

General Education Committee

Minutes for April 17, 2002

Members Present: Alison Feldt (Chair, FA), Steve Reece (HUM), John Day (IGS, Associate Dean), Naurine Lennox (SAS), Jill Dietz (NSM), and Niels Knutson (Voting Students).

Guests: Professors Carolyn Anderson, Joan Hepburn, Bruce Nordstrom-Loeb, and Mary Titus

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:22 pm.

Minutes for the April 3, 2002, meeting were approved without changes.

Announcements:

The Chair announced an update on the monitoring project.

Courses numbered BE 1-200: the 31 who have not responded are being followed;

Courses numbered BE: 201-400: the 47 who have not responded are being followed;

Courses numbered GE 401-600 will be sent out by Friday, April 26th.

Further monitoring will be deferred to the next academic year.

Kristy will contact Katherine Baker to determine procedure for changes and discrepancies that have been noted in the returned surveys.

The Chair drew the committee's attention to the Final Report to FIPSE on the ORC Project prepared by Jo Beld. She asked members to consider whether the committee wants to make a statement regarding the conclusions and concerns in the report.

The Chair announced the need to consider two student petitions during today's meeting in addition to the business on the agenda.

The Chair announced that some of those invited to talk with the committee about MCS-D intend to come to the meeting today.

The committee:

Approved **IS208: Geometry and Culture** GE #849 for MAR and MCS-G.

Approved **Psych 126: Investigative Explorations in Psychology** GE #850 for NSL.

Approved **CS172: Principles of Computer Science** GE #851 for MAR.

Accepted the Music Department's request to drop ALS-A attribute from **Music 223: Composition I** GE #45, which is a "major's course" That no longer fits the guidelines for ALS-A. Rationale from Department Chair Dan Dressen, Associate Dean of the Fine Arts Charles Forsberg, and professors Hamlin and Mahr, who teach the course was reviewed.

Approved a student petition to complete WRI during Term in Asia. (Professor Mary Titus).

Postponed decision on a student petition to receive retroactive ALS-L credit for the course "Representation of Women in Film" taken as part of the Lancaster Semester. Review of course materials indicates that the course does not meet the ALS-L guidelines.

The committee discussed the guidelines for MCS-D with expert guests Anderson, Hepburn, Nordstrom-Loeb, and Titus. Chair Feldt opened the discussion by asking whether "these guidelines are true to what we (the faculty) want students to learn" about multiculturalism in the United States. The language of Guideline #1 is:

"1.The Multicultural Studies component focuses on the diversity of culture and experience in U.S. society which grows out of racial, gender, or ethnic differences. Such diversity is best illustrated by components which explore the way in which the group(s) considered have an experience and culture which are substantially different from that of the dominant groups in U.S. society." <<http://www.stolaf.edu/committees/gec/Master.htm#MCS>>

This year as the committee reviewed proposals requesting MCS-D, it became aware of ambiguities in the guidelines and even potential confusion with the MCS-G A clear focus on the purpose of the MCS requirements may help to differentiate the "G" and "D" attributes.

It seemed to be agreed that studying interesting cultural differences is not sufficient to meet the spirit of the attribute and that the focus of the attribute (course) will be a group or groups that exemplify difference and are systematically stigmatized, marginalized, and oppressed in their relationships with the dominant society; that the approach of the course will lead students to understand:

Institutionalized oppression, marginalization, inequality, and exclusion.
Ascribed identity vs. achieved identity,
Systematized injustice and uses of power, stereotyping, and prejudice,
Resistance vs. victimization,
Celebration and creative responses of a people to oppression,
and to understand the commonality of human experiences despite difference.

To be considered appropriate for the course, the position of the other must be multigenerational and long term. From such an approach come hope and the ability to work for continuing change-to build these disparate parts into a whole.

In the U.S. these themes are most likely exemplified by groups that are named in the guidelines-Asian American, African American, Hispanic American, and Native American. Should other groups, such as Arab Americans, be included as well? Can groups such as the aged, physically disabled, blind, and deaf be included?

Gender is currently included in the guidelines. Is it a separate but related issue that could better be addressed in an additional component? On the other hand gender issues might be described more richly in the current guidelines.

Would a full course to meet this attribute be more in keeping with the College's commitment to diversity? Does a "component" demonstrate the degree of commitment to this subject matter that is desired in the curriculum?

Could separating race and ethnicity from gender in two separate requirements and creating a gender and sexuality attribute (which would require similar study of men, women, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons) be important to the college's support of diversity content in the curriculum?

Consideration of the MCS guidelines will continue.

Meeting adjourned at 4:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Naurine Lennox
Secretary Pro Tempore