General Education Council
Minutes: Monday, April 18, 2011
2:30-3:30 p.m.
Center for Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship


Absent: L. Gilpin, B. Lee, C. Town, J. Zhang, B. Joyner, S. Zerwas

Jake welcomed everyone and suggested that sub-committees meet next week and the Gen Ed Council reconvene the week after. He then invited reports from each of the three subcommittees.

Policies, Procedures & Communications Subcommittee (PPCS) report:

Jake reported that this subcommittee had exchanged documents, met, and agreed on the following ideas for each dimension of their responsibilities.

Policies:
1. Assessment must be formally incorporated into the university’s normal business practices and structures.
2. Assessment should have centralized oversight, but decentralized execution.
3. General education outcomes should be assessed across multiple programs and at multiple points in time.

Procedures:
1. Propose to the Senate the establishment of a standing committee for the assessment of general education outcomes. (i.e. Make the GEC a standing committee of the Senate.)
2. This committee would provide the university-level oversight needed to ensure outcomes are routinely assessed and that assessment results are used to improve the curriculum deployed to achieve those outcomes.
3. While it is envisioned that college/departmental faculty would conduct that actual assessments, the committee would need to design and implement mechanisms and formats for collecting and disseminating assessment results. Because several assessment activities are already in-progress, we anticipate using this year for observation and learning in order to have the needed mechanisms/formats in place next year for on-going use.

Communication:
1. As a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, the activities of the assessment committees would be routinely incorporated in the Senate Librarian’s report.
2. In addition, the committee’s responsibilities in the Senate Bylaws should include an explicit requirement to conduct an informative and educational university-wide “Assessment Day” at least once each academic year.

Curriculum Subcommittee (CS) report:

Heidi reported that the CS focused on consideration of what General Education (GE) means for Georgia Southern. They observed that the list of GE learning outcomes created at the time of semester conversion was more extensive than the single learning outcomes specified by the Core Council for each area of the core curriculum. So although they recognize that the latter list is more current and has been approved by the University System of Georgia (USG), they view it as being perhaps a minimum subset of what Georgia Southern’s GE outcomes should be. They also expressed concerns
that some faculty may be resistant to their perception that the GEC is one more group telling them what they need to do.

Assessment Subcommittee (AS) report:
Fred reported that the AS began by focusing on assessment within the sciences. Based on recommendations and plans laid out by the Core Council, the AS took steps to implement the use of the Madison Assessment in several science courses. They found the science faculty to be quite receptive and they have so far scheduled the assessment to be taken by 255 students currently enrolled in one geology, one physics, one astronomy, two biology, and three chemistry sections. This sample of students will include freshmen through seniors in a variety of majors.

A general discussion followed the subcommittee reports.
Kathy Albertson clarified relevant timeframes by explaining that we are on a five-year cycle for assessment in general, to include general education. However, in response to SACS expectations, we need to demonstrate effective assessment activities for our core curriculum learning outcomes within the next year or two. The committee discussed the challenge of reconciling the various initiatives and documents related to core curriculum and general education that have been created over the years. Kathy confirmed that most, if not all, of these were responses to different requests or directives emanating from the USG and that the Provost’s Office and Deans’ Council were trying to find ways to streamline and consolidate. Jake cited the number of directives over the years as evidence of the need for a standard structure/process that will make assessment part of our normal business practices.

Based on the reports and discussion, the committee constructed the following list of primary activities that need to be pursued and the subcommittee that should take the lead in planning how and when they may be accomplished.

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<th>Activities</th>
<th>Subcommittee</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Propose creation of a standing committee of the Senate to oversee assessment of GE outcomes.</td>
<td>PPCS</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Consider what, if anything, should be included in a more current, comprehensive statement of GE outcomes, beyond the approved outcomes for our core curriculum areas. (This should help establish more clear, distinct definitions and avoid future duplication of effort in response to ad hoc initiatives.)</td>
<td>CS</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Track assessment of the core curriculum learning outcomes. (One embedded aspect is to include a means of monitoring the status of assessment for each outcome. Another is to address the need for assessment data to be easily accessible from the university’s standard course management system.)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Get/keep assessments going.</td>
<td>AS</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>“Close the loop”, i.e. ensure assessment results are used to make program improvements.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Facilitate cultural education. (Help faculty understand the evolution of assessment activities and the importance of their on-going roles. Help reduce the perceived threat by understanding that the goal of assessment is program improvement, not faculty or student evaluation.)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Facilitate integration of and sharing among the different assessment activities accomplished throughout the university in response to the standards and expectations of multiple professional and accrediting agencies.</td>
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It was agreed that for the time being, the GEC will continue alternating weeks between meetings of subcommittees and meetings of the entire GEC. Consequently, the next meeting of the GEC will be scheduled for the week of May 2-6, with the intervening time used by subcommittees to pursue the activity list shown above.

Next Meeting: May 2 @ 10:00 am in the CTLS, 1st floor of the Library