

General Education Committee
Plymouth State University
Meeting Minutes
9 September 2013

Meeting called to order: 2:34 pm

In attendance (voting): Pat Cantor, Jeremiah Duncan, Sandra Gamble, Alex Herbst, Jim Stiles, Jason Swift, David Zehr

In attendance (non-voting): Mary Campbell

Absent: none

Vacant: sabbatical replacement for one voting position (Elliott Gruner, who has one year remaining in his elected position to the Committee, will be on sabbatical for the year; a replacement has not yet been appointed by the Faculty Speaker), non-voting observer position, one student representative position

Guests: none

Recorded in approximate order of discussion:

I. Introductions

- Pat Cantor and Sandra Gamble are new, elected members of the Committee. Committee members both new and old introduced themselves
- Alex Herbst, student representative to the Committee, noted that he will be presenting the results of the Student Survey of General Education, which was conducted in the Spring, 2013 semester, at the next Committee meeting (Sept 23).

II. Discussion of Electing a Chair and Distribution of Duties

- The Committee is beginning the semester without an elected Chair. There was a call for volunteers or nominations to the Chair position. There were none. Members noted reluctance to serve as Chair due to the significant duties of the position, as well as the fact that most members of the Committee are un-tenured. Some noted that they would be willing to serve as Chair in the future.
- Pat Cantor asked what the duties of the Chair were, and discussion followed. The most significant duties of the Chair were described as calling and setting the agenda for meetings, coordinating the process of initial course and sunset renewal applications, and sitting on the Faculty Steering Committee. A discussion followed about ways to distribute the workload of the Chair:
 - Currently, the application and review process is done almost entirely through email, which places a heavy burden on the Chair to coordinate. A suggestion was made to develop a Moodle site through which applications could be collected and reviewed. Jeremiah offered to contact Justin L'Italien to discuss the use of Moodle for this purpose, and if appropriate, have a Moodle site established. Committee Members would be given "teacher" access, while faculty and possibly administrative assistants could be given "student" access to allow them to upload application documents. A motion was made to pursue the use of a Moodle site for course applications and review. Motion passed 7-0-0-0. Pat volunteered to discuss this possible change to the submission and review process at the next Chairs' Meeting.

- It was noted that the current application system involves an “Early Review” process, as well as a “Standard Review” process. For Early Review, applications must be received 2 weeks before a Committee meeting, Committee members review the applications via email, and department chairs (or their representatives) of departments having courses that do not pass in this process must attend the next Committee meeting to discuss the course. For Standard Review, applications must be received a week before the Committee meeting, and department chairs (or their representatives) are required to attend the Committee meeting. There was a discussion about how this system seems to be somewhat cumbersome and places an undue burden on department chairs and the Committee. It was suggested that the “Standard Review” option could be eliminated to streamline the application process. Jason volunteered to draft a potential change / motion to the submission procedure. Pat volunteered to discuss the elimination of the Standard Review option at the the Chairs' Meeting.

III. Discussion of Using Closed Ballots for Course Application Voting

- The Committee was reminded that a motion was presented and passed at the May 13, 2013 meeting requiring votes at Committee meetings regarding the approval of course applications (both initial and sunset renewal) to be conducted using closed ballots. Jason volunteered to develop the voting form.

IV. Discussion of Requirement for Assessment in Course Applications

- The Committee discussed the changes to the course application process to require an assessment plan and submission of collected assessment data. It was noted that a lot of clarification about the new requirement is needed, especially for Chairs and others who are preparing applications. Clarification is also needed regarding exactly when the requirements go into effect for both initial course applications and sunset renewals. It was noted that some form of a repository is needed for the collection and organization of data at the Committee level. There was a discussion about the need for more well-defined learning outcomes for General Education—currently, ambiguity of these outcomes is making assessment somewhat difficult. The Committee should work to define learning outcomes related to the “skills” of the program. The suggestion was made to consult the “Understanding by Design” model in the development of learning outcomes.

- The suggestion was made to review the application forms for the purposes of trying to streamline the application process and clarifying what is needed for assessment. A question was raised as to the status of an updated form the Committee developed to include assessment information and requirements. No one was sure whether this form had received final approval from the Committee and was now available to the faculty.

V. Further Discussion of Eliminating Standard Review

- The Committee returned to the discussion of eliminating the Standard Review option for course applications. Mary Campbell spoke to the history of the two options: initially only Standard Review was available, and then Early Review was added in May 2007 in order to create a more streamlined process. There was some question about what the downside of eliminating Standard Review would be—the only one offered was that the last deadline for course applications would occur one week earlier in the semester, which would be Nov 25 this semester. Mary Campbell noted that 117 courses will be potentially applying for sunset renewal this semester. The Committee discussed the possibility of adding another meeting after the last official meeting of the semester, possibly during Finals Week or January, to allow for review of a large number of applications that are expected at the last deadline. The Committee also agreed to stick to the last

official, published deadline of Dec 2 for submissions, regardless of if the Standard Review option is eliminated.

VI. Discussion of Waiver Sunset Renewals

- A Committee member asked about the number of waiver sunset renewals that would be expected this semester. It was noted that a number of them need to be submitted by this October and will expire in May, 2014. However, departments were not notified about the impending expiration of waivers, so all waivers that would have expired were granted an automatic 1-year extension to May, 2015. Thus, the next round of waiver sunset renewal applications are all due Oct 6, 2014.

VII. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

- Minutes from the May 13, 2013 meeting were discussed and a motion was made to accept them. Motion passed 5-0-2-0

VIII. Election of Chair

- The discussion returned to the need to elect a Chair. Pat Cantor was nominated and accepted the nomination. The Committee voted 7-0-0-0 to elect Pat Cantor as the Chair.

IX. NEASC Update

- A Committee member asked about the status of the NEASC accommodation renewal process. The NEASC committee is expected to visit Plymouth State University in November. The review document received many final edits over the summer and is now in the hands of a professional document editor.

X. CLA Update

- David Zehr reported that the USNH Board of Trustees has mandated that Plymouth State University administer the Collegiate Level Assessment (CLA) test this year. Both UNH and Keene State were already planning to administer the exam, and PSU gave the test last year with inconclusive results. The Provost has agreed to hire a graduate student to oversee the administration of the test, which will involve the testing of 100 students in the fall semester and 100 graduating seniors in the spring semester.

The following Committee members volunteered to take minutes at meetings for the rest of the semester:

- Sept 23: Jim Stiles
- Oct 28: Alex Herbst
- Nov 25: Sandra Gamble
- Dec 9: Jason Swift

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 3:58 pm.

The General Education Committee meets on the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 2:30 to 4:00 pm. The next meeting of the Committee will be September 23, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeremiah Duncan, Scribe