General Education Task Force Meeting Notes (8/18/11)

Present: Cliff Abbott, Lucy Arndt, Darryl Block, Susan Cooper, Heidi Fenci, Scott Furlong, Regan Gurung, Sue Mattison, Donna Ritch, Bryan Vescio, Georjeanna Wilson-Doenges

1. Scott asked if members of the Task Force thought the Chancellor should mention the roll out of General Education reform at Convocation. Some suggested that the Chancellor may want to mention the roll out would begin by asking for feedback from various groups. Scott will write up a short description of the Task Force’s work for submission to the Chancellor.

2. Darryl asked whether we had discussed how General Education reform would affect transfer students. Most thought that it would not be any different than what we do now with general education courses that transfer (credit evaluation process, petitions, etc.). One exception would be the first year perspectives course. Transfer students would not be expected to take one of those, but would have to take an additional three credits to meet the minimum credit requirement for general education. Discussion moved to the capstone courses. They would be embedded in the major and an interdisciplinary link to general education. The Task Force felt that a capstone course could be replaced by an experience, such as an internship, honors project, etc.

3. The notes from the last meeting were approved as is.

4. Subcommittee reports

A. Assessment subcommittee
   • Breadth assessment
     o The subcommittee felt that faculty are the experts in the area of breadth and asking faculty to assess content may be offensive
     o There may be some value to asking students about meeting the learning outcomes
     o The discussion focused upon the current CCQs and pros and cons of on line teaching evaluations
   • Perspectives assessment
     o Independent reviewers (other professors) review samples of students’ work using rubrics; do not assess every perspective each year; will end up with two evaluations of work (the instructor and an independent reviewer); perhaps the members of the domain subcommittees could perform the independent review
   • Skills assessment
     o Discussion centered around e-portfolios; questions arose as to how do you make students put assignments into the portfolio and how do we make faculty use them
   • Comments from the Task Force in general
     o We should create a General Education program where assessment is part of what we do; we are able to assess, examine results, and change the program according to the results
     o With the reorganization of CATL, this may be the time to incorporate assessment into the General Education program

B. Skills subcommittee
   • Subcommittee members developed a list of seven skills to incorporate into the reformed General Education program; discussion by the Task Force centered around the list; it was suggested that teamwork/leadership might be happening more in the major than in general education courses; some members suggested adding Creative Thinking as a skill
   • The subcommittee presented various models for skills that they discussed; the acceptable ones included faculty responsibility to focus on skills in a course and trust that the faculty will incorporate skill attention so that students develop skills over a range of courses
   • We may be able to introduce skill development apart from the General Education model
C. General Education Structure subcommittee

- Like the skills components, we may be able to introduce this apart from the General Education model
- There needs to be an ownership of the General Education program on campus
- Discussion focused on whether we would want a general education faculty; if so, who gets appointed, what are the criteria for appointment, etc.? 
- The structure of the General Education Council would be the chairs of the content subcommittees with two working groups, one for course approvals and one for assessment
- Handbook about General Education provided to all general education faculty

5. Learning outcomes

After Georjeanna pointed out that Scott already distributed a document outlining learning outcomes, the Task Force members discussed a framework for presentation of the learning outcomes. The framing language should include what things we value in a general education program that we want students to take away.

For example:

- Ethnic studies is an exploration of race and ethnicity from multiple perspectives within the context of the United States.
- Experiences that meet the ethnic studies requirement provide engagement with causes and the effects of stereotyping and racism, exposure to culture, and historical context.
  - Discussion about this language focused on UW-System definition of ethnic studies course

Scott gave out assignments to individuals to work on the framing language for the learning outcomes:

- Natural Sciences - Heidi/Susan
- Fine Arts- Kevin/Bryan
- Humanities - Bryan/Andy
- Social Sciences - Tim/Georjeanna
- Ethnic Studies - Cliff/Donna/Ray
- Global Studies – Lucy/Derryl
- Sustainability – John/Lucy
- Interdisciplinarity – Scott/Derryl/Ray
- Critical thinking – Debbie/Sue
- Quantitative reasoning – Susan/Sue
- Communication skills – Cliff/Georjeanna
- Problem solving – Cliff/Heidi
- Creative thinking – Bryan/Kevin
- Information literacy – Donna/Andy

6. Communication with the units

Scott drafted a memo to the unit chairs with a brief description regarding the General Education model. He asked the unit leaders to engage in a discussion with the faculty. At least one person from the Task Force should attend a unit meeting to ask very specific questions and to clarify any misconceptions about the information. Lucy, Bryan, and Cliff volunteered to attend unit meetings. Kevin and Tim were also nominated by Scott.