

Agenda

General Education Ad-Hoc Committee/General Education Assessment
Subcommittee Joint Meeting
Arkansas Tech University
February 13, 2009
2:30 pm, SGA Senate Room

Call to Order

Approval of the Minutes

Old Business

Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees approved creation of General
Education Standing Committee

New Business

Report from Carey Roberts

Questions?

Next meeting of General Education Committee

Adjournment

**The Minutes of
THE AD HOC GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
OF
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY**

The Ad Hoc General Education Committee and the Assessment Committee met Friday, February 13th at 4:00 p.m. in Doc Bryan SGA Senate Room. The following were present:

Ad-Hoc General Education Members:

Dr. Tim Carter	Dr. Trey Philpotts
Dr. Peter Dykema	Ms. Karen Riddell
Dr. Ruth Enoch	Ms. Annette Stuckey
Dr. Robin Lasey	Dr. Kim Troboy

Assessment Committee Members:

Dr. Jan Jenkins
Dr. Brenda Montgomery
Dr. David Roach
Dr. Carey Roberts

Absent from the Ad-Hoc General Education Committee:

Dr. Hanna Norton

Call to Order:

Dr. Lasey called the meeting to order and asked for action on the minutes of the November 19, 2009 Ad-Hoc General Education Committee meeting. There being no amendments or corrections, motion by Dr. Dykema, seconded by Dr. Philpotts, to approve the minutes as distributed.

Old Business:

Dr. Lasey informed everyone that the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees has approved the creation of the General Education Standing Committee as of Fall 2009. The Ad-Hoc committee will continue to exist until May with the current members. When elections for standing committees in Spring are done, members will be elected based on the proposal that went through Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees. Dr. Roberts stated that the Assessment General Education Sub-Committee would now be abolished.

Report from Assessment

Dr. Roberts distributed a Report on General Education Assessment to the committee and gave a brief history of what had been done thus far. Dr. Roberts began by explaining that the idea for the General Education Committee was first introduced by Dr. Eldon Clary at the April 11, 2008 Faculty Senate meeting as a need for the Higher Learning Commission site visit that will be in March of 2011.

Dr. Roberts informed the committee that due to the lack of a committee, the General Education goals had reached an unmanageable number; at one point being as many as 35 or 36. The Assessment Committee, along with the Faculty Senate and many faculty members, has now broken these down to the current six goals.

Dr. Roberts stated that when the State of Arkansas decided to rescind the mandate that required all rising juniors to take the CAAP exam, which was the primary source of student assessment at Arkansas Tech, it was decided that a committee be formed to figure out how best to assess the general education of the students for both the Russellville and Ozark campuses. Dr. Roberts also reminded the committee that a member from the Ozark campus will be selected at a future date to serve on the General Education Committee and that after elections take place for the elected members of the committee, some members will be appointed to the committee.

Dr. Roberts reported that the Assessment Committee has devised an assessment plan for general education and compiled the Report on General Education Assessment that he had distributed to the committee. This report includes criteria by which we can report that our students have met general education goals including scientific and quantitative reasoning, communicating effectively, demonstrating ethical perspectives, developing knowledge of the Arts and Humanities, thinking critically, and understanding wellness concepts. Dr. Roberts said that the committee focused mainly on the course embedded measures within the general education courses.

Roughly 30 to 40 faculty were involved in the process of coming up with these course embedded measures. Some of this was obtained through commercially available assessment projects. The committee also identified non-course embedded measures whereby general education learning assessment can be located, primarily in licensure and major field exams for Nursing, Engineering, Education, and Business majors. These exams constituted over half of the student majors at the university. One of the reasons for the staggered terms membership for the General Education Committee is the fact that these reports need to be compared over several years, not just one year.

Dr. Roberts reported that one of the areas that presented the most challenges was ethical perspectives. This was especially difficult to assess using course embedded measures. The areas of most success have been scientific and mathematical reasoning. Dr. Roberts mentioned that using common final exam scores and attaching those to the students T number can be useful in gathering other demographical variables which can tell us a lot about student success and retention. Dr. Roberts then directed the committee to pages 26 and 27 of the report which identifies the problems in General Education Assessment that have been observed and potential remedies.

Dr. Roberts commented that whoever is elected as chairperson of the General Education Committee would get a three hour course reduction for the spring and fall semesters. He said this would be a problem for the fall semester since the election for their chair would not be held until August unless that committee meets after elections are held in spring. That person will be unlikely to get that reduction for fall. He recommends that the person elected as chair get a course reduction for spring and an overload pay for summer one.

Dr. Roberts told the committee that one of the problems he sees for them in the coming months is figuring out what is needed from the general education classes. He thinks that there needs to be

conversations between the departments every few years to determine what is expected from the general education courses. He also said that the general education goals need to be reviewed every three to five years to make sure they are still appropriate. He mentioned that one thing that could make the job of this committee easier would be multiply grade pages in Self-Service Banner. He has been working with Wyatt Watson to accomplish this. He told the committee that they did not need to assess every goal every year. There should be a staggered cycle for this focusing on two goals each year. Data should be collected as regularly as possible.

Dr. Roberts said that the Assessment Committee would treat the General Education Committee as a separate department and that the General Education Committee would need to have an Assessment plan and report on that Assessment plan on a regular basis. The chair of this committee will be trained in how to put the data gathered into TracDat. Right now they are on a July 1 schedule, so any data gathered from courses this spring will be collated and recorded by July 1 of this year.

Dr. Lasey then opened the floor for question from the members for Dr. Roberts. Dr. Dykema asked Dr. Roberts if there were any good models for general education assessment. Dr. Roberts said that there were really not any good models. He said that the colleges that had the most advanced assessment plans for general education were the community colleges and he didn't think that those institutions should be models for us since they typically have a more autocratic administrative structure and less faculty governance. Dr. Dykema also asked if the General Education Committee would be involved in determining any kind of links between the goals and what courses allegedly fulfill the general education goals and what courses fulfill general education requirements of Tech, since the goals and the requirements are not always the same. Dr. Lasey responded to this and said that one of the main problems that the Faculty Senate had with the creation of this committee was that they might

suggest curriculum changes or goals. Dr. Lasey then raised the question that if not the General Education Committee, then who should make these changes? Dr. Lasey observed that this should be each departments responsibility to make the changes for the good of the university, but if that change was going to hurt their department, would they really being willing to make it?

Dr. Roberts stated that the general education core is a state mandate of 36 hours, but that Arkansas Tech's is 37. He told the committee that they needed to keep in mind that most accrediting bodies also have requirements for general education, so this is a consideration that has to be taken into account. Dr. Dykema observed that our job is to measure to what degree our goals are being met within those compounds being set by others.

Dr. Roberts recommended taking simple steps at first such as reaffirming what is already in the faculty handbook. The handbook states that faculty are required to state on their syllabi how their class will meet general education objectives.

Dr. Philpotts asked what would motivate change once it was discovered that a goal was not being met. Dr. Lasey replied that Dr. Watson's take on that was that it should be turned over to him at that point.

Dr. Philpotts asked what the group could do in the time remaining in this semester. Dr. Roberts replied that the committee could look at the assessment framework that the Assessment sub-committee created and look at the weaknesses there. Following up with the faculty teaching the general education classes and providing the data that the committee needs is also something that the Ad-hoc committee can do. Dr. Philpotts stressed that the committee should take one thing at a time in order to focus on it in depth. Dr. Roberts commented that the committee may be too small and that they may need to petition to have an increased number.

Dr. Carter asked at what point our students should have the goals mastered. Dr. Roberts addressed this by saying that the state legislator stipulated that students had to have these mastered by their 60th hour, but that we don't take that approach at Arkansas Tech. Our approach is that general education is everyone's responsibility and that we want to make sure the student has mastered these by the time they graduate. Dr. Carter then wanted to know how we could determine that all departments were assessing their seniors at an equal level. Dr. Roberts responded that there was no easy answer to this, but that there are things being done by upper division students which we can reasonably compare to what they have done in the general education classes. He also stated that there needs to be conversations between disciplines regarding this. Dr. Lasey observed that linking the T number to the assessments will help determine at what level the students are reaching the goals.

Dr. Roberts told the committee that when Arkansas Tech was giving the CAAP exam, it was discovered that Agriculture students were the worst of all majors in the writing category. The Agriculture department has since taken measures to improve the writing skills of their students. This is an example of how general education assessment can actually make an impact.

New Business

Dr. Lasey asked that the Ad-hoc committee have their next meeting in a couple of weeks to brainstorm and talk about what we want to do this semester. Dr. Dykema suggested that Dr. Lasey send out an email before the meeting with a possible three issues for the committee to discuss and then also brainstorm at the end. Dr. Lasey agreed that she would do that and asked that everyone send her their schedule so that she can set a time for the meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.