

General Education Council Minutes
September 27, 2013

In attendance: Leanne Frost, Great Falls College; Mike Havens, MSU Billings; Nancy Hinman, University of Montana; Jessica Hopkins, Flathead Valley Community College; Tia Kelly, Helena College; Tasneem Khaleel, MSU Billings; Ron Larsen, Montana State University; Norton Pease, MSU Northern; Garth Sleight, Miles Community College; Lynn Stocking, Missoula College; Chip Todd, Montana Tech; Karl Ulrich, UM Western; Nadia White, University of Montana; Karin Janssen, OCHE; Brandi Foster, OCHE.

Special Guest: Carmen Taylor, Aahniih Nakoda College

Review of website/searchable database: Karin demonstrated the online database of courses searchable by campus and by academic area which are part of the MUS Transferable Core. Karin is the only person who can make changes to the database but access to searching is granted to the public.

A good discussion followed regarding the need to have course syllabi available. It was determined that the word syllabus is probably misleading and that what is necessary is a list of outcomes, course description, topics and any pre-reqs or co-reqs. Texts and evaluation methods are nice, but faculty can contact each other regarding these types of specific details.

*Karin will send the URL to the committee

Report on LEAP Conference: Jessica and Lynn debriefed the council on their attendance at the AACU LEAP conference in June. Montana is not an official LEAP state, although some campuses do use the LEAP essential learning outcomes and high impact practices.

The LEAP outcomes were not officially adopted by the General Education Council and so are not accessible through our website. If more information is wanted see www.aacu.org under LEAP.

Lynn emphasized the need to get the public and campuses talking about the quality of general education, to identify pathways for students to move in and out of general education and understanding the difference between liberal and practical education (although there are not as many differences as one might think). She mentioned the practices of using The Degree Qualifications Profile and said that this is similar to the “tuning” process that is being started at the two-year campuses with degree and program alignment.

Jessica mentioned the popular book resource entitled “Why do I have to take this class?” as a way to communicate to students the purpose and importance of general education. She also discussed some assessment techniques that were shared at the conference. One school offered a \$2000 scholarship for top student essays about their general education experience (this idea came from Rebecca Karoff at University of Wisconsin, rkaroff@uwsa.edu). The essays helped students tell the story of the importance of the general education curriculum.

Communication. Brandi reminded the Council that part of our role is to communicate the MUS Transferable Core and its importance for students to their respective campuses and throughout their other applicable networks. Jessica and Brandi recently presented at a state-wide conference for college advisors and it was clear that there is still a lot of misunderstanding about the Core. It is crucial that

students and advisors (faculty and professional) know that the Core is an option and how to determine if it is the best option for them. All members were encouraged to go back to their campus and look for ways this could be communicated. Brandi offered OCHE's assistance in presenting on the Core to any campus or organization.

A good discussion was then had on general education assessment and assessing the MUS Core. Brandi asked the question. "What do we want to report back to the Regents regarding the Core and what the Council does?"

The need for good data on the actual use of the Core was identified as a good place to start. Mike H. suggested that requirements for NWCCU accreditation be used to communicate effectiveness of campus general education programs to the Regents.

The Council decided to assign a few members to work on an assessment sub-committee to determine if something more should or could be done. Members of that committee are Chip Todd, Tia Kelly, Nadine White, Tasneem Khaleel and Carmen Taylor.

Action Item: Brandi will send out an email to this group to get them in contact with each other and they will report back to the Council.

Individual Campus Presentations on MUS Core course submissions.

Flathead Valley Community College: No significant changes. May come next time with a course entitled the Economic Way of Thinking. Discussed humanities assessment and use of common rubric on campus.

Great Falls College: Added Physics.

Helena College: No changes to core. Added "Our Physical World".

Miles Community College: New courses included NRSM 240 Ecology, ANSC 256 & 255 Functional Anatomy of Animals. Some CCN updates necessary.

MSU Billings: Campus core was changed from 37 to 31 credits with only one writing course now being required and a combining Social Sciences and History. This is the first semester so the impact on the Social Science area is not yet known. Math updates are needed for CCN including M 122 College Trig and in the music area.

MSU Bozeman: The last major update to their campus General Education program was in 2004. They have re-written the objectives to develop a more rigorous assessment process. Gallatin Valley now offers the AA/AS degree.

Montana Tech: No changes. Chip did bring up the fact that Tech requires two math courses in its campus core and there have been some students with documented math anxiety who have become a challenge to this requirement. The Council discussed the process for identifying accommodations on their campuses and the need to follow ADA which allows for maintenance of course/program rigor and content. Members offered support to Chip in identifying the best way to help students and yet maintain the course outcomes.

MSU Northern: Their Academic Senate is reviewing a proposal on changes in the core at the present time. Once these changes are approved, Norton will let us know it's official.

University of Montana: Courses are up to date. They are starting their review of new submissions for their campus core on 9/27 (today). The review of current courses cycles on a 3 year basis. There are recommendations for changes in the language requirement on their campus which would impact some students. Missoula College uses both UM GER and MUS core as general education guidelines in support of student specific needs. Students at Bitterroot College can earn an AA through face to face and on-line courses.

UM Western: Their General Education program is 31-32 credits and they use LEAP for their assessment. Currently they have hired a consultant to help with this as Brian Price, former Associate Provost in charge of assessment, has recently left. Because of the block delivery, students can finish the requirements in one year if desired.

Dawson CC: representatives were not available.

Aahniih Nakoda: Campus General Education program is 30 credits including 3 credits in Native American Studies, 3 credits in local culture and 2 college writing courses.

Future meeting: March or April of 2014 will be the next face to face meeting. A survey will be sent out to determine the best time and location.