of the need for change. MAN argued for a short fact sheet that could be pointed out to skeptical faculty. And she argued that the summer minutes should be posted and that we should seek other ways of being inclusive. AG seconded that there’s a lot of anecdotal evidence that students disparage GE and asked if a survey could be done. PD said that such a survey exists, and the data are in process. TW pointed out Ray Castro’s documentation of GE problems and volunteered to draft a document for Dolly Freidel articulating an approach to the 200-400-level GE expansion.

SVM raised the question of money and to what degree faculty recalcitrance is money-based. ES said that such concerns have been with us all along and that we’d have to deal with them. MAN argued that we need to be overt that GE change will change the financial picture. Voicing optimism, TW argued that deans & provost could take the lead in talking about economic impacts and their commitment to regulating at the school level to control enrollment fluctuations, provide faculty retraining, etc.

PD: if GE distinctions disappeared, would FTE stay the same within programs? CB said that that change would eliminate or at least diminish predictability; it’d be difficult the first couple of years, but that in the long run there could be parity.

PD moved the discussion by strongly arguing for the need to “dream big,” understanding that we may not get all of what we ask for. What can we make that’s pedagogically beautiful? How can we think out of the box and end up elsewhere than where we are now?

ES volunteered to develop a website housing all data on GE; this can be used by our task force as well as for programmatic analysis for FYE.

TW moved the discussion to FYE. He urged that the EMT portion of FYE should be structured so as to retain the connection between faculty and students throughout the students’ courses of study. And he urged the need for rich descriptions of everything we do (in freshman English, in FYE) so that advising can be improved. PD seconded this point, arguing for a need to put in place RTP criteria to reflect our valuing of GE and FYE in particular. MAN argued that all faculty should teach freshmen. TW seconded that the RTP process should be revised to reflect

that GE incorporates what we do in “scholarship.” MAN agreed. PD argued that the University should not only revise RTP to reflect the importance we place in GE and FYE but should also devise means of supporting faculty with pedagogies, assessment tools, release time, etc. ES mentioned that hiring will be focusing more and more on tenure-line hires and that specific criteria could be developed to reflect our GE focus.

TW raised the question of how the Professional Development Subcommittee and the Center for Teaching could help. SM, a member of PDS, shared that the PDS does indeed wish to help and that it does have a specifically faculty-development-related agenda for the 04/05 year. ES said that the Provost’s Strategic Planning Initiative is also involving PDS in its discussions.

PD asked the group to find another date to meet; the group agreed that we would meet on Wed. July 7th, from 10 to 1, with lunch, and then there would be a 1:30 to 3 pm meeting for those interested specifically in professional development issues.

The group shifted to specific dreams about FYE. MAN urged that the FYE include built-in means for faculty meeting and discussion. SVM, quoting Richard Feynman on the importance of being able to explain difficult concepts to freshman students, argued strongly for a program that highlights interdisciplinary connections and includes real-world applications like service learning so as to give the students a clear understanding of why it’s important to be able to “spell and add.” KB wished for a GE program that would inspire students’ research efforts as much as their major programs do.

PD presented one model for an FYE course that would encompass EMT, freshman English, and critical thinking, and learning communities. This model could contain the “university book” idea (in fall ’04 some FIG sections will be reading Nickel and Dimed and Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies), and would be centered on a large lecture/small seminar format. He noted that this is only one model, but offers it as a way to start thinking outside the box.

9am-12pm	Mondays	Wednesdays	Fridays
	Seminar: Learning community section (LCS) 15 students, 1 faculty, 1 SSP, 1 Peer Mentor	Large lecture: combining all LCS sections	Seminar: Learning community section (LCS) 15 students, 1 faculty, 1 SSP, 1 Peer Mentor
9-10:20	Read & discuss	450-1500 students inspiring talk	Lecture discussion
Break			
10:30-12:00	Advising sessions EMT topics Group building activities	SSPs meet w/ students peer mentor Section faculty meet	Writing, info comp & research feedback loop

CB argued that PD's plan was exactly the kind of out-of-the-box thinking we should do and said that preliminary budgeting estimates suggest that it could work.

KB argued for the need to weave in an info-comp element. PD agreed, suggesting that some sort of scholarly element should be included; the idea was seconded by others, who suggested that PowerPoint presentations, poetry, or many other genres could be invited. ES and MAN argued that such a course would offer an excellent place to begin a process of students developing an electronic portfolio. ST argued that the course should model the kind of integration of curriculum and "real life" that we hope they'll take away. And using the example of the Santa Rosa High ArtQuest project, ES argued that the curriculum should be involved in the community and perhaps culminate in artistic or other performances, etc. Such a plan would take great planning and substantial resources.

Next meeting was scheduled for July 7 10am-1pm (FYE issues) and 1:30-3:00pm (faculty development and GE Faire issue).

Meeting concluded at 12:10.