SENIATE COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Minutes for Meeting #1, September 9, 2014

Members Present:

Members Absent:
M. Demirel, K. Pollack, J. Schiano

Guests:
Janet Schulenberg and Mary Beth Williams

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The April Minutes were discussed and approved as written.

ANNOUNCEMENTS
In order to manage time, the announcements from the Officers and Chairs meeting were woven through the UE committee discussion of priority items for the year.

OLD BUSINESS
The committee discussed subcommittee appointments and Chair Seymour asked for additional volunteers to finalize appointments.

Subcommittee appointments:

Academic Standards Committee – Annie Taylor (Chair), Fred Weber, Stephen Van Hook, John Moore, Erinn Finke (HHD)

Engaged Scholarship – Beth Seymour and Annie Taylor

Commission for Adult Learners - Beth Seymour

Curricular Affairs

Annie Taylor and Chris Brady (General Education)

Paul (Retention and Transfer)

Angela, Victoria, and Paul (US/IL)

Daniel and Anne Rose (Writing Across the Curriculum)

Tim and Stephen (Undergraduate Advising Council)
NEW BUSINESS
Discussion of Priority Items:

LionPATH - New system that will replace ISIS. The 2015-16 admissions will be first use of LionPATH

Textbook Report:
Summary of previous conversations: Do we, as a committee, want to support the Barnes and Noble Bookstore? Students get materials many different ways beyond the bookstore… an important “freedom.” Felt that the bookstore was trying to get UE to support them out of frustration that students can “bypass” them. Wanted UE to provide a gesture of support – committee felt this wasn’t our role and that students should be able to get their books and materials wherever they wish (but we do appreciate our bookstore!). The report was clearly produced by the bookstore. If we are going to put forth a report, it should be authored by UE. Decided it would be desirable to put forth a textbook report, but one authored by UE and not the bookstore.

If we were to author such a report, what purpose would it have? Chris Brady says there is a need for an informational report – the landscape is changing and the burden on our students is tremendous. Would be good to provide information about what all of the options are for our students and our faculty so we can all make informed decisions. Yvonne added that there is a lot of discussion about custom textbooks… more expensive, little or no resale value, etc. Stephen added that in his department, they use custom texts because it is cheaper for students. Anne Rose worries that this kind of comprehensive report would be a huge undertaking that would require good benchmarking with other institutions, as well, in order to be beneficial. Fred Weber – How does this tie in with the Higher Education Opportunity Act? Impacts planning and Schedule of Courses (have to provide text information months in advance). We agreed that this is an important topic, but not sure where it fits on our overall priorities. Beth will contact chair of LIST to see if they would be interested in co-authoring an informational report.

Academic Integrity Report – Committee shared suggestions for improving the report

David Smith - Concern for the bigger picture: Why are students finding themselves in these situations? How can we help students avoid these situations? Do we provide adequate services (e.g., CAPS) at all of our campus locations? Several stories shared that support that we need more help and support for all of our students.
Suggestions:
Add “mental health” count to Academic Petitions report to help illustrate the extent of the problem.
Include some indication of each academic unit’s size to help make sense of the numbers. (i.e., Why so many in LA?)
Explain how/if World Campus, eLion, Trauma, and Appeals are (or are not) included in academic unit totals.
Put footnote from last page earlier in the document (page 2) when those terms first appear.
Beth to speak with Senate leadership about potential for a special joint report on the topic of student mental health issues.

Student Literacy Report (from SL) – just received their charge.

Prior Learning Assessment – University just hired a new director of PL; UE will be involved in this initiative.

Engaged Scholarship – Looking at an informational report for December; UE will be asked to endorse it.

Which legislative reports should be our priority?
Revisions to Repeating Courses Policy, Major Declaration Policy, and Prerequisites might be needed first due to upcoming changes in LionPATH. Or do we need LionPATH further along first? Need to further explore this with LionPATH.

Mary Beth Williams and Janet Schulenberg from the General Education Task Force:

Shared an update on the progress of the GETF to date and to discuss where the GETF is headed.

At May 2014 retreat, the GETF moved from a single model to the creation of multiple models…none of which are proposed as “ideal”…that the University community can deliberate. Goal will be to identify the “best of” each that can be included in our ultimate model.

Another retreat in August 2014, where the GETF broke into four groups to analyze each of the four models that were created over the summer. Each analyzed a specific area of potential impact – faculty, student progress to degree, etc. As a result of these discussions, two new models came forth…one was a blending of two of the four, the other was completely new. Now all 6 models have been discussed to determine which to bring forth for University deliberation – three were selected. Each represents a different way to help students reach the learning objectives proposed for a new General Education curriculum.

Wants our help with the overall learning outcomes (are we headed in the right direction? Have we identified the “right” learning outcomes?) and with the deliberation of the three models.

Anne Rose – Why do we need to revise Gen Ed? Janet says asking “what’s broken?” is the wrong question to ask. The world is changing and the learning outcomes our students need to achieve are changing. Our current Gen Ed is not ideal in meeting our students’ needs.

Anne Rose – What, specifically, has changed? Janet – Students need to be able to address problems they’ve never encountered before and to be able to integrate information in ways never needed before. We need to do a better job helping students understand how to make sense of all of the information now available to them and to make decisions that are sound. Mary Beth – What we know about pedagogy has changed significantly, too. Stephen – What has come off the
list? Mary Beth – Nothing has really come off the list, but we are looking at making sure we can measure student success better. Janet – The national standard is now that Gen Ed should be revisited every 5 years to keep up with the rate of change.

Anne Rose – who could disagree with these learning outcomes? They are generic…no meat on them. How are these going to actually impact what happens in the classroom? And we have an increase of Fixed Term faculty (>50%) who “come and go” – lots of change! Departments are already concerned about updating the curriculum…shouldn’t assume that departments and faculty haven’t changed their Gen Ed approaches. Chris Brady – the devil’s in the details! Will be interested to see the proposed models. Critical Thinking, for example, has been in the curriculum for a long time. How can we really know if these things are happening on the ground? There has been a lot of talk about a dedicated Gen Ed faculty…perhaps we need this? Our content specialists are not necessarily well-positioned to create Gen Ed curricula that meet needed learning outcomes. Mary Beth – Yes, some of the proposed model components definitely speak to a need for faculty development if they are to be implemented. The report will speak to the need for faculty development and how that might take place.

Chris Brady – Will there be a deadline by which faculty like me have to have my new curriculum in place? Mary Beth – We prefer carrots to sticks! There will be incentives. Angela – Sounds to me like Gen Ed is catching up with what is happening in the classroom…we are already teaching to these learning outcomes. Mary Beth – And recognizing the faculty who are “keeping up.”

Anne Rose – Who’s going to do all of this work? We appreciate our federated approach where faculty and departments are trusted to do our work. Paul – Don’t forget that some of the campuses don’t have the resources. Paul hears a lot of faculty complain that “this is a waste of time and nothing is going to change.” That will be up to the Senate! Mary Beth – the Senate will have the opportunity to look at the proposed changes in “pieces” so each can be considered somewhat independently.

John Moore – Was on the last GETF. Found it valuable to be part of that discussion. He likes the direction of the new GETF, since making sure we can assess Gen Ed is important. John doesn’t find the current model to be “incoherent” – he feels that it is important to have students think in an arena that is foreign to them (i.e. English major has to spend time thinking as a natural scientist). Janet – In all three of the models we will be deliberating, students will still be exposed to all seven domains. Chris – We need to help students see how these different courses they are taking fit together.

Chris Brady - Concern for how we will assess these outcomes…an intense, time consuming process. We would need to hire a lot more people to help with assessment, administration, faculty development, etc. Mary Beth – It depends. We don’t have to assess every single undergraduate in order to assess the overall curriculum. We are a large enough institution that we can do sampling. The Assessment Subcommittee is working hard on an assessment plan. The Provost and President have both said they are prepared to provide the resources needed for whatever the Senate approves.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.
Minutes prepared by Annie Taylor.