# General Education Committee Minutes, 5/2/18

## Call to Order / Roll Call

Members present: L. Ametsbichler, S. Bradford, D. Parson, P. Muench, J. Randall, T. Wheeler J. Wilkinson  
Members Absent/Excused: B. Clough, B. Durnell, T. Gregory, G. Peters, A. Sala   
Guest: Tom Hyatte (ASUM)  
Ex-Officio present: B. French, N. Lindsay, M. Opitz

The minutes from the 4/18/18 meeting were approved.

## Communication

* After the President released the preliminary strategy for distinction, ECOS asked the curriculum committees to:

1. Please identify recommendations that do not seem controversial and/or problematic from the perspective of curricular review; and,
2. Please identify recommendations that will require additional information and/or action before Faculty Senate can adequately assess impact.

The subsequent clarification included the following:

1. The only item up for approval by the BOR in May will be the new Mission Statement. Everything else presented will be informational. President Bodnar will NOT be putting forward to the Regents in May specific areas for reduction, numbers of FTEs, or details around re-organization. He’ll only share that we have started important conversations around these topics.
2. Anything identified in the President’s draft recommendations required to go through the regular FS processes will go through the appropriate FS committees in the fall.
3. Reorganizations in particular will take place along varied timelines as various programs and colleges figure out the logistics. Timelines will vary depending on the need for refinement and depending on the implementation logistics. What the re-organizations will finally look like will depend on faculty input and the new Provost’s input.
4. This summer the President, the Provost, and Deans will work together to refine the plan for FTE reductions, which will go to the appropriate Review Committee in late summer, per the CBA. This process is clearly outlined in the CBA.

Chair Randall sent the response appended regarding the proposed Montana Ways to the University Planning Committee in response. ASUM was also asked to weigh in on the issue. Student John Hyatt joined the discussion for this purpose. Student member Daniel Parson sent a feedback summary to Chair Randall. These included……. Some students liked the model some did not. Some felt it was a stretch to overlay the 9 groups into 4. It seems to be more appropriate for business rather than education. Since UM inspires to have a more global focus using Montana in the core is too narrow. It doesn’t have the same meaning to others as it does to us. The pedagogy should be explored further. If it is intended to be a marketing strategy then we should ask for expertise. Students were in favor of a greater degree of choice in the categories.

* ASCRC approved the proposed revision to the Natural Science Group
* The rolling review of X, Y and H is scheduled for the fall (included in curriculum deadline memo)

## Business Items

* The draft data analysis was briefly discussed. The data was provided by the Office for Student Success with the understanding that it was unofficial. Institutional Research must provide the data if it is going to be used for public consumption. There could be slight changes. The Expressive Arts data could be problematic because of several 1 credit courses in music. There were some questions on the slides that need to be clarified by Professor Sala. Thus, the analysis will be discussed again in the fall for clarification on how the information can inform the discussion of revising general education.
* Chair Randall went over the instruction slides. The FAQs and slides will be sent to members for feedback. Please send your edits next week. Chair Randall will include an additional assessment slide with some examples. They were provisionally approved with the understanding there would be minor edits.
* The administration will be working over the summer to revise the strategy for distinction and will provide another period for feedback in the fall. The revision could include some recommendations for general education. The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate will also be refining its response over the summer. Chair Randall will be available for part of the summer for input. A meeting may be scheduled with the President. Daniel indicated he would also be available.

## Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34p.m.

## General Education Committee Feedback (4/26/18) UPC Strategies for Distinction: I. An Innovative Core: Montana Ways

INTRODUCTION

The GE committee is committed to improving our current system. In our opinion, new GE/Core proposals should work to address or remedy perceived issues with our current system.

Commonly heard criticisms of GE at UM (these aren’t universally held, and some have more merit than others):

1. Too complicated: 11 groups (makes advising complex; doesn’t help with retention)
2. Too much overlap between groups (although steps to remedy this have been taken in recent years)
3. Our GE doesn't align perfectly with other systems (MUS CORE, WICHE Interstate Passport, Peer Institutions), which may present a barrier to students transferring to UM
4. Too competitive: for a variety of reasons, schools and department may scramble to keep GE credits within the department—SCHs, attracting TAs to teach GE, etc. With lower enrollment at UM (and a wide variety of GE choices), the issue is exacerbated.
5. Our GE doesn’t always allow for the flexibility desired by a variety of programs: GLI, Honors College, Professional degrees, etc.

Priorities for new GE Revisions (not everyone is in agreement here, but there’s a certain energy toward the following points)

1. A simpler plan: fewer GE groups; or, perhaps we retain our current GE groups within larger categories and allow flexibility in distribution of required credits within those categories
2. Ease of assessment: learning outcomes for groups should be assessable through qualitative or quantitative methods. This is important for university accreditation.
3. Our GE shouldn’t be so unique that it presents a barrier for students transferring to UM
4. Flexibility to serve diverse student needs:
   1. Students wanting a more “curated” approach (desired by some professional schools, and programs like GLI or Honors College)
   2. Those students who aren’t yet decided on their path and want the ease of a check-the-box system
   3. Transfer students

MONTANA WAYS VS. OUR CURRENT GE SYSTEM

Pros

1. Fewer categories: 4 vs. 11, which could allow for greater flexibility
2. Some GE members see potential benefit in using the Montana Ways as a “branding exercise” to communicate shared values at UM
3. Our current GE groups fit reasonably well into the 4 Ways (see table below). However, there are distribution issues to be considered.

Cons

1. Some GE members see “Montana Ways” as too insular and feel strongly that it communicates the wrong message, emphasizing local identity over global engagement. Out-of-state and international students may be less attracted to this message than in-state students.
2. Doesn’t make assessment easier. While our current system has many groups, each one now has a clear and limited number of outcomes, which makes assessment easier. (This was viewed favorably in our last accreditation visit)
3. Greater overlap and “fuzziness” between categories than our current system
4. Transferability: it’s so unique that it aligns less easily with peer institutions than our current GE (which may be a barrier for students transferring in). The UPC has recognized that this is something for consideration.
5. The proposed interdisciplinary courses that serve particular degrees or programs could create problems for students changing majors at UM. If a student changes a major, would another interdisciplinary track need to be satisfied?

SUMMARY/PATH FORWARD

* Although “Montana Ways” could offer a distinctive way of branding UM values it also carries considerable risk. The university should work with experienced advertising and marketing professionals to make that final determination. Could a generic label of “UM Core” work just as well?
* If the “Ways” categories were adopted as a framework for a new UM Core, our current GE groups could fit within it (see table below); however, for the reasons outlined above (under Cons), we would suggest retaining a more conventional set of GE subcategories. Our current GE groups are a good starting point, as they better align with GE models at peer institutions than “Montana Ways,” and we already have clear and assessable learning outcomes for each group, which is important for accreditation.

**MONTANA WAYS/CURRENT GE GROUPS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| COMMUNICATING | CREATING | KNOWING | LIVING |
| III: Modern and Classical Languages | IV: Expressive Arts | II: Mathematics | VIII: Ethics and Human Values |
| I: Writing | V: Literary and Artistic Studies | VI: Historical Studies | X: Cultural and International Diversity |
|  |  | VII: Social Sciences | IX: Democracy and Citizenship |
|  |  | XI: Natural Science |  |