

General Education Council
Meeting Minutes
July 2, 2008
1:00 p.m.

Present: Byron Brown, Kristina Cragg, John Gaston, Brian Gerber, Sheri Gravett, Jane Kinney, James LaPlant

Guest: Louis Levy

Excused Absent: Anita Hufft, Kent Moore

1. The meeting began at 1 p.m. with introductions all around.
2. Discussion of the need for a General Education Council:
 - (a) SACS is beginning to examine General Education more closely and is concerned that institutions be able to document not only the aims of General Education but how well those aims are being fulfilled. Institutions must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing student learning and making changes based on those assessments.
 - (b) As the Board of Regents is considering making changes to the University System of Georgia Common Core Curriculum within the next few years, such a group will be needed to implement the BOR changes.
 - (c) The General Education Comprehensive Program Review taskforce (which reviewed VSU's core curriculum and prepared a report in 2006-2007) recommended such a council in its Executive Summary (available at <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/FacultyPoliciesandProceduresGovernance.shtml>).
3. Vice President for Academic Affairs, Louis Levy, charged the General Education Council with the following responsibilities:
 1. Oversee and maintain the integrity of VSU's core curriculum.
 2. Promote the importance and quality of core curriculum courses in VSU's colleges and departments.
 3. Provide guidelines, assistance, and review to departments that wish to propose new courses in the core curriculum.
 4. Establish and review policies related to the transfer of core curriculum courses.
 5. Collect, examine, and report on current assessment data on the core curriculum, in particular looking at how well student learning outcomes for the core curriculum are currently being met.
 6. Develop and implement an assessment plan specific to the core curriculum.

L. Levy also recommended obtaining a copy of the AAC& U publication, "The Art & Science of Assessing General Education Outcomes." L. Levy has already challenged department heads and deans to make sure all programs have up-to-date learning outcomes.

4. Discussion
In reviewing its charge, the Council decided that the immediate priority was to address points five and six. As a starting point, the Council discussed "Tentative Plan for General Education Assessment," submitted by Council member B. Brown. This plan proposes a phased-in schedule of assessments, the first focusing on required core curriculum classes with this phase being in place by spring 2010. Phase two should cover elective classes and be in progress during spring 2010. Phase three should focus on major degree programs and be in the planning stages after that. The council should be assess both instruction (are the eight VSU General Education Outcomes being addressed?) and student performance (are they learning the outcomes?)

After discussion, the Council decided to begin with Phase One. The Council will initially focus on required core classes as well as the most heavily enrolled of some of the major elective courses:

AREA A: ENGL 1101, 1102, MATH 1101, 1113

AREA B: Find out the most heavily enrolled and frequently offered PERS courses.

AREA C: ENGL 2110, 2120, 2130 and perhaps COMM 1100

AREA D: BIOL 1010/1020, 1030/1040

AREA E: POLS 1101, HIST 2111, 2112 and SOCI 1101, PSYC 2500

K. Cragg suggested that transfer students could be used as a control group. Since many of these transfer students will enter VSU with already completed core areas, Strategic Research and Analysis can compare this group with students who complete their core at VSU. Strategic Research and Analysis can also work with the Council to provide data to accompany the qualitative feedback from samples of student work and/or student portfolios.

5. Tasks for Next Meeting (TBA on July 23-26)

- B. Gerber and J. LaPlant will examine assessment models at other universities to see what might be helpful in developing a VSU plan.
- J.. Kinney, B. Brown, and K. Cragg will examine VSU's current core curriculum and the Core Program Review report for additional data, approaches, and information that might be helpful.
- S. Gravett will provide additional updated information for the Core Curriculum pages on the Academic Affairs website at <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/CoreCurriculum.shtml>.
- J. Kinney will draft a memo to all department heads to remind them that all syllabi for core courses should connect course assessments (papers, tests, presentations, etc.) to the appropriate General Education outcomes.
- K. Cragg will review available data sources. Other data can be gathered from the Regents' test results, portfolios, specific major tests, nationally-normed tests in specific fields, NSSE, FSSE, etc.
- John Gaston will examine faculty development ideas to help faculty present general education outcomes more effectively in their classes.

The Council will use email to share ideas and documents.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.