

## **Final Report of Gen Ed Assessment Subcommittee, Spring 2009**

- I. Good News

In general, the General Education Survey of Graduating Seniors from 2002 through 2009 suggests that students believe that the General Education objectives are being achieved *and* are important.
- II. Concerns
  1. The Gen Ed subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee was disbanded a few years ago.
  2. There has been no substantive assessment of the Gen Ed curriculum since semester conversion.
  3. Disciplines rarely assess their Gen Ed courses in any substantive or consistent way.
  4. Catalogue language suggests some inconsistencies in how UMM is approaching the Gen Ed curriculum.
  5. The Gen Ed goals as they are currently stated are not very measurable, and it's difficult to gauge whether individual courses are actually meeting Gen Ed goals.
- III. Proposals (in addition to continuing this conversation next year)
  1. The ASLC needs to continue to work in tandem with Jeff Ratliff-Crain and his office.
  2. The campus needs to revisit the language used to describe the Gen Ed goals in the UMM catalogue and elsewhere and revise accordingly:
    - a. The descriptor (Ex. "Human Behavior, Social Processes, and Institutions") needs to more closely match the associated designator (Ex. "SS").
    - b. The language needs to more consistently reflect whether we imagine Gen Ed goals/outcomes as thresholds students must meet (and are thus measurable) or as a steady growth in knowledge (which is less measurable). The current UMM approach seems to be the latter, though the catalogue language on p. 57 seems to contradict this idea ("UMM courses designated as appropriate for meeting general education requirements are those which, if passed successfully, demonstrate the student's competency in a given skill or area").
  3. We need to get a better sense of how *faculty members* think the Gen Ed program is working. This is one step in Jeff's 4-part plan for Gen Ed assessment and will likely get started next year.
  4. The tools used to assess the Gen Ed program campus-wide can and should be improved as follows:
    - a. Senior survey questions should not address an entire Gen Ed goal at one time if that goal has multiple aspects as, for example, Foreign Language does. The Foreign Language Gen Ed goals are (1) "to develop some fluency in the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a second language" and (2) "to develop . . . critical insight

into another culture.” Students should be asked to address these goals separately.

- b. Senior survey questions need to be revised to match the key on the results (or vice versa). For example, “extremely important” is not an option for the “importance” question but is listed on the reports as one. In the actual survey, 5 is designated as “very important.”
  - c. Senior survey answer options need to be revised to more effectively distinguish between, for example, “quite important” and “very important.”
5. The campus as a whole needs to reconsider:
- a. Whether all courses must have a Gen Ed designator, especially upper-level courses for which the prerequisite has the same Gen Ed designator as the course itself (committee members do *not* believe every course should be required to have a Gen Ed designator).
  - b. Whether courses can serve more than one Gen Ed need (even if students can ultimately only count a course toward one of those Gen Ed goals).
  - c. Whether it would be worthwhile to revive the Gen Ed committee that was disbanded a few years ago.
  - d. Whether we should add separate Gen Ed questions to the end-of-term course and instructor evaluations whether appropriate.
  - e. Whether we should add a space on the ECAS form for new courses that requires faculty to justify the particular Gen Ed designator chosen for the course.
6. We (the ASLC) need to provide more specific direction to disciplines about what they need to do (and when) in regards to Gen Ed assessment. Among other things, questions to be addressed should include:
- a. Which are your Gen Ed courses?
  - b. How do they meet the specific Gen Ed goals?
7. We should continue the work of this committee *after* receiving individual discipline reports about Gen Ed assessment.